

# **Raise a Child, Not a Test Score: Perspectives on Bilingual Education at Davis Bilingual Magnet School<sup>1</sup>**

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## **Abstract**

This article describes a highly successful bilingual education program at Davis Bilingual Magnet School in Tucson, Arizona. After two decades of bilingual schooling in which children of all language backgrounds study content via both Spanish and English, Davis has developed strong community support through special attention to additive bilingualism/biliteracy and by creating a challenging and nurturing learning environment. By examining the school's long-term success from the perspectives of teachers, families, and dual language immersion students themselves, the study highlights successful bilingual schooling in a manner that acknowledges but goes beyond performance on standardized tests.

## **Introduction**

Dual language immersion programs are increasing in number at a rate unseen in bilingual education since passage of the Bilingual Education Act in 1968.<sup>2</sup> Unlike those early days, however, when research data were largely unavailable, there is presently a great deal of information about bilingual schooling in the U.S. context. Three important lessons learned in 30 years of

research are that successful programs: (a) develop over time (August & Hakuta, 1997); (b) respond to local conditions and stakeholders (Brisk, 1998); and (c) are characterized by strong support for the status of and literacy in the minority language (Baker, 2001). As in other cases of successful bilingual schooling (e.g., Brisk, Minaya-Rowe, & Guzmán, 2001; Christian, Montone, Lindholm, & Carranza, 1997; Freeman, 1998), these lessons are well attested in the case of Davis Bilingual Magnet School.

The purpose of this article is to tell the story of Davis. The primary aim is to detail the nature of the challenges faced and the conditions of the school's success, so that they may be understood by educators and researchers working in other contexts. Following the inclusionary philosophy and practices that have characterized Davis since its rebirth as a bilingual magnet school, the story is told here from the multiple perspectives of stakeholders who make up the Davis community: students, teachers, administrators, parents, and community members.

We mean to highlight the fact, too often forgotten in the push for high test scores, that successful bilingual programs can only be fully understood from a variety of points of view beyond standardized testing. To paraphrase Rebecca Freeman (1998), the success of good bilingual programs is so much more than testing. In addition to the stakeholder perspectives listed above, we examine the case of Davis through discussion of language and literacy instruction, as well as the school's efforts to foster instruction grounded in students' emerging theories of bilingualism and biliteracy (Jiménez, 2000), and to create a research community. Finally, in this time of renewed threat to bilingual education, we also mean to celebrate the achievements of this remarkable and proudly bilingual school.

### **Context of the Study**

Davis Bilingual Magnet School is located in Barrio Anita, one of the oldest neighborhoods in Tucson, Arizona. Founded in 1901, Davis has served families of Barrio Anita and surrounding neighborhoods, most of whom have been speakers of minority languages: mainly Spanish, but also Chinese, Tohono O'odham, and Yaqui. Officially a monolingual English school for the first eight decades of its existence, Davis was also one of the poorest schools in Tucson. Not surprisingly, the dropout and failure rates exceeded those at wealthier, European American-dominated schools, in which children were allowed to study in their first language. In 1981, in response to a federal desegregation lawsuit, Davis became a Spanish-English bilingual magnet school, attended by children of neighborhood families and ethnic majority children from other parts of Tucson. The Dual Language Immersion (DLI) program at Davis is one in which all students, regardless of home language background, receive instruction exclusively through Spanish during their first

two years (K–1). The use of English as language of instruction increases in subsequent years but does not exceed a ratio of 70% Spanish and 30% English, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

*Distribution of Minority and Majority Languages of Instruction at Davis Bilingual Magnet School*

Grade	David DL Program
K	100-0
1	100-0
2	85-15
3	70-30
4	70-30
5	70-30

There are other cases of DLI programs increasing the use of the minority language for instruction (cf. Cloud, Genesee, & Hamayan, 2000; Christian et al., 1997). To our knowledge, Davis is unique among dual language programs because Spanish, the minority language, continues to be used for the majority of instruction through Grade 5.

Students from Barrio Anita continue to attend Davis, as do magnet students from other parts of the city. About half of the students qualify for free or reduced school lunch programs. Many barrio students (approximately 35% of the student population) are from Spanish-dominant homes, although almost all begin school with considerable knowledge of English and Spanish. Magnet students constitute approximately 65% of the student population, and most begin school as monolingual or dominant speakers of English. About 70% of the school's 250 students are of Latino heritage, approximately 20% are European-American, 6% are African-American, and 4% are of Native American heritage. The largest single group of students at Davis are third- and fourth-generation Mexican Americans. Many such families have chosen the school's DLI program hoping their children will regain Spanish and revitalize their Latino heritage. Thus, the DLI program has been instrumental in transforming local perceptions of bilingual education as compensatory schooling (Brisk, 1998) for Mexican immigrants to "enriched education" (Cloud et al., 2000) for all children who wish to become bilingual.<sup>3</sup>

The Davis faculty consists of 12 classroom teachers: two per grade level plus two subject area specialists for art and music. There are full-time

instructional aides in each classroom, as well as a full-time exceptional education teacher, librarian, curriculum specialist, and counselor on staff. All faculty, staff, and administration are bilingual and 71% of the classroom teachers hold an MA degree or higher. Most have taken academic courses in both languages and 65% have taught in a dual language program for more than five years, meaning that the Davis faculty is unusually well-trained and experienced even for a DLI program. Nearly three-quarters of the school teacher and staff self identify as Mexican or Mexican American (Smith, 2000).

### **Theoretical Framework**

DLI instruction at Davis presents a compelling research opportunity because the site offers an unusually wide range of language proficiencies and language ideologies. To better understand how diverse and sometimes competing bilingual behaviors and attitudes operate within a single program, we draw on theoretical perspectives from multiple and overlapping disciplines including critical literacy, reader response, language-in-education planning, and biliteracy development. Unlike previous studies, we approach the study of dual language immersion from a funds of knowledge perspective (McIntyre, Rosebery, & González, 2001) because it allows us to tap the understandings held by stakeholders participating in the daily construction and interpretation of this model of bilingual schooling. We are especially interested in the developing theories of children as they learn through two languages, as they reflect a crucial source of knowledge that has received little attention in research on DLI programs.

### **Methods**

A case study design was selected in order to highlight the geographically and temporally bounded nature of the Davis-Barrio Anita community (Merriam, 1998). The mixed methodologies employed in this study reflect our interests in different facets of this uniquely successful program. We think they are best viewed as a set of multiple cases embedded within a single school-community context. As collaborators on a longitudinal study of language ideology and biliteracy development (see Moll & González, 2000), we triangulate ethnographic data from multiple and varied sources, including participant observation in classrooms and other school domains; interviews with students, families, and educators; and content analysis of student writing samples, running records, and other school-based measures of literacy in Spanish and English. In addition, it is important to note that because each author has been either a teacher or parent at the school, we approach the study from an emic perspective.

## Findings

By many different measures, Davis can be regarded as a successful example of bilingual education. Winner of several state and national awards for teaching excellence, the school has been described as “a national treasure” (Brittain, 1999). Like their counterparts across the country, students and teachers at Davis now face increased demand for accountability in the form of high scores on standardized measures of academic achievement. Like students in many magnet programs, bilingual education students at Davis have typically fared well on such measures relative to district and state norms. In 1999 the first generation of Davis students to complete kindergarten through fifth grade under the DLI model scored at or above the district and national averages in all categories of the Stanford 9 standardized achievement test (Moll & González, 2000). And 100% of Davis third graders met or exceeded the state standard in English reading on the Arizona Instrument for Measuring Standards (AIMS) in the spring of 2000, although they had received at least 70% of their schooling in Spanish. Longitudinal analysis (1998–2002) of student performance on more recent measures is currently underway.

Over the course of the study, it became apparent that success on standardized testing tells only part of the story. For example, although Davis educators recognize that parental and district support is partially contingent on high test scores, many are critical of the validity of standardized tests for minority students and for second language learners in particular (Arnot-Hopffer & Smith, 2001). As several teachers pointed out to us, even if high test scores indicate that instruction at the school is generally very effective, they are of little use in planning.

We have already noted the importance of parental and community support for successful programs. As evidence of this sentiment at Davis, we recorded examples of families registering newborns on the district’s waiting list for registration at the school.<sup>4</sup> We also observed language minority and language majority parents at Davis who have figured prominently in recent struggles to preserve the right to choose bilingual schooling.

Because children are capable of increasingly complex understandings of the word and the world (Wink, 2000), in the following sections, we go beyond test scores to examine the success of bilingual schooling at Davis according to three groups of stakeholders: educators, parents, and students.

### Stakeholders’ Perspectives on Bilingual Success

#### *Teachers talk: Implications for successful practice*

Because Davis educators stress that they are in the business of raising children, not test scores, we asked teachers to tell us why they think the DLI program has been successful. Teachers’ comments were consistent with research on dual language (or two-way immersion) programs suggesting that

raising the status of the minority language in DLI programs is fundamental to success (Christian et al., 1997). Davis teachers pointed to the school's collective effort to privilege Spanish, and thus raise the status of the minority language, as a distinguishing characteristic of Davis' success. Anna, a kindergarten teacher, compared Davis to other schools:

This school tries really hard to communicate to the kids what a wonderful thing it is to be bilingual. In our own way, at each grade level, we point that out, through music, through literature discussions. That's something that is really big at this school that I haven't seen at other schools where I've worked.

The deep structure of interactions between educator and students is a primary determinant of students' academic engagement or withdrawal. Cummins (1999) observes that these interactions are most likely to be effective in promoting engagement when they explicitly challenge the low status that has been assigned a subordinated group in the wider society. This point is illustrated in the following segment from a conversation among the school's curriculum specialist, Elizabeth, Cathy (second grade teacher), and Chris (third grade teacher):

Cathy: [Something] that I didn't see in other places is the recognition that these two languages are not socially equal. That they're not treated equally in society and that that's why we're going to privilege Spanish. And I think that that is something that is part of this program. It's the reason I use Spanish four days of the week out of five. Because the staff . . . recognized that outside the school walls Spanish is not considered a high status language. So we'll privilege it inside school.

Elizabeth: What about implications for teaching?

Chris: Well, I think we understand the [Mexican American] culture better, and how the kids might feel about using language, and sharing about their culture, or being proud. I think we can be more sensitive that way, in the sense that we understand the language, the culture, and where the kids are coming from.

Teachers also identified autonomy as a key ingredient in the school's success. Although Davis faculty share a commitment to the goals which guide the DLI program, each teacher is uniquely successful based on his/her experiences and beliefs about teaching and learning in two languages. Principal Guadalupe Romero explains this philosophy:

I try to make it clear to parents that students in the dual language immersion program are at "all levels," just like their non-immersion program counterparts in other schools. And that teachers need to be free to choose what they think works best for them, and of course it has to be in Spanish.

### *Parent contributions to dual language immersion*

Successful bilingual programs are characterized by strong efforts to reach out to parents and families from different backgrounds (Miramontes, Nadeau, & Commins, 1997). At Davis there are many ways for children and families to succeed in and contribute to the life of the school. Davis is home to a *guitarrista* group and the state's first performing *mariachi* group for elementary school students. *Día Extendido*, the after-school program in which 98% of Davis students participate, offers classes in trumpet, violin, guitar, dance, art, computers, sports, and drama. *Escuela Nocturna* [School After Dark] is held two evenings a week and features classes in Spanish and English as a second language for parents and community members, in addition to computers, child care, tutoring, and other classes for adults and children. Unlike parent-involvement programs where parents and community members participate in limited support roles (viz., volunteers or fundraisers), Davis also engages parents as learners.

Interviews and conversations revealed that Davis parents recognize and value the bilingualism and cultural awareness their children are developing at school (Poveda, 2000). As the following comments illustrate, the DLI program at Davis has also motivated some parents to (re)learn a second language. An African American father explains his reasons for studying Spanish in the *Escuela Nocturna* program:

Hispanic people are gonna be the highest minority in this country. In the area that I live in there are a large number of Hispanic people. I have two kids and we have them at a bilingual school and it's to my advantage to learn because I don't want my kids standing in front of me saying things that I don't understand.

A Mexican American mother from the extended community, raised as an English monolingual, added:

My husband and I started coming last year. It was my daughter's first year in a bilingual school . . . so when they offered the after school program for us, we thought that it was only fair. If she had to learn, so did we. My goals are to learn more Spanish and to be able to speak more Spanish. And plus, my kids feel good. [They say] "Oh! This is mom's and dad's time to go to school."

These parents and their classmates have performed publicly in Spanish by leading weekly school-wide assemblies. When parents said the "Pledge of Allegiance" in Spanish, one young boy told his mother how proud and happy he was seeing her speaking in Spanish in front of the entire school. On other occasions, parents have performed short plays in Spanish for student audiences. These are rich opportunities for children to see their own parents as role models in the struggle and excitement that learning a second language entails.

Through the *Escuela Nocturna* program, Davis is stepping back from the traditional notion of schools as places that seek only to maximize the achievement of students (Apple & Weis, 1983). In addition to high levels of student achievement, the school fosters bilingual education for adult learners who seek the cognitive, emotional, social, and economic benefits conferred by proficiency in a second language (Ayers, 1992). In our experience, discussion of the benefits of bilingualism and biliteracy through schooling is often limited to focus on children, and implications for parents are rarely considered (Poveda, 2000). Interaction during class activities and relationships formed by parents during *Escuela Nocturna* illustrate how linguistic and cultural differences between English-dominant and Spanish-dominant parents can be mediated with comprehension, effort, and mutual respect. Like their children, parents become culturally sensitive by learning and sharing with people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and they become particularly appreciative of those who speak the language they are learning (Cummins, 1995). Thus, the DLI program at Davis goes beyond student achievement to involve family and community members in the process of acquiring oral and literate proficiency in a second language.

#### *Davis students share their success*

Student perspectives have been largely overlooked in studies of DLI (but see Lambert & Cazabon, 1994). Given renewed attention to the importance of advanced biliteracy (Cloud et al., 2000), we believe that understanding student views on biliteracy development is particularly critical. Educators who understand how students perceive literacy development in two languages are better able to counteract negative perceptions of the minority language, thus increasing the likelihood that DLI schooling will indeed result in high levels of oral and literate proficiency in both languages.

We present here a sample of student writing to illustrate how Davis students reflect on learning through two languages. The author, Alyssa, is an English-dominant second grader from a Mexican American family:

The kids at my school are successful because they learn two languages. They learn to play instruments like violin, guitar, and trumpet. They learn many things. This is important because you can get a good job and have a good life. My friend Anissa and I go to guitar class every day together. The children can come to this school and have fun. The parents can also be teachers.<sup>5</sup>

#### *Children's theories as evidence of success*

Eder and Corsaro (1999) argue that the process of childhood socialization, once thought to be a private affair of simple internalization, is actually a public, creative process, in which children adopt, adapt, and reinvent adult culture. They use the term "interpretive reproduction" to refer to the complex interplay

in which children become co-authors of “adulthood.” We suspect that the same is true within the realm of bilingual and biliteracy development. Children do not simply absorb sets of skills in a second language; they transform them and in turn contribute to transformations of how language—oral and written—becomes defined and how it is perceived. And they are able to achieve all of this in very public arenas, such as schools, as Alyssa’s writing illustrates:

In first grade my teachers taught me how to add and subtract big numbers. My teachers taught me how to read more advanced books. Now I am in second grade. We learn about insects, how to measure, about animals, how to add and subtract really big numbers, how to read, and how to take tests. When I am in third, fourth, and fifth grade I think it will be hard. I like this school because I have friends and good teachers. And the most important thing is that we learn two languages.

This is indeed fortunate for those of us interested in studying not only biliteracy development, but also the ever evolving concept of “biliteracy” itself. For schools become ideal sites for witnessing the collective means by which the “interpretive reproduction” of biliteracy occurs. During the past four years, we have documented those public processes by which biliteracy is negotiated and transformed. We have learned that not only do such young children already possess sophisticated notions of biliteracy development, they indeed may already be contributing to changes in our very notions of biliteracy. In the following sections we provide examples to illustrate students’ developing theories on the purposes of studying in two languages, their emerging concepts of language, and views on the status of English and Spanish.

### *Children’s theories on the purposes of bilingual schooling*

Though we have observed few instances of adults explaining to children the purposes of the model of bilingual schooling used at Davis, it is clear that students have developed ways of rationalizing for themselves the use of two languages for instruction. Jennifer, Spanish dominant and 7 years old, describes her theory, explaining the greater use of Spanish in the early grades.

J: Because almost all of the kids know English and they don’t know Spanish and they want to be bilingual and they are teaching them.

C: And what about the kids who do know Spanish?

J: Well, there are some words that I don’t know. And I get them wrong and . . . I say them poorly. And so they teach me.<sup>6</sup>

Jennifer has developed the notion that instruction in Spanish serves all students. Recognizing the benefits for English-dominant students, she also describes the importance of continuing development of the minority language.

### *Children's concepts of language*

There have also been few observed instances at Davis of explicit instruction about the nature of language, of how languages are learned, or how they can be compared. Yet we see that children come to negotiate for themselves these complex notions. Edgar, also Spanish dominant and seven years old, describes how his English-dominant friend Michael began teaching him English when both were in kindergarten.

¿Cómo me enseñaba? Así hablando, le decía. ¿Cuál es esa palabra? Ay, es que no sé. Y luego la maestra le decía a otro niño [Michael] “Díle en inglés” y me decía. Hoy ya sabía en inglés, me enseñaba.

[How did he teach me? Talking, I would talk. What is that word? Ay, I don't know. Then the teacher would say to the other boy [Michael] “Tell him in English,” and he would tell me. Today I already know English, he taught me.]

Edgar has also developed the theory that some languages are inherently easier and harder than others. In the case of Spanish and English:

¿El español? Fácil. Es fácil para hablar en español, pero en inglés es poquito trabajoso. Porque el inglés . . . es como inglés, ¡que casi no sabe nadien! Más saben en español que en inglés, ¿verdad?

[Spanish? Easy. It's easy to speak in Spanish, but in English it's a little hard. Because English . . . it's like English, almost no one knows it! More know Spanish than English, right?]

Edgar's theory is especially interesting given that the majority of his peers are English-dominant. His theory that Spanish is an easier language may be derived from the greater use of that language by adults surrounding him, both at school and at home. It is clearly a theory still in evolution, though, as indicated by his checking with the teacher-researcher (“¿Verdad?”).

### *Children's views on the status of English and Spanish*

Finally, we also observed few instances of teachers explicitly referring to the social status assigned to languages, yet children demonstrate that they are acutely aware of these. Jennifer, for example, describes the consequences of not learning Spanish versus those of not learning English.

C: And what would happen say, if a child is in school and doesn't learn Spanish? He only learns English.

J: That he didn't pay attention and played.

C: And what would happen say if a child . . . doesn't learn English?

J: He won't have good work. My daddy didn't want to study and he is working very hard. And then he won't, he won't be able to make his dreams come true. If he wants to be a doctor, he won't be able to because he didn't study.

Jennifer maintains that failure to learn Spanish reflects poor study habits, while failure to learn English results in negative consequences for future career pursuits. Likewise, Edgar notes, "*Porque si no sabes en inglés, y en tu trabajo hablan puro inglés, no le vas a entender.*" [Because if you don't know English and in your job that's all they speak, you won't understand.] Children's abilities to contrast the consequences of not learning Spanish or English belie deeper, formative notions of the perceived status of each language.

These notions of the purpose of bilingual instruction, of concepts of language, and of language status, are only three examples of the ever-evolving theories children develop in the public context of school. Both despite and because of the absence of explicit adult instruction in these notions, students appropriate, change, and reproduce the very concept of biliteracy. The question remains: How are they reinventing "biliteracy" for us and for our world? In the next section, we consider this question by examining the strategies that second language learners use to predict meaning.

### *"I knew it!": Learning through literature discussions*

Work by Vygotsky (1978) and Halliday (1981) suggests that children learn through verbal interaction with peers and adults. The use of literature discussion in early primary classrooms illustrates the personal and intertextual connections that very young children are capable of producing as they learn a system of making and sharing meaning through conversation with others (Clausen, 1995; Martínez-Roldán & López-Robertson, 1999). Consistent with Rosenblatt's (1976) transactional view of reading, these observers of young language learners note that language development, like reading development, is an active rather than passive process.

Literature discussions with Davis kindergarten students reveal strategies that these young learners use to predict meaning in their second language. We found that English-dominant students have become highly receptive to the Spanish language, and were able to understand and respond to Spanish comments and questions from their peers and the teacher. Fillmore (1976, p. 634, cited in Lindfors, 1980, p. 446), in her study of child second language acquisition, observed that young learners were able to function as if they understood what was going on in the classroom very early on. They also understood that the second language directed to them was directly relevant to the situation at hand. Significantly for DLI instruction, students bring their own native language knowledge of contextual and semantic cues to the task of communicating in a second language, thus allowing them to predict the meaning of oral and written texts.

This point is illustrated in the following example of a typical literature discussion in a Davis kindergarten classroom. The teacher is speaking in Spanish to English-dominant students and they are sharing their understanding in English:

Teacher: *¿Tú crees que está diciendo mentiras?* [You think he's lying?]

Mark: *Sí.* [Yes.]

Jeffrey: *Sí.* [Yes.]

Teacher: *Y no podía dejar de temblar de miedo.* [And he couldn't stop shaking from fear.]

Susan: Why was he scared?

Teacher: *¿Por qué crees que tenía miedo?* [Why do you think he was scared?]

Mark: I know, because, because they had never been to the dentist.

Susan: And you know what? I'm never scared to go to the dentist.

Teacher: *Pero miren, este niño está sonriendo* (pointing to picture). *¿Por qué, creen?* [But look, this boy is smiling. Why, do you think?]

David: Because they fixed his tooth.

Teacher: *Hmmmm, mira* (points to picture). *¿Alguno de ustedes se ha sentado en una silla como ésta?* . [Hmmm, look, have any of you ever sat in a chair like this one?]

Mark: I have.

Susan: I have. They just put a paper on your tooth and then you bite on it and then they take a picture of your tooth.

Jeffery: I wonder what he has for a present for him (looking at the illustration of the dentist giving Nacho a present).

Alicia (bilingual child): Me too. *Ya sé qué es, un cepillo de dientes.* [Me too. I know what it is, it's a toothbrush.]

Thus, instruction incorporating literature discussions was found to support second language learners and first language learners alike as they constructed meaning based on the story, their personal experiences, and peer comments. Most importantly, literature discussions at Davis foster a love for literature in a second/minority language. When we asked Mark, an English-dominant kindergarten student, how he felt about being read to in his second language, he responded, "I sit there and enjoy the story." In the next section, we examine the role of inquiry as a key factor in successful schooling at Davis.

## The Role of Inquiry in Successful Dual Language Immersion

Over the course of the study, one of the characteristics that impressed us most was the central role that inquiry plays in all aspects of DLI education at Davis. In previous sections, we have seen how parent and teacher inquiry sparked a transformation in schooling. We have also seen how teachers encourage inquiry as means of building on what students know and think about oral and written language. We turn now to an example of how instruction at the school is shaped to reflect student knowledge and belief.

### *Designing instruction to reflect student knowledge*

Using case studies of second graders becoming biliterate via the school-designed Spanish literacy program, *Éxito Bilingüe* (see Smith & Arnot-Hopffer, 1998), our previous work has examined children's perspectives on their developing abilities to read and write in two languages, particularly as these contribute to changing understandings of bilingualism (Arnot-Hopffer & Smith, 2000). By listening to students talk about learning in a DLI program, we have learned that children who are not afraid to take risks gain greater access to their second language. We also discovered that students as young as second grade are keenly aware of their own second language oral and literate abilities, as well as the proficiencies of their classmates. We found that students were involved in learning concepts about the forms and uses of both Spanish and English, from peers and teachers. And, given the opportunity to explain their personal theories, the students demonstrated knowledge of orthographic conventions so valued by schools, as well as differences in phonological, syntactic, and metalinguistic form.

The power of critical literacy is evident as students use their developing literacy skills in Spanish to actively address social issues of relevance to them. During the present study, for example, second graders lobbied for cleaner bathrooms at school, better care for utensils in the cafeteria, and against Proposition 203, a ballot initiative designed to dismantle bilingual education in the state of Arizona.

Listening closely to the voices of students has also helped us to understand that there are multiple paths to biliteracy rather than a single path that all children must follow. This is an important lesson to remember as teachers select or create curriculum and reading materials. Furthermore, by recognizing that schools need to provide multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate success, Davis teachers have become more critical in their assessment of textbooks and commercially-produced reading programs that promise uniform progress.

By listening to students we have also learned that development of second language literacy is most sensibly viewed as a process that necessarily takes place over time. To use the metaphor of a footrace, becoming a highly proficient

reader in one's second language is more like a marathon than a sprint. Because our ultimate goal is to help learners become confident and eventually academically competent readers/writers in their second language, we question the wisdom of measures that demand students show uniform early competence. The challenge for teachers, then, is to look at all students—including those still developing second language literacy and oral proficiency now—as capable of long-term success in becoming biliterate. Listening to students helps Davis teachers provide the conditions to achieve this goal.

*Investigaciones: Davis as a successful research community*

Close collaboration with university-affiliated researchers has characterized many successful bilingual programs (cf. Lambert & Cazabon, 1994; Morison, 1995; Panfil, 1995). This is certainly true of Davis—the site of three doctoral dissertations (Brittain, 1988; Saavedra, 1995; Smith, 2000) and a longitudinal study since becoming a bilingual magnet school in 1981. Davis has also proven to be a sought-after site for teacher training, and proximity to the University of Arizona has made the school a favored site for observing bilingual classrooms and methodologies. It has consistently experienced a steady stream of visitors to classrooms and its ancillary programs. However, it is not only fortuitous proximity that makes Davis attractive as a research site. The particular constellation of factors described in this article have resulted in a unique configuration of a learning community. First of all, the historical depth of Davis is unparalleled. As the first school in the heart of Tucson, it produced early local luminaries, Anglo and Mexican, and later generations of Tucson residents often trace educational genealogies to Davis. Streets and schools are named after its former students, giving current students claim to a legacy of historical continuity.

A second feature that attracts researchers is the wholesale commitment of faculty, administration, community, and students to bilingual education. Because Davis is a magnet school, many parents and students consciously choose this model as their educational option. We have seen how faculty and administrators overtly nurture an atmosphere of bilingualism within the school, privileging Spanish in domains traditionally reserved for English. In many bilingual programs, the administrative functions of the school (e.g., school intercom announcements) are still delivered exclusively in English, conveying to students the jural precedence of the majority language. In contrast, Davis projects a pluralistic language ideology that equally validates two languages.

A third component of Davis as a research site is the negotiated nature of curricular and methodological issues. Teachers are encouraged to reflect on pedagogical concerns through teacher study groups, and a mutually educative dialogue is promoted. This in itself is a venue for research (Saavedra, 1995), and teacher study groups are an integral part of the success of this program (Murphy, 1999).

Finally, the demographic and linguistic profile of the students completes a compelling research picture. Students emanate from Spanish-dominant barrio households, English-dominant Anglo extended community households, English-dominant Latino households, mixed households with complete bilingualism, English-dominant African American and Native American households, tri-lingual households, and a variety of other permutations of language and ethnicity. There is no one trajectory that students follow on the path to becoming bilingual and biliterate. There are multiple paths, and students are encouraged to draw on a variety of linguistic and non-linguistic funds of knowledge from both the school and the community.

Interestingly, it is not the nuts and bolts of bilingual education that make Davis a prime research site. While many observers do come to learn about techniques and methodologies, teaching in two languages is much more than technique at Davis. Rather, it encompasses an entire panorama of learning strategies that articulate children's funds of knowledge to classroom practices. Since the shift to a DLI program seven years ago, Davis has become an even more compelling research site because this model is not easy to implement. Researchers are just beginning to understand the implications of the many programs labeled as DLI that do not provide full attendant support for reading, writing, and content area development in two languages (Amrein & Peña, 2000). Because of its strengths in these areas and demonstrated commitment to fostering and—critical for demonstrating success—documenting bilingualism and biliteracy (Brisk, Minaya-Rowe, & Torres-Guzman, 2001), Davis is a research context in which a fuller range of language abilities and ideologies may be observed and understood.

### **Lessons Learned**

Our observations of and conversations with teachers, parents, and students reveal a school community that is proud to be bilingual and working hard to stay that way. Following decades of one-size-fits-all schooling for language minority children, Davis educators have embraced the DLI form of bilingual education as most appropriate for meeting the cognitive and linguistic needs of today's diverse population. At Davis, DLI instruction means rejecting the idea of standardization of children, teachers, curriculum, communities, families, and a single path to biliteracy. It means practicing a wholesale commitment to additive bilingual education through school-designed programs that—like languages and the ideologies we construct about them—are ever evolving.

Embedded in a culturally and linguistically rich environment in which children and adults nurture each other, and a sense of community that is readily apparent, we find that Davis families, students, and educators continue to learn language through social interactions that transcend classroom limits.

Rejecting the lower status of minority languages outside the school, the community privileges Spanish as an integral feature of the collective effort to promote second language acquisition for all students.

In this environment, Davis students do well on standardized tests. But because the Davis community understands the difference between real learning and preparing children to take tests, and because it is a community in which colleagues, parents, and administrators will not allow highly motivated, well prepared bilingual teachers to become mere test preparation technicians, high test scores are regarded not as the focus of DL instruction, but as icing on the cake. (Or, as a fourth-grade student suggested, “the salsa on the tostada”). The Davis community has raised test scores because it is not in the business of raising test scores. At Davis, the greatest pride comes from raising bilingual and biliterate children fully capable of understanding the world and confident of their place in it.

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### Endnotes

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- <sup>2</sup>Many authors (e.g., Brisk, 1998; Christian et al., 1997) use the term “two-way immersion” to refer to bilingual programs which, like the one at Davis, group children of language majority and language minority backgrounds together to study content via the languages of both groups. Here, in keeping with local practice, we have used the terms “dual language immersion” and “*inmersión en dos idiomas*.”
- <sup>3</sup>Smith (in press) describes the unique historical conditions and pioneering educators whose work led to this transformation.
- <sup>4</sup>At one point in the mid-1990s, the waiting list to register children at Davis was several years long. Access to the DLI program and other district magnet schools is now determined through an annual lottery.
- <sup>5</sup>Due to space limits, we present only the English version of Alyssa’s composition.
- <sup>6</sup>This conversation between Jennifer and her teacher took place in Spanish, but is presented here in English because of space constraints.