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Dual Language programs can be found across the globe and they offer learners opportunities to become immersed in a new language. The purpose of my study was to investigate parents' perceptions of their children's experiences in a one-way 90/10 dual language program that began in elementary school and has continued into secondary school. I interviewed ten parents whose children are currently involved with dual language at the secondary level and asked them to share their experiences and insights on programmatic features as well as areas of concern that schools in the program may need to address. I aimed to examine parents' understanding of the experiences that their child has had over time and the programmatic features parents favor that prompted them to extend their child's continued participation into the secondary level.

I found that parents valued outcomes the program generated, including preparing their child to be a global citizen, enabling them to achieve content mastery, and encouraging them to take responsibility and become independent. Parents also identified challenges with their child maintaining engagement with the adopted language along the way, primarily during transitions from elementary to middle and middle to high school. In analyzing my findings, I examined how the concept of self-interest related to parent decision-making. I hope that the results of my study will allow school and district leaders, like myself, to consider approaches to enhance the structural aspects of a dual language program already in operation.

PARENTS SPEAK: WHAT ARE THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR CHILDREN'S
EXPERIENCES IN A 90/10 ONE-WAY LANGUAGE IMMERSION PROGRAM?

by

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Dr. Craig Peck
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DEDICATION

To my family and friends, for their unending support and for always believing in me – no matter what – especially my wife Janice, who is truly my anchor, along with the most amazing kids a dad could ever have to laugh with, brag about and to be so proud of - Carolynn, Michael and Jacob. My dad, my sister, brother and their families - with all of you surrounding me I can do anything! Even those who are no longer with us, like my mom and my brother, I feel the pride and love from above. Finally, I envision this work to enhance the world of education through helping other leaders attain success with their students in the pursuit of bilingualism – regardless of the first language of the individual.

APPROVAL PAGE

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Identifying ways to increase student achievement in schools has been a long-standing challenge. Various programs, research-based practices, trending activities, and modern technologies have been developed with the intention to enhance academic success. One instructional approach that appears to provide consistent contributions to favorable academic performance is dual language immersion programs (Ee, 2018; Giacchino-Baker & Piller, 2006). Language immersion models, such as the two-way 50/50 immersion program or the one-way 90/10 immersion program, pave the way for students to become bilingual, biliterate, and possess stronger cultural perspectives. As a principal who operates a one-way 90/10 immersion program, I am motivated to better understand parents' perspectives of their children's extended experiences in dual language programs. Parents' perspectives are important to my study because they are the constant observers of student engagement, progress, struggle, and success over multiple years of program involvement. They may share insights into typical program flaws or blind spots that could be improved upon.

Statement of the Problem

According to multiple studies conducted in the United States by Lindholm-Leary (2012), Block (2012), Stewart (2005), Marian et al. (2013), Steele et al. (2017), and Alanis and Rodriguez (2008), as well international research, including a study in Ireland by Kavanagh and Hickey (2013) and a study in Canada by Deslandes and Bertrand (2005), dual language immersion programs have a high rate of academic success with students. While state testing data have consistently supported the positive academic impact of dual language programs, several barriers prevent most educational settings from offering a strong language program. These obstacles include lack of desire for the implementation of an immersion program by parents

within the school community. If and when interest grows into demand, curiosity can ignite a potential willingness among parents to learn more about becoming involved in a dual language immersion program to enhance their child's educational experience.

The term "dual language" is used to generally describe language immersion programs. Understanding the specific types of dual language program models is important, and I differentiate between them throughout this dissertation with specific terms: two-way 50/50 dual language programs and one-way 90/10 dual language programs. A two-way 50/50 dual language program is formed with a balance of student participants who speak two native languages. Two homeroom classes are formed: one class is made up of native English speakers, while the other class is made up of native speakers of a different language—most commonly in the United States, this language is Spanish. Dual language programs under a 50/50 model may offer a variation of target languages to meet the needs of the local school community. For example, Korean would be a target language offered in a community with many Korean families; however, this would not likely be the language offered in a community of Hispanic families. Student homeroom assignments occur through cluster groupings based upon the native language spoken: one cluster group speaks English and the other speaks the new target language. The two specially trained teachers alternatively deliver academic content to each group on a delivery schedule that works for their particular setting. Teachers deliver the same standards-based instruction to students; however, the primary delivery mode is in the target language for the specific cluster group being served. The two-way 50/50 model is considered mutually beneficial because it supports two groups of native language speakers: English and the second/target language. The terms used for this model throughout this dissertation include "two-way 50/50 model," "two-way 50/50 program," "two-way 50/50 immersion program," or "50/50 model."

In contrast, the one-way 90/10 dual language program is specifically designed for nonnative speakers of the target language that the program offers. Students are assigned to a single cohort classroom with one specially-trained teacher whose native language is that of the program offering. Students attend lessons daily and simultaneously learn the new target language with their peers. There are no native speakers of the target language in this cohort. This is likely due to a limited population of students—whose native language is not English—to form an alternative class to implement a two-way 50/50 program. This model uses 90% of the school day for students to learn the new second language through an immersive environment when students are in grades 1 and 2. Although the program is commonly referred to as 90/10, that is based on how participants begin. As a student progresses through the program, the amount of direct English instruction increases beginning in 2nd grade, while at the same time the amount of second language instructional time decreases. As the program continues, the percentage of English continues to increase, decreasing second language interaction time. When students reach grade 3, the percentage of English increases to 30%, making the program 70/30. As students continue to progress to grades 4 and 5, they get closer to a 60/40 blend. Despite the changes along the way, the one-way 90/10 model exclusively benefits nonnative speakers of the new target language. The increase of English instruction times comes after the foundational level of language learning occurs in the first two years. Understanding the year-to-year adjustments in time, terms used for this model throughout this dissertation include “one-way 90/10 model,” “one-way 90/10 program,” “one-way 90/10 immersion program,” or “90/10 program.”

In this study, I focused on one-way 90/10 dual language program models that span across K–12 schools, where students enter the program in elementary school and continue through middle and high school. Rather than focus solely on the foundational level of program entry, I

conducted this study at the secondary level to gain insight into the actual experiences that the program has provided children through parents' perspective. I want to know more from parents about what they appreciated, as well as the components that they would have changed in relation to their child's experiences. This target group was critical for this study, as it yielded rich data from invested parents who have extended involvement in dual language over a period of years.

Purpose of the Study

My purpose in conducting this study was to investigate parents' perceptions of their children's experiences in a one-way 90/10 dual language program that began in elementary school and has continued into secondary school. I aimed to understand the experiences that a child has had over time and the programmatic features parents favor that prompt them to extend their child's continued participation into the secondary level. The interview-based study design allowed me to ask parent participants to elaborate upon their actual experiences in their family's dual language journey over an extended period of time. The interviews provided parent participants with the opportunity to share their voices regarding the impact of program experiences upon their child. The parents who have remained committed to the extended secondary opportunities of a 90/10 dual language program have a story to share related to the experiences of their child. Through this study, I intended to bring those experiences forward in hopes of promoting positive aspects of the program, while at the same time shedding light on areas of concern that can be addressed in the future with program implementation prompting the consideration of programmatic enhancements and changes to incorporate for added success.

Research Questions

I developed one main research question and three subquestions to guide this study:

1. What are parents' perceptions of their children's experiences in a 90/10 dual language immersion program that began in elementary school and continued into secondary school?
 - A. What do parents describe as the most positive aspects of the program?
 - B. What aspects do parents believe might be changed or improved?
 - C. How do their children's experiences in the program compare to the anticipated outcomes that originally prompted the parents to enroll their children in the program?

Background and Context

When school staff and administration, parents, and community members all want to implement a dual language program, a stable foundation emerges for program implementation (Alanis & Rodriguez, 2008; Giacchino-Baker & Piller, 2006; Shannon & Milian, 2002). Another key factor is the school community "carefully attending to the program environment" (Ee, 2018, p. 705). Programs with weak implementation and limited school or district support structures tend to demonstrate a lower success rate and gain less support from parents and the larger school community.

In a case study of a two-way dual language program at an elementary school, Alanis and Rodriguez (2008) accentuated the role of the school principal in contributing to the overall success of a dual language program through active support. The principal's attention to school culture, professional development, and teacher support were critical components towards building teacher capacity for strong program implementation. In a study examining Spanish literacy in a dual language program, Smith and Arnot-Hopffer (1998) described how the "strong

support of the principal, and parent commitment to bilingualism are critical factors” in program success (p. 275). These authors concluded that teacher ownership in the program and their shared vision for program success was vital. Similarly, Gomez et al. (2005) conducted a study on dual language programming and devoted a section to potential problems with program implementation, explaining that “effective programs must be well implemented and provided with adequate administrative, faculty and resource support” (p. 149). In a recent study of a Mandarin Chinese immersion school, Zheng (2020) determined that parents wanted strong adherence to the language of the program and for the school to provide adequate resources to maximize language use.

Positive Aspects of Dual Language Immersion Programs

Previous researchers have supported the idea that dual language immersion programs, in general, have a positive impact on student learning. Across several studies including those of Alanis and Rodriguez, (2008), Smith and Arnot-Hopffer (1998), and Gomez et al. (2005), the benefits of dual language program enrollment are multiple and extend beyond test scores. For example, regardless of type, immersion language programs are associated with instilling positive cross-cultural attitudes (Block, 2012), generating intellectual stimulation (Parkes & Ruth, 2011), enhancing communication skills, and increasing compassion for others (Lao, 2004; Lee & Jeong, 2013; Shannon & Milian, 2002). Further, students indicate a greater cultural understanding while demonstrating more patience and acceptance of others when they take part in immersion programs (Shannon & Milian, 2002). Dual language programs position participants for better opportunities in the future, as Whiting and Feinauer (2011) noted. Furthermore, scholars have determined that dual language students experience multiple benefits, including the potential for varied employment options, higher salary earnings, higher college acceptance rates, and greater

competitiveness in a global economy (Giacchino-Baker & Piller, 2006; Varghese & Park, 2010; Tochon, 2009).

Many studies on dual language programs have focused on the two-way 50/50 design model and described the mutually beneficial outcomes they provide to both native and non-native speakers of the target language. For example, in a study of eight dual language schools, Parkes and Ruth (2011) collected and examined parental satisfaction data regarding categories such as academics, language development, and multicultural growth. While parents valued different aspects of program offerings, it was clear that they believed the programs were beneficial for their children. For instance, Chinese language dominant families valued their children's enhanced level of home language use at an earlier age. Similarly, English language dominant families were attracted to the ability of their children to develop and apply Chinese language skills. Both Chinese and English language dominant families valued the cultural development and intellectual engagement most of all.

Areas of Concern with Dual Language Immersion Programs

Previous studies have reported a series of concerns that the parents involved with dual language programs have identified. As with traditional schooling, the ways in which parents can support their children's learning include assisting with homework, attending parent nights, and obtaining resources for academic support (e.g., tutoring) in the community as needed. In a traditional American school setting these activities and supports are primarily offered in the language of the school community, which is English. When it comes to dual language programs, the activities and supports that are more easily accessible in a traditional school program can become a challenge for families. Parental concerns are primarily identified within three areas: the

possible negative impact of program participation on academic development, the extended nature of the program, and the lack of student supports.

First, parents' academic concerns emerged in relation to students' development of proper English language skills and abilities (Parkes & Ruth, 2011; Zheng, 2020). Parkes and Ruth (2011) found that parents were concerned that language issues and barriers complicated instruction in disciplines such as mathematics. In a study of a 90/10 one-way model offering the Mandarin language, Bucknam and Hood (2020) described the need to better align the dual language program with existing curricular standards. In studies such as those by Giacchino and Piller (2006) and Lee and Jeong (2013), parents expressed concerns about student progress in dual language classes as compared to students in traditional classrooms. They believed that students in traditional settings make more progress in foundational skill levels than those in the dual language program.

Researchers have also identified a variety of parental concerns related to the lengthy time span of dual language programs. Parents have expressed concerns, for instance, as to whether dual language programs that begin in elementary school should continue into the secondary levels (Wesely & Baig, 2012). Similarly, student participation in a dual language program beyond elementary school was of specific concern with over half of the parent participants in the study of Giacchino and Piller (2006). In situations where students transitioned to the secondary level, parents and their children faced the necessity of choosing between the dual language program or different academic pathways offered by the school, such as an International Baccalaureate program (Wesely & Baig, 2012).

Finally, parents have expressed concerns that there are limited resources in the home to support second language development. Families may lack access to books and other literacy

materials, simple homework help from a parent or family member, or community members who are knowledgeable about the language of acquisition (Block, 2012; Kavanagh & Hickey, 2013; Lao, 2004; Sanders, 2018; Zheng, 2020). For example, a common area of concern comes from monolingual parents who are able to provide homework help in their family's native language but are limited in the amount of help they can provide in the second language. In addition, many parents may not be fully aware of reliable resources accessible to them in the community, such as tutoring if needed (Bucknam & Hood, 2020; Giacchino & Piller, 2006; Kavanagh & Hickey, 2013; Lao, 2004). In these situations, parents rely heavily on the school to ensure that these academic supports are provided regarding student progress, community opportunities, and available resources.

Methods Overview

In this basic qualitative study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), I used interviews as the primary approach to collect data from parent participants. I examined their experiences with and their perceptions of their children's involvement with a one-way 90/10 dual language immersion program. Specifically, I collected data from parents whose children started the program in elementary school and who have continued involvement with the program into the secondary level of schooling. I conducted interviews with at 10 parent participants whose children are currently at the secondary level of schooling. This target group had experiences that span multiple years and could provide rich feedback regarding the long-term benefits and challenges that they experienced.

I recruited participants by distributing an interest flyer announcing the study to secondary level parents of children who began their immersion experience in a one-way 90/10 program in elementary school (see Appendix A). Within many district's dual language programs, students

follow a cohort model through the K–12 continuum and often have an organized parent network for parents led by parents with children in the immersion program. This organized network operates independently of the school or district. Such a parent organization exists within the community in which my study was conducted. I utilized this group to help ensure that my flyer reached parents effectively.

As I had my own experiences with, perceptions of, and even assumptions about dual language programs, I remained aware of my positionality and maintain transparency through consistent reflection during and after interviews. As Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained, “qualitative research is a dialectical process that affects and changes both the participants and the researcher, at least to some extent” (p. 64). I needed to become aware of these moments with myself as a researcher and noted these moments in a journal throughout my interviews. Maintaining a reflexivity journal helped me to challenge my own perceptions and experiences related to my own “insider/outsider stances” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 64)—not only as someone who is a school administrator who operates a dual language program, but who is also a parent of a child in an immersion program. I captured my reflections and challenges to any stance I may have in my journal, as I conducted the interviews in real time, in order to monitor my thoughts and revelations throughout this process.

Theoretical Framework

Given that parents make a conscious choice to enroll their child in a 90/10 immersion program, the theoretical framework of self-interest was my primary lens through this study. Shuls (2018) applied the theory of self-interest in a study specific to parents’ personal decisions regarding school choice and their broader support for school programs. In this study completed in two geographical locations in Missouri, five focus groups totaling 35 participants contributed

to the study regarding an “individual’s personal decision on where their child goes to school” (Shuls, 2018, p. 80). In explaining their choices, parents expressed reservations regarding the potential harm to public school performance and funding, the quality of private school, and the impact their choice would make on concentrating poverty in the community. Shuls found that parents wanted to do what was best for their children but also wanted a larger system to help all kids in relation to schooling opportunities. Although they wanted to support the greater good, they may have made a personal choice to follow a different path in what they deemed best for their child and acted in the end in their own self-interest.

Similar to choices parents made in the Shuls (2018) study, parents are making an educational decision for their child to engage with and maintain continued involvement in a 90/10 dual language program. The relevant aspect of this theory is that there is an undeniable aspect of self-interest driving individual preference. Within the Shuls study, parents made a decision that would impact their child’s education, and that decision might not align with a collective group interest. In explaining why parents act in self-interest, Shuls (2018) cited the work of Schelling (1978), noting, “it should be expected that parents would choose to do what they thought was best for their children” (p. 89). Shuls (2018) described self-interest as an essential part of the decision-making process. He quoted Schelling (1978) in stating that while “people may care how it all comes out in the aggregate, their own decisions and their own behavior are typically motivated toward their own interest” (p. 24). In my study, I used the theory of self-interest to aid in both structuring the study and analyzing the findings.

Researcher Experience

My experiences over the past 27 years have been in public education. Prior to my current tenure as an elementary school principal, I served as a classroom teacher and as a curriculum

specialist. For the past twelve years, I have directly supervised an elementary school with a successful language and global education program earning local, state, and national recognition for the school's global efforts and language program. I work closely with global education entities that provide extensive staff development and recruitment of international teaching staff. In my school district, I serve on a global team to bring global experiences to students and educators across the district.

In my experience as a principal of a school that provides access to a one-way 90/10 immersion language program, I have observed significant work towards successful program implementation making a positive impact on the school community—particularly with student achievement and school involvement. My role in this study was to learn more for my own professional growth and understanding of the needs within my school community in hopes of providing better support and deeper understanding of school programs for the community. Additionally, my study contributed to the body of research for my colleagues to reference in the event that they explore implementing a dual language program into their own school or move into a school where a program exists. Finally, I have a deep appreciation for the impact that learning a second language has had on my own children and their views of the world around them. These specific areas are potential biases that I recognized and strategically addressed through the study's research and design. This is described in greater detail in Chapter III.

Significance of this Study

This study is significant because limited information exists concerning parents' perceptions of their children's experiences in one-way 90/10 dual language immersion programs over an extended period of time. Studies have indicated that benefits are generally found in immersion programs regardless of whether the program is based on the one-way 90/10 or the

two-way 50/50 model; however, studies are more abundant for the two-way 50/50 programs. Across multiple studies, such as those of Lee and Jeong (2013), Parkes and Ruth (2011), and Whiting and Feinauer (2011), the programs most frequently investigated are the two-way 50/50 models where two populations of students are served. This model is quite common and typically based on the needs of the school community in which the program exists. Two-way 50/50 models emerge in geographic areas where there is a need to support both native language speakers and new language learners. Whether the program features Spanish, Korean, or French, there is desire and demand for a mutually beneficial outcome from both English speakers and native language speakers. Parkes and Ruth (2011) described that in 50/50 programs, English-speaking learners acquire a second language while native language speakers retain part of their cultural identity when their native language is reinforced.

While popular, the one-way 90/10 model is less common and is designed specifically for nonnative speakers of the new target language that is taught within the program. This model provides English-only-speaking students the opportunity to learn a second language 90% of the time that class is in session, while simultaneously working on mastering curriculum standards. Unlike the two-way 50/50 model, there is not a group of native speakers of the target language enrolled in the program to receive instruction in their native language or to enhance their abilities learning English. This program also serves the school community and emerges because there may not be a substantial population of native speakers enrolled or enough interest to form a two-way 50/50 program, yet there is enough interest for a one-way 90/10 program.

The focus on one-way 90/10 dual language programs distinguished my study from studies that examined the two-way 50/50 model. In addition, by focusing on parents' perceptions, I added to the current knowledge regarding parents of children in a dual language

immersion program and their choices of and experiences with such programs. Finally, by seeking participation of families who are in secondary school, I discovered insights into parents' perceptions of their children's long-term program experiences.

Beyond adding to the existing studies, the data derived from my study helped me to understand the programmatic impact on the recipient side. More specifically, the insight shared from participants informed subtle changes and enhancements to the current structures within my own school. As a current principal of a dual language school I utilized the outcomes to better inform parents of what to expect. I am in a much better position to help parents see what is to come, understand more of the opportunities beyond elementary programming and how they could keep the development of the language to continue and to enrich the cultural understanding students gained through their program involvement. This valuable insight is easily replicated across other schools offering a dual language program in my school district. Serving on the global schools' team, my study outcomes are practical and helpful across settings. My immediate supervisor is the global school lead making the distributing of content and its integration into current practices relatively easy.

Chapter Overview

In the next chapter, I review the literature on dual language immersion program types, features, and benefits. I include a range of studies used to capture schools across the United States as well as international schools in Canada and Ireland. In Chapter III, I describe the methods utilized to collect and analyze data. This qualitative study included parent interviews to understand the experiences and perceptions they have through their children's involvement in a one-way 90/10 immersion program. A reflexivity journal captured my own thoughts and helped

me to define categories and to interpret the patterns that emerged in the process of interviews. This chapter describes the recruitment of study participants and setting.

Chapter IV is a presentation of my key findings categorized into sections based on the main themes that emerge. Chapter V is an analysis of the key findings, a review of the initial problem identified, and a discussion of how the study answered the research question and subquestions. The fifth chapter contains an evaluation of how the findings align or contrast with related studies. It ends with a set of recommendations for practice and future research, as well as my final thoughts.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I review the body of existing research related to the nature of dual language immersion programs, including their advantages and challenges. I also investigate previous scholarship concerning the relationship among socioeconomics, parental involvement, and participation in dual language programs, as well as the important aspect of parent perceptions of these programs.

Language Immersion Programs

A language immersion program takes place in a school setting as part of that school's academic program. The design includes students being assigned to a structured classroom environment where the intended outcome is that of obtaining a second language, while simultaneously learning the mandated curriculum. Program enrollment places students with a cohort of peers who progress together through the program in that cohort group. Typically, elementary school programs begin in kindergarten and last through fifth grade. The commitment from parents at the elementary level is to remain in the program throughout the K–5 grade span continuum. As students move to the secondary level, it is common to experience variations in dual language delivery in order to allow students to have greater access to secondary content requirements and enhancement programs that are external to the dual language program. Deslandes and Bertrand (2005) emphasized that parental involvement through middle and high school is a critical component to student academic success, noting that parents help through “encouragement and praise, help with homework, frequent discussions about school, and attendance at school performances or sports events” (p. 165).

In most instances, the dual language program uses the same state-adopted content standards that exist for all regular programs; the only difference is that the mode of instructional

delivery is in the target language, whether it is Spanish, Mandarin, French, etc. In Chapter I, I provided a brief description of dual language immersion program models. To restate, there are two typical models of immersion programs, also known as dual language programs. In the one-way 90/10 program, students begin in a cohort in early elementary school; for 90% of the day, the instructional mode of delivery is through the target language of acquisition, and 10% is in English, the native language of students. As students progress through the K–5 continuum, the percentage of access to English increases and levels out to 50% in upper grades with the other 50% in the target language. Conversely, a two-way 50/50 program maintains 50% instructional delivery in both the native/home language and in the new target language at all grades from the onset (Gomez et al., 2005; Lindholm-Leary, 2012; Lopez, 2013; Parkes & Ruth, 2011).

Enrollment in each of these models differs based upon demands of the school community, including program types and target languages. For example, studies in Utah (Call, et al., 2018; Whiting & Feinauer, 2011) showed growing popularity of dual language programs among the diverse families seeking them. Similarly, studies conducted in California (Block, 2012; Ee, 2017, 2018; Lee & Jeong, 2013) considered Korean language programs to meet the interests and needs of the school community. These studies examined parent perspectives within Korean-English communities and how parental involvement enhanced the overall school experience and relationships. Further, Texas-based studies (Alanis & Rodriguez, 2008; Lopez, 2013) focused on how Spanish immersion programs generated benefits for a range of diverse families; because of sustained program operations and more accessibility provided to families, long-term benefits were more evident. Program enrollment also depends on the target population to fill the program and the number of seats available based on the design of the implementation

model. To reiterate, programs across the United States typically adopt models based on the needs and interests of their local school community.

The most unique of the target languages was found in a study conducted in Massachusetts, where the target language was Portuguese (Rubinstein-Avila, 2002). Although unique in the program offering, the study demonstrated how the program addressed the needs of the local community where 25.8% of the school's population is comprised of foreign-born Portuguese speakers, the largest such population in the United States. Internationally, the same approach took place for the implementation of immersion programs. For example, Wesely and Baig (2012) studied a Canadian one-way French immersion program, while Kavanagh and Hickey (2013) examined a one-way Gaeltacht immersion initiative in Ireland. In essence, the programmatic delivery models in these studies were similar to models in the United States, but the program languages offered and the settings differed.

90/10 Immersion Programs

While limited studies focusing solely on one-way 90/10 dual language programs exist, there are some compelling studies that address student achievement, parental satisfaction, and discussions of advantages of program involvement. Some studies include a variety of full immersion programs and span globally to include locations such as, Finland, Germany, and Ireland. For instance, in the study conducted by McVeigh et al. (2017) on immersion programs in Ireland, they presented the program as “full immersion” and described the specific language offered as a “medium”: “Children’s enrollment in either an “Irish-medium or an English-medium school is determined by the parent” (McVeigh et al., 2017, p. 3). The study revealed many of the cognitive benefits of the program similar to those in the United States, and additionally describe

these cognitive abilities to emerge more with divergent thinking, metalinguistic awareness, and even with tasks that require controlled attention.

In an empirical study about programs in Germany, researchers Fleckenstein et al. (2019) conducted a longitudinal study of a one-way immersion program. The study considered the cognitive benefits of bilingualism on math performance as evidenced by achievement data. In their findings there were no negative implications on achievement, instead their findings indicated that math instruction in a second language “promotes” and “accelerates” achievement (p. 233). Likewise, studies by McVeigh et al. (2017) and Shannon and Milian (2002) documented increased achievement among students that generated more interest in the programs from parents and school leaders.

In the United States, three other studies of one-way 90/10 models were completed in Oregon, Utah, and Wisconsin. Each study focused on Mandarin immersion programs. The Oregon study conducted by Bucknam and Hood (2020) closely examined the oral language used by first graders in the content areas of math and language arts. The outcomes indicated the successful transfer of academic skills, but the researchers determined the program may need further development with a better balance of content and resources to support language learning. Furthermore, they found that the program provides sensitivity to the cultural aspect of the language; however, there needs to be an increased alignment with school curriculum.

Two specific studies that emphasize parental perspectives and experiences with dual language programs those of a study in Utah by Sung (2020) and a study in Wisconsin by Zheng (2020). These studies further included demographic details to understand diversity among participants. The Sung study revealed that program involvement was primarily connected to parents’ beliefs in the benefits of becoming bilingual. Overall, parental satisfaction was high,

however some wanted to strengthen program diversity. The Zheng (2020) study accentuated how students could develop the ability to speak another language in a way that could be “converted into marketable capitals in the globalized world” and further envision a “community of language uses across different geographic locations” (p. 14). Zheng also captured how some parents were dissatisfied with the program, felt that it did not serve the interests of their children, and hoped for more attention to diverse perspectives.

Early Ages as the Window of Opportunity for Language Acquisition

The age of language acquisition is essential to consider. Adult learners may not be able to develop language nuances, such as accents or tongue rolling, to make certain sounds that are natural for a native speaker because the development of sound and speech patterns occurs in the early years (Tochon, 2009). Regardless of language, literacy instruction is paramount to ensuring children learn to read, write, speak, and otherwise communicate fluently in their native language. Studies support the implementation of a dual language program during the preschool or early elementary years that is aligned with a well-structured academic program. For example, Kovelman et al. (2015) found that children exposed to language development around age three or four showed better phonological awareness, decoding ability, and general reading habits. Similarly, Tochon (2009) took an in-depth look at the need for schools to develop language programs at an earlier age than traditionally, in which students take language classes at the secondary level. Both Kovelman et al. (2015) and Tochon (2009) asserted that early childhood is the prime time for language skill development regardless of native language, but even more so if learning a second language:

Thus, children with new language exposure between the ages of 3-4 might be in a developmentally ‘vulnerable’ zone for ultimate language and potentially, reading and

literacy attainment. Nevertheless, preschool years are characterized by rapidly advancing learning abilities and great neurological change. (Kovelman et al., 2015, p. 2)

When addressing the question of the best age to learn a second language, Tochon (2009) indicated that it should begin “as early as possible. At such early age, the language aptitude is the highest” (p. 653).

Advantages and Challenges of Dual Language Programs

Advantages of Dual Language Programs

Regarding dual language immersion programs, many studies relate to the impact of the program on English language learners in comparison to non-native speakers who are seeking to acquire a second language (Alanis & Rodriguez, 2008; Block, 2012; Hopewell, 2011; Varghese & Park, 2010). School districts such as those included in the studies of Alanis and Rodriguez (2008) and Gomez et al. (2005) have found the two-way 50/50 model to be very appealing to address the needs of an English language learning population as well as a population that is interested in second language acquisition. In addition, Block’s (2012) findings demonstrated that Latino students who enrolled in dual language programs experienced high academic achievement, full bilingualism, and cultural competence. In areas where a strong demand for a language program exists but the area lacks sufficient enrollment of native language speakers to fill the program, a one-way 90/10 immersion program becomes an option for the schools to consider. In the 90/10 model, structure and engagement levels are different than in 50/50 programs, yet the same goals exist of encouraging students to become bilingual (Lee & Jeong, 2013; Whiting & Feinauer, 2011).

One advantage of dual language programs is the strong influence they can have on the academic success of learners (Alanis & Rodriguez, 2008; Block, 2012; Fleckenstein et al., 2019;

Steele et al., 2017; Nicolay & Poncelot, 2012). As an added advantage, dual language involvement further bridges social relationships among peers and among diverse groups at the school with differing cultures and languages (Block, 2012). Externally, family and community interactions are enhanced as command of the language grows, which helps maintain cultural identity of the family and community (Block, 2012). Alanis and Rodriguez (2008) discussed an arrangement in a small school setting of approximately 300 students. The school operates a 50/50 model and is open to both native English and Spanish speakers. Within their study, state assessment data indicated ELL passing rates increased as program involvement progressed over time. This particular program began in 1995 and demonstrated continued success across populations.

Existing research has demonstrated how bilingualism encourages students to engage with diversity, social justice, and cognitive development. Varghese and Park (2010) found that the global aspect of bilingual education is a way to enhance the school experience. Dual language programs encouraged students to think differently, to be more accepting of diversity, and to be more open-minded to new learning. In addition, immigrant communities gain a stronger sense of belonging when students from these communities participate in the bilingual programs. Varghese and Park (2010) noted, “the benefits of bilingual education have long been characterized in terms of advantages for a global economy” (p. 74). As the world becomes more globally interconnected through technology and international business, the ability to communicate in more than one language is an advantage in the workplace. Speaking two languages can allow professionals to build positive relationships with colleagues and provide a better and more inclusive level of customer service. Further, in applying for a job in a competitive environment

the ability to communicate in another language can set a candidate apart from others who are not bilingual (Lopez, 2013; Tochon, 2009; Whiting & Feinauer, 2011).

The academic benefits of immersion programs—whether involvement is with a one-way 90/10 model or a two-way 50/50 model—are evident in studies such as that of Alanis and Rodriguez (2008), where students in a two-way dual language program consistently outperformed their peers on state assessments. These researchers examined state testing data where ELLs outperformed peers on state and district averages in the setting of their study where a dual language program was offered. As ELL students progressed through the fifth grade, the data over time showed continuous improvement above their peer group across the state and district. Likewise, in the mixed-methods study of Block (2012), the sample included students enrolled across three 90/10 models. Parents and students participated in surveys and questionnaires. The feedback reflected favorably on the programs, especially for populations of Latinos in the Southern California district where the positive impact on intergenerational relationships and student engagement were quite clear when these same areas were compared to mainstream peers.

Effective dual language programs provide a balance of support for learners reflected in both academic and social-emotional areas of need. One particular benefit that scholars have consistently identified is that students develop a strong command of both languages and a deeper understanding of diverse cultures as well as that of their own (Lopez, 2013; Whiting & Feinauer, 2011). Hopewell (2011) documented that a “hybrid learning environment increases the likelihood that the totality of a student’s background knowledge will be activated in the service language and the literacy acquisition” (p. 606). Referencing the study by Smith and Arnot-Hopffer (1998), Varghese and Park (2010) asserted that dual language programs can have a

“powerful impact on immigrant communities and student learning” (p. 74). In these studies, relationships improved as bilingual abilities improved. Communication with family members increased outside of school and the relationships with teachers, school staff, and peers increased in the school setting.

Tochon (2009) presented a comprehensive study regarding program types, optimal age to learn a second language, and short- and long-term program benefits. This author cited several reasons why a person would consider learning a second language. Topping the list was “increasing global understanding,” as “language learners step inside the mind and context of another culture. Intercultural sensitivity builds trust and understanding, can bridge the gap between peoples, and promote peace and international trade” (p. 656). Some of the other benefits to students include improving employment potential, increasing native language ability, and sharpening cognitive and life skills. In addition, learning a language increased chances of entry into college or graduate school, appreciating international literature, music, and film, and making travel more feasible and enjoyable. Increasing the understanding of oneself and one’s culture, as well as making lifelong friends, were presented as enhanced benefits (Tochon, 2009).

General Challenges of Language Immersion Programs

Across models, teachers of students in a bilingual setting face the unique challenge of developing students’ abilities to read and write in two languages. While the brain determines meaning through context and language rules, learners also draw upon their personal experiences, their developed abilities and understandings rooted in their first language. When learning a second language, constant processing occurs within the brain to make connections with the new content to retain its meaning and importance. The ability to think deeply about and apply class

activities requires the development of critical thinking skills unique to the bilingual brain (Hopewell, 2011).

It takes a well-prepared educator who has the capability to recognize and measure students' abilities in their native language in order to provide appropriate instruction at a meaningful level in the second, target language of acquisition. The critical aspect of data collection is with the accurate reporting of progress. Hopewell (2011) argued that the restriction of native language learning opportunities limits learning and reduces the access to learning for some students. The support of a "hybrid language environment increases that the totality of a student's background knowledge will be activated in the service language and literacy acquisition" (Hopewell, 2011, p. 607). To avoid limitations, the environment needs to be rich with language resources in both languages and have an educator who is skilled in language development in both languages for success with second language acquisition.

In a one-way 90/10 immersion program, second language learners in primary grades do not receive explicit instruction in their native language across the domains of literacy for their country (e.g., as in English in the United States). This issue can have a significant negative influence upon letter-sound relationships, which is a large component of early literacy assessments. Most standardized state assessments measure early childhood language skills in English. Outcomes on these assessments tend to reflect poor outcomes for a dual language student in native language literacy domains, particularly with phonemic awareness because the student is being exclusively taught the language skills of the second language. Hopewell (2011) suggested that "the process of constructing and extracting meaning from the text cannot, and should not, be relegated exclusively to the domain of the language of power or prestige" (p. 604). In other words, second language learners should not necessarily fall into a category of low

performing when they are able to demonstrate literacy skills in the native language—or, in the case of immersion, in the language that they are acquiring.

In many instances, the early childhood literacy measures and language monitoring assessments used by teachers are administered in English. When considering that a 90/10 immersion program may not provide direct instruction in English until later grades in the program (i.e., typically not until second grade), the data on English language measures may reflect poorly on the program. In Sanders's (2018) study on literacy development in immersion programs, the author noted that some bilingual educators "lack assessment tools needed to accurately evaluate reading development in emerging bilinguals" (p. 4). Further, Sanders (2018) pointed out that "with a failure to determine reading abilities across languages, monolingual assessment structure places emergent bilingual students at a disadvantage" (p. 4). This scenario may exist in settings with 90/10 programs, where there is an absence of direct English instruction in the foundation years, yet the required assessment tool measures skill mastery in English, not in the language they have received direct instruction.

Parents considering involvement in dual language programs are essentially taking a "leap of faith" to see long-term benefits as measured by state testing programs. Alanis and Rodriguez (2008) examined the data of fifth graders who had been part of a dual language program in place for over a decade. This data indicated that the students had outperformed their peers in areas of reading, math, and science. Similar findings in studies by Steele et al. (2017), Fleckenstein et al. (2019) and Gomez et al. (2005) indicated the long-term strengths of test score outcomes for students involved in an immersion program, yet parents may not see such results in their child's early years in the program.

As an additional issue, some individuals assert—per a tenet of interest convergence—that white parents only engage with a dual language program in order for their child(ren) to hopefully benefit from it (Morales & Maravilla, 2019; Palmer, 2010). In some instances, student success is attributed to the fact that they come from well-to-do families. The findings of Zheng’s (2020) study indicated that more work needs to be done around ensuring more diversity within programs, especially in local community schools where the program serves only a limited, mostly white population and the implementation of a dual language initiative can possibly bring about tension in the community. Zheng cited the need to ensure that the student population involved with a program is a good representation of the community it serves.

Rubenstein-Avila (2002) presented the complexities of an effective two-way 50/50 immersion program through the portrait provided in her study. Although the program maintained good enrollment, it encountered some challenges. For example, it was difficult to recruit an effective bilingual staff who possessed a deep cultural understanding of both the primary and target language taught in the classroom. This study further presented instances where students resisted the use of the second language in social contexts and when in the classroom; rather, they communicated in their native language instead of only using the target language. These instances diminished the immersive environment where they were supposed to benefit from learning the new target language within a more meaningful, immersed context.

An alluring aspect of dual language involvement is that it is typically taught by a native speaker of the target language, which allows the teacher to bring a rich cultural experience to the classroom. As a clear advantage over having a local teacher whose native language is English, the native language speaking teacher would more likely be in a better position to help students develop a deeper appreciation for the contextual meaning and language nuances (e.g., accents) as

they develop their language skills. A challenge that Rubenstein-Avila (2002) noted is the question of whether a school staff and administration can truly embrace all that comes with an immersive language setting towards providing the greatest benefit to students. This author pointed to limitations with the variety of languages offered and cited Franquiz and de la Luz Reyes (1998), who stated that “the task of affirming cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity can and should be embedded in the curriculum from early grades” (p. 85). Another challenge is finding sufficient native speakers to teach in the program.

Parental Choice of and Involvement in Immersion Programs

Regardless of socioeconomic status, parents have a wide range of influence regarding their child’s learning choices, including whether to enroll their child in academic enrichment programs such as language immersion. Pertinent to my study of the perspectives of parents whose children have long-term involvement in a dual language program, previous researchers have examined why parents have chosen to engage in the programs for such extended durations. Central factors included acceptance of diversity, future educational and employment opportunities, connection to family heritage, and ability to communicate with more people (Block, 2012; Ee, 2018; Giacchino-Baker & Piller, 2006; Lee & Jeong, 2013; Lao, 2004; Lopez, 2013; Parkes & Ruth, 2011; Shannon & Milian, 2002; Tochon, 2009; Whiting & Feinauer, 2011).

Parents are influential in dual language programs. Jongeyon Ee (2018) examined dual language programs for Asian-English students in seven elementary schools in Los Angeles, California. These two-way language programs offered Korean as the partner language with English. Settings ranged from large city to small city and low to high rates of poverty, as well as

a wide range of percentages of English language learners. Ee examined parental perspectives on their reasons for enrolling their children in a dual language program at a specific school, finding:

With respect to parents' expectations, the primary reasons can be categorized as follows: developing bilingual abilities, increasing future employment opportunities, getting prepared for a global society, enhancing cognitive abilities, preserving home culture and language, strengthening ethnic identity, translating for the family, increasing cross-cultural understanding, and accessing better academic opportunities. (p. 692)

In other studies focusing on Korean dual language programs in California (Ee, 2017; Lee & Jeong, 2013), the researchers found similar reasons for parents choosing them, including their hopes that their children would develop bilingual and global skills and experience future opportunities with schooling and employment.

Lopez (2013) explored how two-way 50/50 dual language programs addressed learning gaps with Spanish-speaking students who were English language learners. In her discussion, she noted, "several nuances related to the larger themes that contribute to a deeper understanding of the parents' desires and priorities" (p. 222) for dual language involvement. Families with more financial means tended to express their desire for recreational travel and hoped that their children would score higher on college entrance exams. While the Spanish-first mothers did discuss the importance of college, they did not mention standardized achievement tests that are often instrumental in college admittance (Lopez, 2013).

Parent Perceptions of Immersion Language Programs

Positive Parent Perceptions

Parents' desires to involve their children in a language immersion program may be rooted in their own patterns of behavior and social interactions. Within the school community social

context, parents learn about the reputations of schools, programs, teachers, and leaders. When parents share similar positive views, beliefs, and opinions about a person or program, they may favor actively engaging their child in those favored events, activities, and academic programs. There seems to be a group of parent leaders and followers, as Palmer (2010) described. Whether a parent who chooses to involve their child in an immersion program can identify specific reasons for that involvement or whether they have “heard good things” about the dual language program, long-term involvement comes down to the parent’s perceptions and opinions because dual language programs are most typically programs of parental choice.

Across studies, there are quite a few similarities between the key factors that keep families interested and sustain their involvement in programs. Their child’s potential to become bilingual and bi-literate and to have deeper cross-cultural connections as well as acceptance of diversity are chief reasons that parents describe (Block, 2012; Call et al., 2018; Ee, 2018; Whiting & Feinauer, 2011). For example, Block (2012) examined the experiences of Latino students in a two-way 50/50 program. The participating parents indicated that because of their child’s involvement in the program, children grew closer to their Spanish-speaking families and community members.

Other factors that attract and sustain parental interest in dual language programs include academic achievement as measured by standardized testing, cognitive development, enriched educational experiences, and extended learning opportunities (Block, 2012; Call et al., 2018; Ee, 2018; Kavanagh & Hickey, 2013; Lopez, 2013). Among the common reasons for immersion program engagement, Lopez (2013) explained, “While the mothers cited aspirations and increased opportunities for their children as perhaps the most common motivating factor for

enrolling them in [two-way immersion program], many also commented on cognitive benefits their children would receive being bilingual and biliterate” (p. 218).

Several of these same studies identified future implications for students as a factor in parents choosing and maintaining involvement in these programs. While some parents may experience program benefits right away at the elementary foundation level, they optimistically look ahead to the secondary level and beyond with anticipation of continued future success. The long-term benefits that are associated with a language immersion program include better employment opportunities or careers necessitating the ability to communicate in more than one language (Block, 2012; Ee, 2018; Lopez, 2013; Whiting & Feinauer, 2011). In Southern California, Korean and non-Korean families involved in two-way immersion language programs expressed positive—but distinct—perspectives towards program involvement (Ee, 2018). Korean families valued the maintenance of their cultural heritage and racial identity. This differed from the non-Korean families, who valued the diverse student population and the encouragement of respect of various cultures.

Negative Parent Perceptions and Challenges

In contrast to favorable aspects parents found within dual language programs, previous studies have reflected some of the less-than-favorable components. Parents who are native English speakers have expressed concerns with how their child would learn English while also learning a second language (Giacchino-Baker, 2006; Kavanagh & Hickey, 2013; Lopez, 2013; Reese et al., 2006). Equity issues were highlighted in several studies (Palmer, 2010; Rubinstein-Avila, 2002; Whiting & Feinauer, 2011), specifically regarding the location of dual language programs that required families to provide transportation thus creating a hardship to those

parents who had limited ability to transport their child. In addition, most programs were limited in the ability to support students requiring special education services.

Skeptical parents who are not quite ready to take a risk with becoming involved with an immersion language program may be frightened right from the start, as typical programs require a multiple-year commitment for optimal benefits to emerge. In times of uncertain budgets and changing economies, worries about program sustainability and continuation at the secondary level are valid concerns presented in a series of research studies (Giacchino-Baker, 2006; Lopez, 2013; Rubinstein-Avila, 2002). Kavanagh and Hickey (2013) and Lopez (2013) acknowledged parents who grapple with the fact that they themselves lack the target language skills their child is learning. This barrier makes them feel as though they are unable to help their child at home or help the teacher in the classroom. Barriers to students speaking and applying the new language in the home is an area addressed by Giacchino-Baker and Piller (2006), who indicated that the lack of home support could contribute to anxiety about the child learning the new language.

Conclusion

In this literature review, I considered research related to the nature of language immersion programs, including their advantages and challenges. I also investigated literature concerning the relationship among socioeconomics, parental involvement, and participation in dual language programs, as well as the important aspect of parent perceptions of these programs. It is clear that there are many benefits parents perceive and actually experience with immersion language programs, such as those presented in the findings of studies by Alanis and Rodriguez (2008), Block (2012), and Giacchino-Baker and Piller (2006). There are also negative perceptions of parents, including the factors that contributed to parents avoiding and not

engaging in a dual language program at all, as they did not feel it was best for their child (Call et al., 2018; Wesely & Baig, 2012).

My study's narrow focus on parent perspectives regarding a one-way 90/10 dual language model differs from existing research. Few scholars have specifically considered one-way 90/10 models such as those of Mandarin immersion programs by Bucknam and Hood (2020), Sung (2020), and Zheng (2020). This study added to the body of emerging research on one-way 90/10 dual language models.

CHAPTER III: METHODS

In this research study, I aimed to understand parents' perceptions of their children's experiences after extended engagement in a language immersion program. More pointedly, I interviewed individuals whose children began schooling in a one-way 90/10 immersion program at the elementary level and who have continued with dual language into the secondary level. The 90/10 program design involves one group of students where the new target language is not the same as their native language. Students spend 90% of their day immersed in the new language and 10% in their native language. Unlike a two-way 50/50 program, the 90/10 program is not for students who speak the language the program delivers. Research studies centering on one-way 90/10 programs are not as abundant as studies specific to two-way 50/50 programs; therefore, my study contributed to filling that void.

In this study, I examined parental experiences related to their child's consistent participation in the immersion program from elementary school into the secondary level. Additionally, I asked parents to include successes and concerns they may have experienced along the way, and whether those successes and concerns were anticipated or unexpected. I further elicited details related to the experiences their child has had in the program and how those experiences align or differ with their expectations as a parent when they originally enrolled their child in the program. Feedback from the parents in this study regarding their families' direct experiences, successes, and disappointments facilitate a greater understanding of one-way language immersion program involvement and inform school administrators who are implementing this dual language program model. By providing a catalog of parent perceptions and experiences, the findings of this study may aid administrators in understanding the power of parent perspectives as a tool to avoid problematic situations and as an opportunity to capitalize

on the strengths of immersion programs. Outcomes of my study presents an opportunity for school and district leaders to consider practical change towards a stronger program.

Pilot Study

The pilot collection project entailed conducting three structured interviews of parents with a child enrolled in a one-way 90/10 language immersion program. The children of two participants entered the program during the first-grade year, and the other began during the kindergarten year. Two of the participants had been involved with a previous interview on this topic. This allowed me to have more detailed follow-up with them, yielding richer results.

I organized the pilot study interview as a semi-structured protocol in order to guide the conversation with a more natural flow. My rationale of having the questions developed into categories was to allow the participants to know where we were in the sequence of my questions. Progressing from one segment to the next during interviews provided an organized structure where responses fit into a more defined context. This further created a sense of maximizing time to be certain that I captured the experiences of participants accurately and the segmentation allowed that to occur. Another goal was to maintain awareness of my positionality and avoid adding my own commentary reflecting my firsthand experiences and observations. As a principal of a school with a one-way 90/10 immersion program, and as a parent of a child who was involved in this specific type of program, I was cognizant of my own perceptions and experiences on this topic. Further, my personal viewpoints may have differed and could have potentially influenced responses to align with my views. Therefore, I gave care to avoid leading participants and I did not share my personal beliefs, perspectives, experiences, or explanations that may have nudged a parent to provide a response to fit within a specific frame.

Adjustments to My Study Based on Pilot Data Collection

The findings of the pilot study prompted me to adjust the interview questions to inquire more about the children's cultural experiences in addition to learning a new language. I learned that my attempts to keep the conversation moving may have been affirming what I wanted to hear from the parents or even challenged their experiences, possibly making them more guarded about sharing their insights with me. To obtain rich insights, I decided it would be best to relate generally and not bring my personal or professional experiences and observations into the interview to affirm or counter those experiences of the participant. It was challenging to keep commentary of my own experience to myself; it almost felt like I was hiding something if I was not affirming a participant's reply when it aligned with aspects of my research or my direct experiences. I realized that my desire and ability to relate to the participants allowed me to capture the most powerful components of the process: the participants' perceptions and experiences.

Reflecting upon the structure that I developed to apply to this study's interview protocol, I found myself using the segments to keep the transitions progressing from one part to the next. I liked the powerful sense of direction and organization that segmenting the protocol provided me, as it seemed logical and respected the time of the participants. The experience before I used the segmented interview process felt choppy, unorganized, and somewhat robotic. It seemed that I would ask the question, relate to the response, and then move on to the next question. Another method that I employed to pull more out of the participants was by giving attention to body language. I listened to the tone in their voice and picked up on areas they were particularly enthusiastic about. I also prompted them to talk more about that subject. Similarly, when they

expressed hesitation or a lower voice tone, this indicated that they were having difficulty talking about a topic; thus, I would rephrase or revisit the topic later in the interview.

Through two of my interviews, I learned more about how the experience was different for each of their children in many respects. The commonly identified benefit for both was with the value and rewards of bilingualism and a rich cultural experience. Parents were concerned that the individual personalities of their children might have impacted how receptive they were going to be with handling the challenges of the program. For example, one of the students had special needs related to sensory issues and attention deficit, which naturally prompted parent concern regarding engagement with a second language program at that particular time. Through the work of the teacher, parents, and child, the outcome was positive. This is also an example of an area that was difficult for the parent to discuss, and I needed to adjust the pace of the interview to capture the concern that the parent was sharing. While the concerns of the parents would have been a similar concern in a traditional classroom, they perceived the challenges to be more magnified in the program and viewed as possible barriers to success. The program is for everyone to have the chance to participate—or at least the opportunity to access and try, despite reservations that may exist.

I continued to reflect on the identified target group of parents to become involved with this study by realizing that I should not expect that all topics are easy to talk about and to anticipate that uneasiness may emerge at any point during the data collection process. I further considered how perspectives and experiences may have changed from the elementary level to the secondary level programming, along with how consistent engagement informs those perceptions and experiences up to that particular point of program involvement. Through the pilot interview experience, I perceived that the responses became more elaborate and informative with those

parents who had multiple children in the program, where there were siblings at the secondary level as well as those in primary grades. I considered this factor when designing the data collection and analysis procedures for the actual dissertation study.

Research Questions

One main research question and three subquestions guided this study:

1. What are parents' perceptions of their children's experiences in a 90/10 dual language immersion program that began in elementary school and continued into secondary school?
 - A. What do parents describe as the most positive aspects of the program?
 - B. What aspects do parents believe might be changed or improved?
 - C. How do their children's experiences in the program compare to the anticipated outcomes that originally prompted the parents to enroll their children in the program?

Through participants' responses to semi-structured interview questions, I gained insight into parental perceptions of their child's extended participation in a 90/10 dual language program that specifically began at the elementary level and extended to the secondary level where the child remains engaged. I anticipated discovering insight into parents' ideas about challenges and successes related to their child's education experience in the program.

Methodology

The research methodology was basic qualitative research using interviews as the primary approach to collecting data from willing participants. As described in Merriam and Tisdell (2016) qualitative researchers are "interested in how meaning is constructed, how people make sense of their lives and their worlds" (p. 25). In this research, I focused on understanding the experiences and perspectives of secondary level parents who have children in a dual language

program that originated at the elementary level in a one-way 90/10 model. Using a semi-structured interview protocol, my curiosities allowed the conversation to flow and the participants to provide insight into areas that I may not have considered. As my interview protocol developed and peers provided feedback to me, I narrowed and adjusted those questions to become more open-ended to allow for more of the participants' insights to emerge.

Study Context

As I discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, two types of dual language program models are options for schools that seek to implement them: the two-way 50/50 model or the one-way 90/10 model. Because program model structures are vastly different from one another and limited research specific to the one-way 90/10 model is available, I designed my study to investigate the specific perspectives of parents of children who began and continued their dual language experience in a one-way 90/10 program. A typical dual language program in North Carolina can have a state waiver to have a class size of 24.

Selecting a study location of an established program in operation for at least 6 to 8 years offered me the greatest pool of families whose experiences were not overly impacted by COVID-19, where the program structures/experiences were altered from the typical mode of delivery—that is, their children would have spent the majority of their time in the program in face-to-face learning. Targeting my focus in this way ensured that I received responses from parents who had been in the program for several years and could offer additional insight and experiences with benefits they have had along their child's dual language journey. Gaining feedback from parents revealed areas for improvement that school leaders might consider as they prepare new cohorts that continue to matriculate to the secondary level.

Setting

To capture parents' perspectives specific to a one-way 90/10 program, I identified one school district that offers a one-way 90/10 language program across the elementary and secondary levels. The Shady Lake School District (a pseudonym) offers the program across the multiple attendance zones within the district to provide access to families across the entire district. Each individual attendance zone offers the same pathways for language learning based on the needs of that school community. While most of the zones offer a full 90/10 program, two zones support their populations with a 50/50 program. More specific to the attendance zone I identified for my study, all 3 schools offer the 90/10 model, including Greenfield Elementary as the feeder school to Bluefield Middle and Brown High thereafter (all school names are pseudonyms).

Greenfield Elementary has a robust program with high demand. Annually, there is a lottery drawing for seats in the program among applicants who live both in the attendance zone and outside of it. Priority is given to families residing in the attendance zone and those with siblings already in the program. Greenfield Elementary was the first school in the Shady Lakes District to offer the dual language program, before five other schools in the district implemented programs over subsequent years. Greenfield Elementary has been recognized at the local, state, and national level for its language and global studies program.

Bluefield Middle receives 90/10 language immersion program students from Greenfield Elementary as well as two other elementary schools in this attendance zone. It was the first middle school to figure out how an immersion program could thrive in the structures middle school is built upon, including block schedules and a wide range of electives. Students at this level of the program engage with the adopted language through a global studies curriculum they

adopted to support continuation of dual language. Finally, Brown High School receives dual language students from Bluefield Middle, its feeder school. It was the first high school in the district to design the program at that level for dual language students. The structure at the high school becomes a bit more complex with required credits and semester course offerings. Students in the immersion program at Brown are able to place into advanced language classes and earn their interpreter license as part of their experience.

Participants

The participants in this study were parents of students who are involved in a specific model of a dual language program at the secondary level. The aim of targeting this group was to deeply understand parents' perspectives with the one-way 90/10 immersion program and what actual experiences are impactful for their child over the continuum of program involvement. All possible parents in the pool received the same invitation to participate, to which interested individuals responded (see Appendix A for invitation flyer).

Recruiting participants for this study began by contacting parents through the Parent Immersion Group that operates independent of the district. This informal group has existed for over a decade and was formed by parents. It grows annually as new cohorts of students begin the program. Each cohort group has a parent lead or moderator within a virtual platform that is private to its members. Participation is exclusive to families with children involved in 90/10 language immersion within a specific school region. I accessed this network through social media platforms and listservs, through which I distributed opportunities to participate via information flyers with my contact information. This approach was more likely to yield a greater pool of interested participants than following alternate paths such as distributing information through specific schools.

I distributed an infographic flyer to invite potential participants into this study who have children in at least one of the two secondary schools in the identified region. The flyer briefly explained the study and how parents could participate. Due to safety considerations associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, I extended opportunities to participate through virtual platforms. The invitation flyer elaborated on how parents could contribute to my study through virtual interviews that recognize current COVID-19 safety protocols in our area and limit personal interactions. My contact information was included for the participants to express interest directly to me by a set date indicated in the flyer. As the participation interest window closed, I assessed the number of potential participants and decided whether I needed to recruit more or develop a plan to select from the responses received. I then communicated directly with parents to arrange the interview time and platform. Each participant was responsive to the options and preferred the virtual meeting arrangement. While an in-person arrangement would have been more personal, the familiarity and comfort of virtual interviews remained quite personal and valuable. I provide a profile of each of the participants in Chapter 4.

Data Collection

Interview Design

The method that I used to collect my data was a carefully designed interview including questions divided out into four categories related directly to my research questions. The organization of the interview enabled discussion of a variety of program aspects through open-ended questions intended to elicit parental insights, perspectives, and experiences. Categorizing questions allowed me to follow a logical progression through the interview and helped the participants frame their responses in a more concise context. Further, this structure helped me to better organize the analysis of the interviews. The questions prepared in advance also allow for

open-ended responses to capture the voice of the participants. As Merriam and Tisdell (2016) described, a semi-structured format allows the interviewer to ask specific questions and obtain specific information but also to remain open-ended and flexible in order to obtain opinions, perceptions, and rationales from the interviewed parents. The interview protocol is included in Appendix B.

The interview design helped me with having a cutoff point if needed. In the event that a deep discussion occurred in the first segment and time ran long, I had the ability to request a follow-up interview and ask remaining questions at another time. I also anticipated that I could have experienced the opposite, where a participant was unwilling to participate with elaborate responses. In this case, the design would have enabled me to conclude that interview and recruit another participant to provide richer feedback.

Data Analysis Strategies

To make sense out of the collected data, I applied strategies described by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), including engaging in simultaneous analysis as I conducted interviews. By doing so, I grew with the data throughout the time of active research with constant reflection, comparing and contrasting to contribute to the organization of the information. Through the “action research cycle of plan, act, observe [and] reflect” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 235), I considered themes that emerged in my pilot interviews to predetermine some codes to help me analyze my collected data. For example, patterns emerged in the pilot study regarding student work habits, homework, and friendships, which I used as codes as I analyzed the interview transcripts. I organized the codes into categories before identifying themes. Through coding, I expected to identify three to seven themes related to the experiences of parents. These themes represented the study’s findings.

Positionality

My positionality affected my study in both positive and negative ways. Positively, it helped me reach participants and have a relatable role as principal of a school operating a dual language program. I further view my experiences as a commonality that I have with these parents; thus, I may have an easier time understanding some of the situations they may have experienced that are unique and common to immersion programs. I also recognized, however, that my experiences and roles with immersion programs have shaped my view that these programs are positive and generate successful outcomes. My experiences could be quite different from those of the participating parents. I needed to be prepared for the reality that my experiences were not going to be the same as those of others. My direct experiences over time with most all aspects of my study was another area that I viewed as a challenge. Knowing how programs should operate and how a principal may need to provide support or resources that are needed could have put me in a position where I began critiquing program structures that are in place, when the purpose of the study was instead to understand parents' perceptions about their experiences.

In addition, I considered my own perspective as a parent of a child who has progressed through an elementary and secondary immersion program and another child who learned Spanish outside of an immersion program at the secondary level. Disclosing my personal involvement with language programs with the interview participants was a relatable approach. This allowed the participant to provide responses that might include program lingo or situations unique to the dual language experience that are sometimes difficult to explain to someone who is not involved with a dual language program. Some interview data may reflect perceptions and experience similar to my own, while other data may reflect differences. Maintaining a reflexivity journal

(Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) helped me to capture those surprises, connections, and contradictions as they occurred during the course of my interviews. I elaborate on my use of a reflexivity journal in the next section.

Trustworthiness

I promoted the trustworthiness of this study through different strategies. For example, when I disclosed my active level of engagement in dual language programs as a school principal and parent to participants, I offered transparency. Sharing my level of dual language collaborations at the local, state, and national level further informed participants of my level of engagement. Next, regarding ethics, I followed all protocols for conducting research. I provided interview participants with additional background regarding what was driving this research, including my experience as a school leader, my involvement as a provider of professional development, and my collaborations across global school networks. Sharing my desire to better understand parent perspectives helps to make the school program stronger, as underscored in my purpose.

Independent reflection is an important aspect of the study that I engaged in as I collected data. Maintaining a reflexivity journal helped me to collect and note my thoughts throughout the data collection. I maintained a record of the thoughts I had after interviews and as I reflected during the data collection process. For example, in marginal notes in my journal I starred areas of interest, such as when Alex talked about her child having the experience of a native Spanish speaker saying her child spoke better than some native speakers. Similarly, when I noted the thought while interviewing Holly in the margin – “what is bilingual – English to Spanish or Spanish to English – same?” This notation informed my study recommendations to consider the concept of bilingualism being touted as a good thing from a perspective of privilege if the

transition is from English to Spanish, but a possible negative connotation as English Second Language learner if Spanish to English. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explain that reflexivity relates to the integrity of the researcher. This means that as a researcher, I would recognize how my own attitudes and dispositions relate to my area of study. Open-mindedness was important, and I remained willing to accept individuals' opinions, their ideals, and experiences—even if these differed from my own ideals, thoughts, and perceptions. This approach to trustworthiness meant that I collected information and reported the findings in an ethical manner.

Finally, the support and guidance from my dissertation committee and chair consistently kept my focus on the areas of work that I needed to elaborate upon and describe more precisely. Collaborating with peer reviewers was a further important strategy in which I remained grounded in my work while bringing a fresh outside perspective to my study. Having peers review segments and provide me feedback helped me to identify possible issues of interpretation or bring more clarity to my written work. For example, a colleague in my graduate program reviewed my sequence of questions. She helped me to make it more personal by inserting the question, “tell me about your child” just a general open question to give the parent that opportunity to celebrate their child and their accomplishments. Another peer reviewer commented, “I could also tell that you were more comfortable with Chapter 2 than Chapter 1, as your mistakes seemed to fade as you became more confident in your talking points - your passion truly lies in Chapter 2 as you are stressing the joys and concerns of dual immersion.” This allowed me to look closer at the way I composed Chapter 2 to bring more of that energy and clarity forward as I revised my writing, particularly in Chapter 1. As Merriam and Tisdell (2016) indicated, peer reviewers should be aware of their positionality and possess a general understanding of the nature of the study in order to offer feedback on the nature of the study.

Limitations

There are several limitations that impacted this study. While there are different dual language program models, I focused on just one model: the one-way 90/10 model. The scope did not include those who began immersion in a two-way 50/50 model. Additional limitations included narrowing data collection to a specific geographical location where students attend one of two secondary schools that are fed by elementary schools that provide a one-way 90/10 program. Narrowing the focus to 90/10 programs limited the number of respondents available in this group. Finally, the small number of participants reduced the generalizability of the study findings.

The electronic transcription program was a challenge for me as it did not yield scripts of the recorded interviews that were completely accurate. They also had unusual time stamps or did not identify a shift in who was speaking. While reviewing the data, I also had to have the audio recording playing in order to catch errors and to capture the voice of the parent more accurately. Without specification given to who was speaking, I had to frequently return to the recordings to verify. I initially thought that I would be able to take notes during interviews and while doing so I thought I could make a notation of the time into the interview so I could easily locate it in the transcripts. I quickly learned that this would not work as I thought it would. Right away this strategy was a challenge for me because it was hard for me to focus on the interview while keeping it flowing naturally – without frequently pausing – interrupting the flow to make notations. I should have known this from my auditory learning style anyway, but I thought I would be really organized and able to use this strategy. While that was the initial problem, I was glad I stopped doing it because I soon learned that the times I noted did not align, not even closely align, with the transcript time stamps. In this experience it worked out better than I

thought because I was able to listen to the recordings over again, and by pausing the recordings, I was able to jot down much better notes. This was much more helpful and while it was rather time consuming, I believe it made my quotes much more accurate and more meaningfully included.

Another limitation I was faced with was having participants who had an experience at the secondary level where COVID-19 restrictions were not a factor. Situations of school closure and remote learning changes the school experience for everyone and dual-language was no different. I wanted to ensure the study included experiences where COVID-19 was not a factor with key areas including school transitions, varied teachers and access opportunities. Students entering middle or High school in the 21-22 school year had a completely different experience that particular year that would not compare to typical experiences. What this meant for this study was that I could not narrow the focus exclusively to students in middle school or to those in high school. I had to keep the option open to include participants from all levels of secondary learning levels 6-12 to capture the widest range of experiences. This was not something I thought of when planning, but as potential participants responded, I realized I needed to have candidates who had with at least two years of middle or high school experience in the program to avoid atypical situations related to COVID-19.

Challenges

There was a central challenge with conducting my research during a pandemic: the COVID-19 virus presents barriers to face-to-face collaboration. The state, national, and global mandates on social distancing creates a challenge for in-person interviews to occur. As the world was changing for an undetermined amount of time, there were delays and reorganizations to my data collection and analysis approaches. The shift I made was to move to a virtual pathway for the interviews to occur through online applications such as Skype, Google Hangout, Zoom, or

FaceTime. The quality of this transition varied greatly depending on the access and technology skills of the participants. My role was more flexible in adapting to the preferences of the participants.

Conclusion

In my study to understand parent perceptions of their children's experiences in an immersion program at the secondary level, I anticipated gaining deeper insight into the motivational aspects of maintaining their active involvement since elementary school. I hoped to explore the misperceptions, challenges, and aspects parents would change if they could. I was looking forward to hearing about surprises, hidden positives, and extended accomplishments. I was further intrigued with the potential outcomes of this study to develop stronger approaches to promote and support schools that offer dual language programs to their community.

Additionally, the ways in which I was able to apply the outcomes of this study to the context of my current work enhanced my understanding of parent perspectives. The findings may support administrators at the secondary level in considering what a parent may be looking for in the transition to that level. The findings can inform school leaders on aspects they might anticipate as perceived areas of parent concern that could be proactively addressed as new groups enter the secondary level. Finally, the significance extends to the collaborations I have with my principal colleagues and teachers on ways to enhance the experiences of students through parental involvement and consideration of their thoughts, ideas, opinions, and values.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

The participants in this study responded to an invitation flyer that was shared with a dual language program parent group. Through a series of interviews, I collected information that I was somewhat anticipating but that I also found to be surprising and that challenged me in thought provoking ways. In alignment with my study, I was seeking insight into parents' experiences with their long-term involvement with a dual language program. My primary question that drove my study was: What are parents' perceptions of their children's experiences in a 90/10 dual language immersion program that began in elementary school and continued into secondary school? To delve deeper, I also asked the three subquestions below:

- What do parents describe as the most positive aspects of the program?
- What aspects do parents believe might be changed or improved?
- How do their children's experiences in the program compare to the anticipated outcomes that originally prompted the parents to enroll their children in the program?

A unique component of my study was that I sought to include participants who began the dual language journey in a 90/10 elementary program. This is significant because many existing studies focus on the impact of 50/50 dual language programs (Ee, 2017; Ee, 2018; Lao, 2004; Parkes & Ruth, 2011). In essence, those studies focused on the impact made among two populations of learners: nonnative language speakers who were learning a new language and non-native English speakers who were learning English. While researchers like Block (2012) and Whiting and Feinauer (2011) included awareness of the 90/10 model in their respective studies, their studies were rooted in data collection from 50/50 model schools. By focusing solely on a 90/10 program, I hope to add new insights to current scholarship. Moreover, when it comes to specialized language programs, successful student outcomes matched with parental support are

critical to ensuring appropriate funding and staffing. By sharing how parents perceive key aspects of a 90/10 dual language program, I hope to help school leaders to identify successful components of program implementation and strengthen areas of concern.

I begin this chapter by providing brief descriptive profiles of each participant. Following the profiles, I present the findings as five key themes I identified after data collection. To elevate parent voices, I reveal the thoughts and sentiments of participants through quotes, examples, and connections in order to support each theme. Finally, I conclude the chapter with a brief summary.

Participant Profiles

As detailed in Chapter III, participants of this study reside in a medium sized community in central North Carolina. Their children currently either attend Bluefield Middle School or Brown High School within the Shady Lake School District (pseudonyms). Their children began their dual language experience at the district's 90/10 program in Greenfield Elementary School (a pseudonym). All participants except one works a full-time professional job. One of the participants is a single parent while all others are married. All participants had a college level education with four having an earned bachelor's degree, four with an earned master's degree, one with post graduate studies and one with a doctoral degree. Each parent had students who were currently attending school at the secondary level in either middle or high school. The grade ranges of participants' children were seventh to eleventh, and there were four girls and six boys. In relation to race, one participant was a person of color, while all other participants in the data collection were White, non-Hispanic. One participant was male and the rest were female.

The families of five of the participants lived in the school attendance zone for the elementary, middle, and high schools in which the program is offered. Three participants noted that their families actually purchased their home in the school zone for the specific reason of

becoming involved with the dual language program. Five families did not live in the school attendance zone, and thus needed to obtain a school transfer from the district in order to attend the specific school where the program was being offered. According to policy in this particular school district, any student school transfer that is awarded requires parents to provide transportation. As the participants explained in their interviews, transportation did not pose a hardship for these families. Finally, several participants expressed having multiple children in the program spanning across Greenfield Elementary, Bluefield Middle, and Brown High School. Some also noted they have high school graduates that have progressed through the Shady Lake School District's 90/10 dual language program.

Alex

Alex is the mother of two children who both have been involved in a 90/10 dual language program. Both children began the program in kindergarten with one currently in eighth grade and the other in tenth grade. The experiences captured in her interview focused on her tenth grader who experienced transitions at the secondary level, pre COVID. Her family currently lives in the school zone where the program is offered; in fact, Alex made it a point to express that she and her husband purchased their home in the specific school zone for their child to have the opportunity and access to a dual language program. When asked to use three to five words to describe her child's experience up to this point in the program, she stated: "incredible," "enriching," and "diverse."

Alex has been involved with dual language for the past 12 years and noted that her children had two different experiences but overall, they both had successful outcomes. She recognized that the uniqueness of her children as learners was nothing about the program, but more about their individual personalities and needs. Despite academic challenges in early

elementary, her tenth-grade daughter is thriving at the secondary level. Alex noted that her child has some classes with native Spanish speakers who have told her that her Spanish is better than theirs. Alex values the program in its totality with language and culture. It has inspired her whole family to gain deep perspective, curiosity, and acceptance of diversity around them.

Belinda

Belinda is the mother of two children who have both been involved in the dual language program since kindergarten. The oldest has graduated high school and the other is currently in ninth grade. The focus of her responses directly related to the experiences with her ninth grader. Belinda does not reside in the elementary school zone where her children attended and had to obtain a school transfer. This transfer required parents to provide transportation and this did not pose a hardship for her family. When asked to use three to five words to describe her child's experience up to this point in the program, she stated: "extremely positive," "family within the program," "extremely educational," and "the Spanish is amazing."

Belinda has been involved with dual language over a period of 15 years. Prior to her oldest child graduating high school, a translator license was earned as a direct opportunity available as a result of longevity in the program and this is anticipated to be obtained by her high school freshman when the opportunity arises. Belinda sees that an application of Spanish language skills would follow both children well into the future with their career choices. Part of what Belinda has enjoyed the most is the fact that her children are fluent in another language. She said, "That's the goal! Going in you never really know if it is going to happen, you think it is going to happen; you just have to have that trust that it will." While academics are average to above average across all areas, both children are good students overall and she attributes this being enhanced through their involvement with dual language. Belinda states that a trust needs to

be put in the program and in their child. She says to let them experience their independence as it develops in ways like other kids are not, she says, “Let it go.”

Carrie

Carrie is the mother of two children in the program, with one in the elementary level in fourth grade and the other in eighth grade. The focus of her responses aligns with the experience of her eighth grader. Experiencing the transition to middle school pre-COVID has provided a great deal of insight on how to potentially support a transition for students from one level to the next. Carrie and her family reside in the school zone where the dual language program has been offered. When asked to use three to five words to describe her child’s experience up to this point in the program, she stated: “exciting,” “challenging” and “enriched.”

Carrie has been involved with dual language for the past 9 years. She considers being bilingual as a direct benefit, but also indicated that it provides an advanced ability to problem-solve that will help in the future. She describes an overall outcome as “fascinating being able to see how easily language is used to communicate with other Spanish speakers.” She reminds parents to keep reading with their child(ren) in English to model good reading habits and abilities.

David

David is the father of two children with one fifth grader and one eighth grader. His responses focus on the experiences of the eighth grader. He is able to see differences in the experiences especially with the impact of COVID on education systems. David and his family reside in the elementary school zone where the program is offered. When asked to use three to five words to describe his child’s experience up to this point in the program, he stated: “enriching,” “challenging,” “exciting,” and “independence.”

David has been involved with dual language for 9 years and celebrates the level of independence of his eighth grader and the ability to make connections with lots of people from different cultures: “He encounters fewer strangers in the world.” David describes his eighth grader as a high achiever that wants to learn more. David is proud of how his child meets and exceeds expectations at school and home. It is celebrated how well his eighth grader connects with people and is not afraid to do so. The future for both children points to their marketability in career fields; moreover, he celebrated their level of independence and ability to make connections with people of different cultures.

Elaine

Elaine is the mother of two dual language students with one being in elementary school at third grade and the other is currently in seventh grade. The experiences and personalities of the two children were described as being very different. The focus of our discussion related to the experiences of the seventh grader. Elaine and her family reside in the elementary school zone where the dual language program was offered. When asked to use three to five words to describe her child’s experience up to this point in the program, she stated: “challenging,” “family,” “global perspective,” “safe challenge,” and “safe space.”

This is the eighth year that Elaine has been involved with the dual language program. The experiences related to the middle school transitions were described as difficult with the decrease in language use due to the secondary structure. Despite that decrease a strong commitment to continue with the program remained. Elaine said that this program is an “Amazing way of learning—incredible”! She continued to say that “he did not know there were any English-speaking classes when we began. He just thought school was that way.” Elaine provided thoughtful responses throughout and in particular with the ideas for a self-help book for parents.

Francine

Francine is the parent of two children with one at the elementary level in fourth grade and the other at the secondary level in seventh grade. Her children began the program when in kindergarten. Francine and her family do not reside in the school zone where the dual language program is offered and providing transportation was not a hardship on them. When asked to use three to five words to describe her child's experience up to this point in the program, she stated: "learning, just taking it all in," "ready to learn," and "challenging."

In her 8 years of involvement, she has been able to see subtle differences in the changes over time that involve her children, particularly at the secondary level. Similar to the sentiments of other participants, Francine values the outcomes of the program as they are quite beneficial providing possibilities for the future and present opportunities that her children might not have otherwise. Francine celebrated the cultural impact on her child. She said her child is "quite aware of varied cultures and he has really been open to the cultural aspect of the program."

Gayle

Gayle is the mother of two children who are both at the secondary level of learning: one in tenth grade and the other in eighth grade. Both have had a full experience in dual language even though the eighth grader began in the first-grade year when a space opened up. She and her husband purchased their home to be in the school attendance area to be considered for the program. The outcomes they have had are quite filled with academic success. When asked to use three to five words to describe her child's experience up to this point in the program, she stated: "impactful with academics," "impactful with discipline" "opportunities," and "great experience."

Gayle has been involved with it for 11 years. She is not blind to the flaws based on the areas of caution she provided during our time together through the feedback on things to include

in a parent guide. Just like Francine, Gayle described the cultural impact as being “just amazing.” She further stated that her children “saw things outside of their bubble in [this county] and it definitely has created a global mindset for them.” She also noted how the habits of responsibility and independence were consistent all along and the level of academic performance for her children have been very high.

Holly

Holly is the parent of multiple children in the program spanning elementary, middle, and high school levels. The responses in this study reflect those of the high school student who is currently in tenth grade. Holly and her family no longer reside in the elementary school zone where the program is offered but they were in the zone when they began the program. A transfer request was approved specific to program involvement and providing transportation was not a hardship. Each student enjoys the dual language experiences they have had over time across each of the school settings. When asked to use three to five words to describe her child’s experience up to this point in the program, she stated: “challenging,” “positive,” “eye-opening,” “relationships,” “comfortable,” and “thinking.”

Over her 11 years with multiple children in the program, she has gained outstanding insight. Similar to the response from Alex, her children are unique in their own ways and have their own individual needs. As they progressed through the same program it was received a little differently for each, however the impact is much the same in terms of outcomes with language, cultural development and strong friendships. Holly enjoys several aspects of the program overall, as she described “I definitely think the relationships have been positive...the way it has, you know, made their brains work...like the critical thinking and problem solving.” Academics are

well balanced, and the habits of independence and responsibility are developed. The most valued component of involvement are overall relationships among students and with their teachers.

Inez

Inez is the mother of a high school student in eleventh grade who started the dual language program in kindergarten. She described the dual language program as being a perfect fit for her child who entered school “as an advanced learner and mischievous.” She pointed to one of the programs components to “enhance his learning with a little more rigor.” Inez followed up on this by saying, “I think it proved for him to be more challenging than a typical curriculum.” Inez and her family do not reside in the school zone where the program is offered and an approved school transfer was obtained. Providing transportation to and from school was not a hardship. When asked to use three to five words to describe her child’s experience up to this point in the program, she stated: “flexible,” “engaged” and “intrigued.”

This is the twelfth year of program involvement for Inez and her family. She says that her son does not recognize his own abilities and he uses language very fluently and that he “doesn’t realize how fluent he is himself.” Her child is pursuing options the program has made possible for him including consideration of college pathways that being bilingual could influence. When asked about work habits, Inez said, “compared to her other children, who were not involved in the program, he’s much more independent with his tasks.” The program has had an impact on him and the family with broadening horizons and developing understanding of the world and cultures of others being more empathetic. Even through challenges of COVID, language skills and interpersonal skills remained through engagement in virtual opportunities with school and friends as well as literature, movies, television and online resources.

Janine

Janine is the mother of a ninth grader who has been in the dual language program since kindergarten. Janine and her family reside in the school zone and when they found out they were in the school zone where the program was offered they were “super excited.” When asked to use three to five words to describe her child’s experience up to this point in the program, she stated: “very meaningful,” “cultural awareness,” and “enhanced learning.”

Janine and her family have been involved with dual language for the past ten years. She is quite aware of the impact of dual language on an individual in the present and potential for future pathways. As with other participants, she sees language and cultural understanding as a key to communications across a variety of language speakers. As with a few other participants, Janine was aware of the science related to brain development and language acquisition. She collected her own research as a parent when exploring program options for her child. “I think just knowing the value of being bilingual, and there’s brain research that supports how it helps learning across content areas. And also, the research supports that they should be learning it [when they are] young.” When asked about outcomes, Janine referred to the fact of being bilingual as the top result. She continued with a thought-provoking statement, “Most other countries have a second language as part of their educational systems.” It is something that is necessary for a global society, and children are not receiving it in a systematic way like the dual language program. Janine has been connected with dual language for the past decade.

Summary

All participants were eager to share their experiences and perceptions of the dual language program, especially when describing the most enjoyable aspects of the program. Participants were overall quite pleased with the program up to this point, but were able to share

insight on areas to enhance the program for future students and families. Parents often noted that their child's experiences correlated with what they had learned about language programs through their own research. As parents shared their unique experiences, including both the favorable aspects of the program and areas of challenge, commonalities emerged across responses. Parents held the language and cultural development components as being most valuable and the transition from elementary school to middle school as most concerning.

Findings

In this section, I report the five main themes I identified through my analysis of my interview data. These themes represent the findings of my study.

Theme 1: Parents valued program outcomes, including preparing their child to be a global citizen, enabling them to achieve content mastery, and encouraging them to take responsibility and become independent

Throughout the data gathering process, parents were quite excited and willing to share the aspects of the program they celebrated the most. While it was seemingly difficult to pick just one area to identify as the most valued, responses were varied on what parents pinpointed as the one most beneficial outcome. Areas that rose to the top of their celebrations related to the exhibited behaviors they were able to observe in action. Throughout the interviews there were many opportunities to celebrate the benefits of dual language. In this section, I feature examples of the most valued aspects of dual language parents brought forward.

Preparing global citizens. David, Elaine, and Holly all described the cultural benefits of the program as providing a “global lens” for their child. When Holly was asked what she would celebrate most with a parent who was considering program enrollment, she responded,

...you know, when you live in [this county], you don't see a lot of the world unless you're willing to go places to do it. It's this program that opens your kids' eyes to different parts of the world, by having teachers from different parts of the world, which I think is really beneficial.

When Elaine was posed the same question, she said she would tell them that their child "will have an appreciation, a greater appreciation for culture and the world and the opportunities to communicate with the world." Developing an understanding of other languages and cultures allows a deeper understanding and development of a diverse mindset. Gayle indicated how it has influenced cross-cultural attitudes:

I think it's just amazing and a great experience because they are exposed to people who speak different, maybe eat different foods have different expressions. And that's been powerful for them to see the whole theme of not wrong, just different at a young age.

They saw things outside of their little bubble in [our] county, and it definitely has created a global mindset for them.

Francine and Janine both addressed insights shared by their children. When the question of how their child responded to the cultural aspects of the program was asked, both participants had an extended experience. Francine described a situation between her and her child that occurred while attending a community event where food trucks were present:

There was a taco truck and, you know, they were like talking some in Spanish and stuff. And I was just like [to him], oh, you should just use your Spanish to order the food. And he said, mom that's so racist! Yeah! And he said it really loud too...I was and just like, shut up, whisper! But I'm like, okay, I understand, you know....I was just like [to him], you know what? You're right. Like, yeah, it doesn't mean like they're Spanish speakers.

Yeah, and like but, I was just like sorry. Like, they're people in front of you and in back and then my son says that, I'm putting my head down. Okay, I'm sorry....I mean, he is aware of those things.

This impactful situation provided an example of how students demonstrate an understanding of cultural sensitivity. Perceived as an unconscious bias with Francine as she made an innocent, automatic assumption that Spanish was a language spoken by all workers at the taco truck, her child did not realize the connections Francine was making when she heard language being used and connected it to his language learning and an opportunity for real world application. Instead, it evolved into her child defining it as "racist". As the focus of my study was not in this particular area, I recognized that it is an area that might require a more in-depth look at how the program integrates cultural sensitivity, to the point that children will point it out when an adult unconsciously says something upsetting to the child prompting a response to statements that may carry a biased message.

Similarly, in the discussion with Janine, the concept of acceptance also emerged with students having a genuine curiosity of things and what others do. She made a connection with a situation between and her child while traveling. She expressed,

Yeah, it's curiosity and not judgment. When we were in [a foreign country] I saw, I don't remember what it was, but I saw something. I was like, oh, that's weird. And he's like, it's not weird. It's just different...there it was, there was a nice reminder of just your language and what you use, and that 'weird' has a negative connotation.

This and other examples demonstrate the impact of the program through transference of cultural sensitivity from the student to parent, and potentially many others, with awareness drawn to an unconscious bias and the importance of recognizing this towards building

acceptance of the cultural diversity within the community. Again, this emergence of information could prompt a study related to this specific impact of a dual language program with the perspective it develops in children—a perspective that is frequently difficult for adults to grasp.

Throughout the data collection process, several parents made connections to the views their children expressed beyond the classroom into their daily lives and experiences such as an interest with international travel with Alex and Carrie’s child, or interacting with Spanish-speaking families at church with David’s child and through the ability to see beyond their “bubble” as described by both Gayle and Holly. Collectively, the blending of language acquisition with an understanding of cultural differences enhances the ability of their children to accept diversity—as evidenced with the situations Francine and Janine experienced with their children outside the school setting.

Recognizing this acceptance of diversity between one another is not limited to being reflected in our own community. Its intrinsic value implies application across the globe through the ability to become empathetic and understanding. Values that are nurtured in the school and home. It builds the understanding that traditions, celebrations, habits, and even foods are part of cultural influence, and that while these influences may be different from those of an observer, it is simply different. In the same way that one family has a certain set of habits and values another family may have a certain set of habits and values that differ. Gayle shared her perspective of this “great experience because [her children] are exposed to people who speak different, maybe eat different foods, have different expressions.” She noted, “That’s been powerful for them, to see the whole theme of ‘not wrong, just different’ at a young age.”

Parents gave other examples of how their child has embraced the cultural aspect of the program and have applied it to daily life. Alex elaborated,

Well, at the end of fifth grade, I told [my daughter] I would take her on a trip to congratulate her [for completion of the elementary dual language program] and she chose to go to Colombia. South America, not South Carolina. None of our neighbors or friends of the family [understood this and asked] how does she even know about Colombia, South America? [Alex responded] Yeah, well, she had three teachers from Colombia and loved them all. So, we went to Colombia. She was really attracted to the Colombian culture from the time she was in kindergarten.

The family not only took the trip, they connected with the teachers and their families while there. This type of situation was also captured by Carrie when she described that there is more openness to consider international travel to Spanish-speaking countries. She said, “there is an awareness of the bigger picture than just here in our hometown.”

Another parent commented that their child is more globally aware than peers who are not in the program. David shared this experience:

One thing I'm always gonna remember is there was a time that Iguazu Falls was on TV. He said, hey that's Iguazu Falls. He must have been in second grade. So, how do you know that? He goes—I just know these things.

David continued describing his perception,

But yeah, so not only does he have the knowledge and the curiosity about it, he does have—he's got a pretty good working knowledge, I think, or compared to most... I mean, especially [my child] is a couple standard deviations above median when it comes to knowledge of other cultures.

Janine and Inez similarly shared perceptions that reflected effects on their child's cultural perspective. Inez stated, “I think it's broadened his horizons and his understanding of the world.”

She continued to elaborate on how “he’s more empathetic and understanding of others and reaches out to diverse groups of people.” Janine articulated, “I think it's really opened his eyes and helped him see how we're all connected and that language can certainly serve as a conduit to connect that collectivism in a community.” In the same respect, travel to locations where these languages are spoken is more prevalent just as the interest in learning another language. Alex, Elaine, Francine, and Holly each shared that their child is more aware and interested in learning an additional language to connect with their cultural heritage and to travel to locations where that language is spoken.

A central part of their child becoming a global citizen was their acquisition of a second language. In fact, over half of the participants indicated their most valued outcome was their child’s ability to speak another language. Being bilingual is the primary goal of being in a dual language immersion program, but to actually be able to see them applying the language and hearing how easily and fluent they are is a cornerstone of success. This success allows their child to be able to expand the ability to communicate with others. Alex reflected on an interaction with a Spanish-speaking family using her language skills, indicating that it “was probably the most powerful moment that I experienced; like, she was not afraid to just communicate with people that looked differently than her that spoke differently than her.” Additionally, other parents described situations their child has been in where language could have been a barrier to communication for monolingual peers, but through the dual language involvement, they were easily able to communicate with confidence. Alex elaborated upon a family trip providing an example of this valued program component.

...getting to know different people like when we went to Disney World. [We were] out like in the town square in one of the parks and she had blended in with this family from

Argentina and she was just talking up a storm with them and it was hilarious. Like it took us a minute to realize, like oh, that's our daughter in that huge family just talking away. That was probably the most powerful moment that I experienced. Like she was not afraid to just communicate with people that looked differently than her that spoke differently than her, she just embraced them like a peer you know, like regular, like we hang out with people from Argentina all the time.

Achieving content mastery. Parents expressed many indicators of program enjoyment across categories, including the level of academic challenge and rigor the program offers students. Inez noted that the dual language program had influence where "it helped his brain develop in different ways with learning; thinking in two languages helped him easily, maybe understand mathematics better." Elaine agrees that the program has had influence on her child in the area of academics by sharing that "he's fortunate and that he's really inclined in both areas of math and English." She continued, "I know he's a bright kid because scores tell us that, right?" and continued to describe his ability to learn:

Things are very easy for him. New concepts are easy for him. I think it would have happened honestly anyway right, regardless of programming, right but mainly because he's smart and then we expose him to things. But I also think that having exposure to this program has really benefitted him because he is more aware in ways that we couldn't teach him and we wouldn't be able to teach him.

Holly explained, "I think strongest is anything requiring like, critical thinking and reading is probably the strongest." She further connected this to the level of independence students develop early on: "I think, through early elementary [with assignments] they're just, they are independent." Remaining engaged in their learning was equally consistent among parents. Gayle

noted that it “created a sense of excitement and interest.” She continued to elaborate upon the most powerful benefit from the student perspective as

...being bilingual. And we know from research that it grows the brain and both of my kids are academically gifted and successful. And I think it contributes a lot to having that foundation at elementary here, they just have that foundation where there’ll be set to continue their education further past high school, and I think it started with this program.

Finally, the implications of high achievement upon future opportunities has been mentioned at some point by each participant in some way. It may have been with excelling in a particular content area, thinking abilities, problem solving, test scores or the ability to easily make connections. When seeking to understand the most prevalent outcome, however, future career and job opportunities was the area of clustered responses. Belinda captured a sentiment that she shared with David and Carrie. She explained how abilities have been developed, nourished, and grown over time throughout the program, stating, “It sets her up for advantages later in life such as getting a job over someone just because she is fluent in another language.” Carrie explained, “We’re sure he’s gonna put he’s bilingual on his resume. I mean it would be silly not to.” She continued with a powerful statement bringing these skills that will help him in the future by connecting it to a programmatic benefit by stating, “But I think the problem solving and being able to think differently, that those skills that he’s gained through being bilingual, and going through the Spanish Immersion program, is going to help him.”

Parents described the academic impact on their child as advanced and enriched. Francine and Inez perceived student abilities to have a strength in language/reading areas, while Carrie, David, and Francine explained the area of strength was with science or social studies. In contrast to the academic richness with performance in specific areas described by some participants,

Gayle, Elaine, and Janine described their child's academic performance as balanced across academics, or content areas of reading, math, science and social studies. Elaine elaborated, "He does well overall as things come easy for him, and I think it would have anyway, but the program enhances this beyond what we can as parents."

The outcomes were not automatic and did not come easily for everyone. In comparison to non-immersion classes the similarity of needed academic support, intervention or tutoring exists within the dual language experience. Understanding that stumbling blocks will occur along the way, the long-term impact on learning is an aspect that emerged as an academic strength for participants. Belinda discussed her child's academic performance as measured by formal tests:

[In relation to] big testing, [state testing] I don't know that it would be any different if she had not been in the program, but she does very well in classwork and class assessments and things like that; all the way through she has. But then, when it comes to big tests, like [state testing] and things like that, she tends to struggle. But I don't think it has anything to do with her ability, I just think it has to do with testing. Because she can prove herself academically in other places, so. But I think the immersion, that dual language piece of it has really pushed her in a different way as a learner.

Alex described the experience of her child as she was facing an academic challenge in third grade that was, as she described "a bit scary":

We did some outside testing because...I realized that she wasn't able to decode any words...outside of context. So, like, if there was a word, like a sign posted without any context with it – we we're at [a drive through restaurant] and it said, 'Sorry, for the inconvenience, we are temporarily closed,' or something. And I said, read that sign for me. And she couldn't read it at all. I was like, can you please attempt it for me, so I can

see where the holes are. And it was like, she had no clue. So, um I got her tested, and she was pre-kindergarten decoding, eighth grade level reading comprehension. And they said, that would have definitely been dyslexia. But they couldn't diagnose it because she didn't have systematic daily English instruction yet, for it had to be a certain amount of hours a day. So that was scary. Because she didn't enjoy reading.

Alex further described the next steps and the final outcome of this situation:

Their recommendation was that she get pulled from the program... and give her a full English experience. And I called the principal and talked to him about this. I lost about three days of sleep. And then we decided to just trust the process and hire a tutor. So, she went to tutoring three days a week. I wanted five days a week, but the tutor thought I was crazy. So we did three days a week for about four months, and gave her that early literacy in English that the tapping out the sounds and blending and she became a lover of reading and even today could read like a 600 page book in a weekend. ...but um, but academically otherwise, I think it's good for her brain development because I can see that she takes on multiple perspectives.

When I discussed academic impact with Holly, she described a gap with kids making a connection to content in math upon entering middle school. The class was blended with students from another elementary feeder school and the structure of the dual language program in middle school was different from elementary and math instruction was delivered in English. While this was a moment of extreme concern, Holly described it as an “interesting thing” that occurred in middle school:

When [my child's] class got to sixth grade, so they were in math with kids from [another feeder school] and then in most of them were kind of divided into two different math

classes, like one accelerated and one advanced, I guess, for the nature of the majority of her [dual language] class, and they were in the first weeks of school, none of them thought they knew any math. And it took us, like the parents—we would text, we were on our Facebook group, and we're like, why do they think they don't know math? Like, they're like, the [feeder school] kids know so much more math than us. They know so much more math than us. Why don't we know math? And finally, I don't remember who it was, they were like, they had math in Spanish—for 6 years and so even the little like, just little things in English that they maybe didn't even know what it meant in English, but if it had been in Spanish, they would have known it. But like, once we told them, like, it's because you don't—your math has been in Spanish, you need to figure out what those words are in English, you know what the Spanish word is and then you're going to know it. And once they all figured that out, it was fine.

This situation highlighted the networking of parents to figure out what was happening with the instructional delivery and student understanding. Without a problem-solving approach to address the student frustrations, recognizing the gap may have taken longer to figure out. Parents bring about thoughts on how the program could identify these situations in a more proactive manner. This aspect is addressed in greater depth in Chapter V.

Taking responsibility and becoming independent. During the interviews, I asked about parents' perceptions of characteristics and behaviors of students in the dual language program. This was quite interesting as parents provided their perceptions in this specific area as it extended into the home and habits in general. Most clearly pointed to a high level of independence and responsibility while others quickly pointed out that it is not all the time that they demonstrated these qualities. I thought that this would be natural and along with

developmental milestones of students as they mature. The behaviors described by parents were quite advanced in comparison to the more typical development of peers. Inez explained her observation: “Compared to the other students we know that are not involved in the program he is more independent with his tasks and assignments.” Francine described her child as being “somewhat independent, but at the same time, there's still that level of immaturity at that I do see in him...but other than that, he's very independent. He doesn't really need help with homework.”

The program prompts students to embrace habits of taking responsibility and owning their work with a clear level of independence. Woven through the collected data, parents generally noted how students essentially complete homework on their own. This is connected back to the external factor of most parents not being fluent or even knowledgeable in the acquired language. Parents can provide general support by asking whether tasks have been completed or they can look over for neatness, but not for content correctness.

Parents like Francine, Gayle, and Janine expressed how students take responsibility to complete assignments, develop the ability to be independent and take ownership in the work they are asked to complete. Gayle commented that her children:

...were pretty much on their own with any homework, I could not help them...It set a foundation from the very first year of school of what the expectations should be...and that discipline has helped them move forward with being successful with schooling and academics.

Janine elaborated on her child's abilities as being

...tremendous. He comes home does his homework. I don't have to ask him to do it. He has developed study skills [provides example] because he had a biology test and I was

like, he's studying, and I was like show me how you study and [he] had a system. So, yes, his independence, autonomy, self-regulation all that is very high.

Elaine described it being a very good thing that her child is independent and responsible and when she gives a reminder about something he says, "I got it, I got it." Elaine elaborated that her son advocates for himself as well:

But in terms of school, like he's, he's a strong advocate for himself, like he will email his teachers when he's out. In fact, he's out this week, and I said, you have to email your teachers and tell them you're going to be out because you pulled a muscle on your back and ask what you need to do. And he was like, yeah, the gluteus maximus. And he did it...he can navigate things on his own.

These accounts are often connected with programmatic features celebrated by parents and are areas that are commonly shared parent to parent in the community. It offers keen parental insight into a hidden outcome of the program that was not directly promoted at the onset of the program, as it is experienced along the way.

Theme 2: Parents identified challenges with their child maintaining engagement with the adopted language along the way, primarily during transitions from elementary to middle and middle to high school

It was clear throughout data collection that the transition to middle school was the most significant challenge for students and parents. A variety of factors contributed to the challenges and types of frustration this transition generated. While there is a typical transition experience for all students moving on to middle school from elementary, and to high school from middle, it is especially hard for a cohort of elementary students who have been in a specialized program for all 6 of their elementary years. The elementary school structure often follows a model where

students have the same teacher all day guiding and nurturing the environments. Typically, there are high levels of parental involvement, as this is the first step into formal education; the initial transition for parents as their child's educational journey begins. Dual language parents experienced the typical adjustments with the additional layer of being in an immersive environment to learn another language.

Carrie described transitional challenges began in small ways in the elementary level with contact time and engagement with Spanish:

When [transitions from] third grade to fourth and fifth with that full day of language down to half a day—not even quite, because, you know, like, one year his homeroom teacher was English and so more English was found in there. And then transitioning over to the middle school having even less Spanish that was a huge change for him. Especially with going K–3, you know, speaking pretty much only Spanish [in school]. So, I know that was a huge change for him.

The first major surprise came with the structures of middle school where students have a block schedule and change classes several times daily, compared to the elementary experience where students spend the full day with a dedicated teacher and minimal class changes. While this was an adjustment for all students, this structure presented the most drastic change for immersion students as it further decreased the amount of time available to support to Spanish language development and application to content areas of study.

Gayle discussed this shift in response to the question was posed about the greatest challenges they have experienced with a transition to middle school and then to high school.

Going from elementary where they spoke, they wrote daily, they were immersed in it—to middle school, where it's one class for an hour a day—to high school now, it's just one

class a semester, so [without] use it's like anything else, if you don't use it, you're going to lose it. And it's watching [her child] being and sophomore him making comments about oh, I forgotten those words I forgotten. Like, it's just not as natural and free flowing as it was in fifth grade, it was just a confidence and could have a solid conversation, and now it's a lot of thinking, trying to recall what they used to know.

This was a shock to many students and parents as the previous years of an immersive experience created an anticipation that there would perhaps be more content delivered in Spanish, reflective of the elementary immersive experience. Contrary to this expectation, students experienced a drastic reduction of time dedicated to Spanish language development integrated with core content areas.

Delivery of Spanish shifted from being through core content areas in elementary to being linked with a cultural literacy program in middle school. These two specific situations conveyed a sense of overall loss to the program delivery. There was somewhat of a drop-off of language interaction because of the reduced application of language to any core content area, which contributed to the frustration experienced during the middle school transition. The consensus of participants was that the middle school transition is the area that would need the most attention if a change in the continuum of the program were to be made from the side of the school system. Ideas of perhaps a structural change with type of access to Spanish or more advanced notice to parents clarifying what would be available with the middle school program and how to prepare for the transition in a more proactive manner.

Aside from the program beginning in kindergarten with it being initially different—an anticipated different—there was no bigger challenge and source of frustration than the shift into middle school. Alex reported that when her child's cohort was preparing to transition to middle

school, “I would say a lot of the kids in her class, who we knew like family by the time they were in fifth grade, none of them wanted to continue with Spanish going into middle school. They're all like, I'm done, I'm done.” This was described as being very difficult, and some families actually considered pulling their child out of the program with the major contributing factor being the significant decrease in the time devoted to Spanish application in core content areas. While this was a consideration, parents did not make the move and remained committed to second language learning and application.

Half of the parents in my study expressed this as the hardest and most frustrating part of the program. Families found themselves trying to figure out how to respond to this; depending on the cohort, parent action steps taken were different based on the specific transition concerns. The impact of COVID-19 during this time was also a factor for the ways in which the program delivery was made and potentially where students had the most struggle, just like their non-immersion peers have experienced.

Janine perceived the transition to middle school with her child differently and described him as being a little nervous, “but not beyond the typical nervousness. It was when he had [Spanish] 45 minutes a day, some parents were like, oh, we want more. And I’m like, you know what, we can take some responsibility as parents.” As a result of the decrease in contact time, she engaged her child with tutors to keep a language connection—especially during COVID. Bigger than the shift in the amount of time for Spanish in middle school, Janine said, “The most disappointing thing for me for middle school was the lack of extracurricular activities.” She recognized this was not an immersion thing, but it was an extension and opportunity to build friendships with a new peer group.

Similarly, Francine and Holly considered friendships and social aspects to be a challenge through transitions to middle and high school. They have been with the same students for 6 years, and as they enter middle school, the group is split into varied teams, classes and environments where content is in English and peer groups have suddenly expanded. Francine commented,

...not knowing a lot of the students like transitioning from you know, [a few schools] going to another, so it was definitely a transition for [my son]. And for us, the concern to make sure he was getting connected or making friends [and worry] like he was an outcast. So yeah, definitely. Like, especially for me I just, like for the whole month, I was probably like, Oh, how's it going? You're making friends? Are you meeting any of the kids you recognize from any sports you play? So yeah, it was definitely a transition.

David discussed the decrease in middle school and how there was a shift to include more emphasis with the grammatical language components. The shift from Spanish integrated within a content area to primarily a grammar focus was a challenge.

Gayle captured the experience moving to middle school by saying, “The abilities are not as free flowing – there is a lot more thinking about words and how to say it in Spanish. ‘I’ve forgotten those words in Spanish’, there is a lot of recall thinking.” Holly expressed the idea that students and parents alike had to adjust to the decreased amount of time because it created a perception that they were losing their Spanish skills, yet they tested high on classroom and benchmark assessments.

The next transition students experience is to high school and similar to the transition to middle school, parents need some type of advance notice on what to expect with the high school approach and scheduling. The biggest area of concern when transitioning to high school includes

the scheduling options available for students achieving the required graduation credits and how the language options are woven in. The placement in Spanish 3 or 4 seems to have been the limits on ways to access the language in an elective course. This course is different, as a great deal is delivered in connection with English and students in the program are much more confident, advanced, and unafraid to share their language abilities outside of the school setting compared to the delivery approach in a high school language course.

Theme 3: Parents perceive teachers to be the primary leader making a powerful impact in the program in terms of language and culture, however their children experienced challenges during periods of transition to new teachers

Parents celebrated teachers during each interview. The praise and value of their work was admired and prevalent in many ways throughout the program. Participants such as Belinda, Elaine, and Gayle discussed how the teachers brought learning to life through their own personal experiences. Bringing their culture into the classroom allowed teachers to bring stronger contextual knowledge of the language through application of the language in real situations—an approach embedded throughout all activities.

The level of engagement in the program is high and forces children to constantly think about the content in Spanish and make connections to English, as well as the individual experiences the students may make connections with to make learning links. Belinda described how her child embraces the cultural aspect of learning: “She embraces it and has since the beginning, especially, especially the Colombian culture part.” She continued with a concluding statement in this part of our discussion, stating, “I think being in the program makes you very much aware of other cultures.” This is where we begin to see the infusion of the cultural aspects of the program as the teacher provides real world personal experiences—including family

gatherings, celebrations and ways of day-to-day living. Teachers share pictures, videos, and literature to bring context to the language opposed to just teaching the language in isolation. Gayle noted that dual language teachers are proud to share their language.

Elaine described her perception and experiences with teachers by stating, “The teachers have been incredible. They've been. It was the challenge that [her son] he needed. Yeah. intellectually and emotionally.” She expanded upon this area in another section of our meeting by saying,

...my kids have had the best teachers. Hands down. Yeah. I mean, they really have—they're so amazing. Like, I can't speak enough about the teachers they've had. And I think just patience and trust, really, that would be my thing. Because, like, you just have to trust and be patient with the process, and it will work out.

Belinda described the teachers along the way by saying, “I think [child's] teachers at [their] school are, have always been innovative enough and experienced enough with what they were doing.” She further noted how much she has learned about the world and cultures. Similarly, Francine described learning another language as a “bridge” to a cultural divide.

All study participants described their experience with dual language teachers in very similar ways. Alex described the teachers her child had along the way as having “very strong instructional techniques” and being “very educated.” She continued to describe the “strong bond with [teachers]” as well. Her child “really would respond to the expectations of the teachers. I think all of [her] teachers were highly qualified. [Teacher] in fifth grade was like her idol she wanted for the longest time to be a Spanish math teacher, just like [her teacher]. So yeah, her experience was exceptional.” Gayle described the ways she perceived the teachers her children had along the way:

...as far as communication, I've always had a good experience. They're very open, they definitely want their kids to be successful. They're proud to be sharing their language with these students. So yeah, they work hard. They put a lot of effort and energy into preparing these kids.

Parents like Inez, Holly, and Francine felt as though they knew their teachers very well as they were informed on what was going on. Teachers were very responsive, friendly, and inviting. They have been very well prepared with a grasp on the curriculum and the experiences to provide students with in relation to the content and language development. Francine stated, "Oh, yeah, I felt like they were well prepared [at school], they were very communicative. They always let us know, the teacher always let us know what's going on."

Some parents voiced concern specific to situations when students had the experience of a first-year teacher new to the school, community, state, and country. Initially parents seemed to have concerns with teachers in their first year of the program. This is a difficult time for the teacher, and they need support and time to adjust; Carrie called it the "learning curve" for them. Teachers new to the program need time to get adjusted but as they get situated, the experience is very good—they are always innovative and experienced to deliver. In the second year of teaching, dual language teachers demonstrated a clearer focus, higher confidence, and greater comfort, as described by both Gayle and Holly. Despite the transition period, students and parents have had great experiences and continue to celebrate the teachers of the dual language program. Gayle described this as follows:

[Dual language teachers are] kind of like in that grace period, when they're new, and they're coming, there's so many things in front of them. You know, in terms of maybe what a [typical] new traditional teacher would go through, there'd be a big difference.

Just that the cultural part, the language part, life for the International Teacher, a lot of that adapting to—in addition to teaching.

When I spoke with Holly about the level of teacher preparedness, she echoed a similar concern of other parents. She brought a personal perspective as well where teachers may have needs beyond the surface that a community could find ways to support. Overall, she celebrated what most all parents expressed in the strengths of their child’s teachers along the way. “I think overall, yes, I think that as a new teacher would transition in, I think throwing them in 3 days before kids are coming has been the worst experience for those teachers.” Holly expressed how the move to middle school included this type of situation with a new teacher. She elaborated on what she meant by support:

Luckily, having parents in her classes that understood what she was going through—because we had seen it happen with previous teachers and were able to help, you know, get her a bed; like she didn't have a bed or get her a table or get her lamps or you know, help her cover her windows. And you know, that kind of which isn't really related to teaching or it is because if she's not prepared and feeling confident and set, you know, it's hard.

Holly continued to elaborate on the best aspects of the teachers and their abilities with students and parents. She described the impact of relationships:

I think [relationships] that's one of the best parts, I think, you know, like, I feel like [teachers] know who's coming, or they know who has who, [if] they've already had [a student] they know, siblings or they know friends or like, I think that that's been wonderful for them. And then just the relationships with the [other] teachers, you know and even [when students] move on to the next grade, [teachers] still have those

relationships with them. And I think that's, that's definitely in the top of why it's so great—is the relationships.

Relationships with students was echoed among participants as a particular strength of the teachers they had along the way. Teachers were further described as making strong bonds, especially at the elementary level.

Carrie considered the early elementary K–2 span to be quite intense with relationships being built as a pathway to provide academic support. Teachers have to rely on a variety of indicators to show connections, understanding and success with language and content mastery while providing emotional support—where relationships matter.

And so, it's that watching of those facial expressions, those hand movements, it's more than just a normal reciprocal relationship. They, they're really watching one another. And so, you, you learned so much from visual cues. And I think they might feel closer to like [their kindergarten and first grade teacher] just because of like, they get to know not only vocally, but all their facial expressions as well, they get a better reading of them.

Relationship building is done through keen observations, not only of the work product, but in the ways in which students respond with body language and facial expressions. Teacher-parent relationships reflect a commitment to education, as their communications are strong and consistent as expressed by parents with multiple children in the program.

Theme 4: Parents advocated for various ways to improve and enhance the program

Throughout this theme, parent ideas and suggestions are linked to specific aspects of the program that presented a challenge.

Guidance on providing help at home. One specific area for improvement that emerged during the interviews included how parents frequently asked for ways they could help at home.

As an administrator this has been my experience as well with parents asking how they could be supportive outside of the school with homework and experiences they may consider beyond school hours to help their child or their child's class. This is reflected in the data collection specifically, when I asked what they would like to see included in a parent self-help book. Parents expressed they would hope to see sections on how they can help at home to reinforce language use. Additionally, they spoke of types of activities they could be involved with over the summer to help avoid learning loss.

The challenge of how parents could help with homework in more meaningful ways, especially if Spanish is not spoken in the home is a common area of inquiry. Inez described her perspective on this as being a big change when comparing how she was able to contribute to help at home with older siblings. "A big change was...just not being able to help him with his homework or review it with him to make sure that he was on the right track." She elaborated on this by acknowledging that "he couldn't count on our support at home, though he had it...but he needed to be independent and be a problem solver on his own."

Inez further described how it was hard not knowing how he was doing with language development. She said, "He was not always eager to speak Spanish for us, so we didn't get to, I guess hear how he was progressing in that language." She commented that we "only got to hear it in snippets if we just happened to catch him speaking with a teacher outside or um somebody outside of the school."

Overcoming challenges. Janine provided practical advice and suggestions for parents of ways to counter challenges, transitions and the decrease in language application. Below is her response when I asked her to describe the chapters she would hope to see included if there was a self-help guide for parents:

I think, if you're experiencing struggles, take a wait and see approach more than jumping in and removing. Building in ways, taking ownership, and building in ways for your child to meaningfully practice the Spanish—put into practice over breaks and summers, and then when they transition to middle school, and it drops to 45 minutes a day, how can you partner with the teacher or someone to continue that experience and enhance it as needed.

As the discussion progressed to the development of a parent resource list, Janine listed ideas that she would find to be helpful for parents in the program at any point:

I think, where to get Spanish books, especially on the audio books, and movies, TV shows, because that's one thing that [teachers] suggested, and it just watching Spanish TV could help. And then maybe networks of tutors, you know, that are affordable and local for the for the students because you know, you don't want money to be a barrier to parents. Especially as they're transitioning in middle and high school to fill in any gaps that do occur.

Francine and Gayle suggested keeping up with what is going on in class and having discussions in English about the content they are learning in class as a way to reinforce it at home. Gayle described this by stating, “So, it’s just my job to reinforce—the same as if it were in English— reinforce at home.” Both expressed the importance of establishing a network among families in the immersion program that may present opportunities for kids to communicate with one another in Spanish. Further, attending meetings at the school and with teachers could also provide a roadmap of where the learning is going and how parents can help at home.

Parents express cautions regarding the program over time. Parents offered areas of caution related to program implementation that span across all years of program involvement. The participants in this study clearly indicated that the area to be most cautious about surrounds

the transition to secondary level of schooling, with the first area being prepared for the sharp decrease with language access in the middle and again in the high school.

Alex extended caution related to ensuring that a balanced emphasis on literacy development continues in the primary language throughout the program:

I would caution the parent to make sure their child was keeping up with their native language literacy. And I would probably recommend that they get a tutor—no matter who they are. Yeah, if you have a [gifted] kid, give them a tutor in English, if you have a [non-gifted] kid, get ‘em a tutor in English, because I think it's very important for them to have the strong native language literacy.

Similar to this suggestion, Carrie responded, “If they haven't started reading with their child, they need to.” Holly expressed, “It's just like, well, English is kind of a home responsibility or that develops in the home.” She continued to describe that it is not explicit language instruction, or “flash cards,” it is simply “reading books in language.” Holly further commented, “[Teachers] tell traditional parents read with your child, have conversations with them, just like when you go to a movie you see, you ask the same questions as you would as a book or watch a TV show.”

In contrast to Alex stating to get an English tutor, Elaine expressed her view: “I think really just knowing the literacy part...learning two languages, it's gonna take them a longer time to learn to read in two languages...But it'll come together. Don't worry about it. Just let the process happen.”

Belinda expressed that “there's nothing wrong with changing your mind” about program enrollment. She communicated her perspective as follows:

It's hard for them to walk in as 5-year-olds and hear someone talking to them in a different language. But as 5-year-olds, you can't give in right away. You have to stick it

out and see... but if those struggles continue, there is definitely nothing wrong with choosing to leave the program at all.

Giving space. Interestingly, several participants shared words of caution for parents to “back off” to allow the program to work, for kids to experience some struggle and to form friendships. In a previous quote, Elaine said, “Just let the process happen.” David, Elaine, Gayle, and Inez also cited the need to let go and stand back. Inez mentioned, “We don't want our children to struggle or, um, not do well with things—So, with this program, you kind of have to let them find their way.”

Parents suggested not overreacting and taking the lead of the teacher. “There is an opportunity for independence to grow here,” as David pointed out. Elaine captured this when she stated, “They will struggle at times, its ok. Literacy skills will come together, it takes a little longer—trust the program—it will work out. Things might not feel normal, because they aren't!” This statement seemed to capture the gist of the group message. Holly extended this sentiment: “I think that's just letting go of what you thought was normal? I don't know if normal is the right word—but what your expectations, may be of how they're going to develop.” Trusting in the program does not mean to let it all go. Inez makes it clear that it is harder to help when one's child is in the program, recalling, “he couldn't count on our support at home, though he had it. I don't know that I said that correctly. He had our support, but he needed to be independent and be a problem solver on his own.” Inez illustrates this through a family example:

...comparatively. I have two other children that did not go through the program. Um, and he's much more independent with tasks, and I believe that's because as he went through school—Um, especially the elementary level, we were not able to help him as much, or he did not reach out for help, because he knew we were not fluent in Spanish, and

therefore he's just—he independently now takes on his tasks and his homework—he discusses them with us, but he does not engage our help with them, knowing that if he couldn't do those things we would help do our best to help support him.

Francine said, having an awareness of what is going on, or the “learning this week” is important, that way, “if you want to contribute, or you want to do something with them, great.” This could also include keeping up with the child’s behavior, listening, showing self-control, and building friendships. Carrie expanded on an area that was important to add, especially for a new family:

The other thing I do talk about occasionally is the brotherly sisterly love that they develop. So, the fact that, you know, I love that they have been together for so long... They need to be involved in other things other than school, so they know how to make friends. So, when they get to middle school, it's not a huge adjustment of, you know, they already know the kids in their class; cause some, kids do struggle with that. And if you've been with the same kids, they might not know how to make friends or how to associate with others. So just, I would encourage them staying involved in other activities that don't include the [dual language] kids. So, they can have that ability to be able to make friends easily.

Parent programmatic solutions. Parent participants provided rich perspective and were able to see areas that might further support or enhance the ways in which the dual language program is implemented. A great deal of attention surrounded making changes during the times of program transition. There was a sense of the program moving along and parents just keeping pace without having a clear idea of what to expect along the way.

To avoid surprises, the suggested areas of change are important for school leaders and program leaders to consider. While some suggestions may not be that practical in application due to varied structures and requirements for instructional time, there may be some ways to enhance or otherwise adjust current approaches.

Alex, Belinda, and Inez would seek more communication about the transition to the middle school level to have more program consistency. Alex specified an area of transition would include placing emphasis on program staffing with native speakers from countries of similar language use: “Spanish in Spain is different from Spanish in Colombia.” Likewise, Carrie advocated for consistency with staffing dual language classrooms with teachers from a specific country. Frustrations of a group of students and parents that emerged between her own children involved an experience in first grade:

...because of how huge the dialect was different... that would have come up for us, if we had that, because I know that was a real struggle having that different dialect at such a young age. I do think it was very important [to have a varied dialect]. I just, I think I’m frustrated by [the children being] just too young, because they’re so new to the language. The fact that we have [a teacher] from Mexico, and that’s a different dialect. I’m excited for [my child] for that.

If there was more consistency in the delivery of the program through teachers from Latin America for example, then perhaps students would not experience a challenge when encountering a native “Spanish” speaker from Spain, with a Castilian dialect when the cohort was only involved with teachers from Latin American countries. There was a stark difference in the language usage, the delivery rate, and the cultural influences for students to navigate with

Castilian Spanish. This was the experience of parents at one elementary school where first grade may have been too early for this exposure.

The consistent acquisition of a second language, specific to a geographic location, may be a solution to consider. It can lessen confusion at the foundation level and make it much easier for students to make connections among varied language dialects and accents with teachers they may encounter in the future with a different dialect and accent. This may come at the price, however, of missing out on the cultural aspect of varied Spanish-speaking countries, as favored by other parents involved in the program.

Parents contributed in this area of change to consider ways to increase diversity in program enrollment. Carrie stated that “enrollment needs to be better,” and David elaborated in this same area of concern to find ways to increase involvement for more “diversity in the program in terms of socioeconomic and ethnicity.” Considering this perspective, an outsider looking in may speculate that the program design attracts a population that might be described as privileged. Data further revealed attentiveness toward gender diversity in the program as parents like Inez whose child was one of five males in a cohort of 24.

In addition, parents addressed the need for students to have confidence boosters during key times during the program, particularly with transitions. Holly indicated, “They need a reminder of how smart/capable they are.” The middle school level staff could become more aware of the structure students in the program have been involved with at the elementary level to perhaps better inform how they transition. Holly also suggested having a consistent focus on the “world view” during transitions that may be helpful with the aspect of cultural diversity development.

Finally, the development of a program road map of potential outcomes or learning pathways may help with the parent/student focus when making long-term goals. Alex shared a point of frustration she experienced with her child: “I think it would be really nice if they gave them the pathway to do the translating, rather than her having to like, look online to figure out the pathway.” She continued,

I had to ask about, you know, what's the continuation of [dual language]? And because she took the competency exam, and they gave her two high school credits of Spanish, she wanted to take Spanish 3. But like, we missed the deadline to enroll, and then we missed the deadline again....and then they're like, well, you don't need another one, because you already have two years, and that's a college requirement. I'm not saying it's a problem, it's probably beneficial for her to fill in those gaps. And especially if she's planning to get her translating certificate.

Alex continued to clarify,

I think it should be like a flow map. Like, what are your goals in Spanish? If it's to get this, this is the path. If it's just to have that, that's the path. Yeah, like to me, I can see it having like three different outcomes depending on if you're one of those students that is going to just graduate and be done, or if you want to continue and be like a translator like that would be the two extremes. And then the middle would just be like, graduate with enough high school credits just to transfer into like a state school.

Theme 5: Parents reported that their original visions for their children’s futures upon program enrollment remained intact

As their child’s journey through dual language draws to a close in high school, parents reported that they began to see valuable program outcomes that they were hoping for as well as

outcomes that somewhat surprised them. Inez described how the program has “kept [her child] engaged and, um, his mind occupied for him with academics.” When I asked Inez if there was anything she was surprised that I did not ask about, she said, “Yes, how he is doing academically, and if the program helped has helped him advance above his peers.” I opened the discussion for Inez to elaborate in this specific area with a previous question. She explained that her child is “doing very well academically. He’s in advanced placement (AP) courses in high school.” I continued to delve a bit deeper and asked, “And do you think being involved with the program has advanced that?” She responded, “Yes, I do.” Advanced Placement (AP) courses increase a student’s grade point average (GPA). Along with a higher GPA, being a bilingual applicant increases students’ chances to get into their college of choice.

Elaine described a series of attributes that “are really strong as a result of being in Spanish immersion” and were frequently referenced by participants as skills that boost overall academic success. She pointed to habits such as “that sense of confidence and independence” and skills such as “problem-solving strategies are so much stronger...” Holly connected in this area including attributes gained along the way including how it “made their brains work.” She explained that is helped build “the critical thinking that problem solving, [and] I think opening their eyes obviously to different parts of the world.” Holly views language and culture playing some role in the future of her child: “I think the nature of life, like to be able to help people, whether it’s even just someone in your community—by knowing the language, is good.”

David shared similar feelings on this as he explained how his initial “big-picture benefit” with his child becoming bilingual was for the future “economic benefits where people talk about your greater marketability in the job market” actually changed over time:

I don't think about that anymore. I really think about some of the things like the independence that he's got his ability to, you know, that he can make connections with people from lots of different cultures that that he's able to establish that. Or there's, I guess in a way—fewer strangers in the world.

Conversely, Janine connected with future opportunities that bilingualism might lead up to, “if we see a job posting that says, preferred Spanish speaker or you know, [we tell him] think about all possibilities you have—you now have because of [being bilingual], that others don't have.”

Through the extended time involved with dual language program that began as a 90/10 model in kindergarten, outcomes were clearly evident across a range of studies. Parents have a variety of reasons for enrolling in a dual language program; when asked whether the program was delivering based on why they enrolled, the answer was affirmative from all participants. Through this unanimous response, commonalities existed among the most valued outcomes, as well as some unique reasons programmatic outcomes were favored.

The intended outcome of being bilingual was certainly expressed by all participants; however, as previously articulated by David, being bilingual extended beyond the obvious with how bilingualism would be applied as part of their future. Elaine pointed out how her child would be able to contribute to the world in ways she did not think possible. She described the experience by saying, “I think our minds were blown after kindergarten and especially after first grade.” Similarly, parents like Janine described how the program “exceeded her expectations.” Belinda summed this up very well when she said, “the intent was never for this to be a temporary thing and to use it into the future.” Uniquely, Alex says she can “see her [child] living abroad...I

see her picking her career by how much she can travel.” Alex concluded this area of discussion by stating, “The experience has made all of these options available for her.”

Conclusion

Participants provided a great deal of insight during data collection. The experiences that they shared allowed me to articulate my findings through the five distinct themes in this chapter giving me deeper understanding of program aspects they valued and were excited to share about including academic success, levels of independence and cultural literacy. Despite challenges such as the transition to middle school, they remain committed to the program as they were at the program onset. They are eager to share thoughts and ideas to extend ideas to enhance the program for those to come through in the future.

In Chapter V, I provide an analytical discussion weaving the studies shared in my literature review throughout to connect with the current findings. Through this synthesis, I determine forward opportunities for additional research through areas that emerged outside of the focus of this study. Further, I consider the ways in which the content could inform school leaders on programmatic aspects they might consider when implementing a dual language program in their school or district. Finally, I compile a table organizing the ideas shared by parents to include in a parent resource guide.

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CHAPTER V: ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of my study was to investigate parents' perceptions of their children's experiences in a one-way 90/10 dual language program that began in elementary school and continued into secondary levels of learning at middle or high school. I sought to understand the children's experiences over time and the programmatic features parents favored that prompted them to extend their child's participation into the secondary level. The interview-based nature of the study allowed me to directly ask parents involved with a dual language program to elaborate upon their actual experiences with their family's dual language journey up to this point in their child's schooling. My primary intent was to bring participant experiences forward to understand what they perceived to be the appealing aspects of the program, while at the same time learning about their recommendations for continued future success.

I begin this chapter by answering my research questions with the findings from my study. To aid in the analysis, I connect my findings to those of existing research. I then discuss my recommendations for practice and future scholarship before sharing my final thoughts.

Findings and Analysis

In my overall research question, I asked: *What are parents' perceptions of their children's experiences in a 90/10 language immersion program that began in elementary school and continued into secondary school?* Overall, participants' responses overwhelmingly indicated a positive perception of the impact and benefits of long-term involvement in the program. When I specifically asked whether there was ever a time the child asked to get out of the program, the collective response was that this was never an issue. When asked whether the parent ever felt that way, there were some moments of doubt, particularly upon entering middle school where a change or exit was contemplated, but nothing emerged that they could not work through.

The primary perceptions expressed by parents related directly to the level of academic achievement, language mastery, and general success in school. Parent perceptions became more solidified as students entered the testing grades where formal state assessments began. In addition, measures on language application tests across domains of reading, writing, speaking and listening in Spanish are obtained. Parents celebrated the exceptional performance data on these state measures of proficiency and with language mastery. This is consistent with the current research on dual language benefits. Factors that attract and sustain parental interest in dual language programs include academic achievement as measured by standardized testing, cognitive development, enriched educational experiences, and extended learning opportunities (Block, 2012; Call et al., 2018; Ee, 2018; Kavanagh & Hickey, 2013; Lopez, 2013). These collective studies additionally reflect the ideals that parents in my study brought to the discussion. In addition, studies like McVeigh et al. (2017) and Shannon and Milian (2002) documented reports of parent and school leaders that indicated increased achievement among students that generated more interest in the programs. Similarly, Alanis and Rodriguez (2008) reported that students involved in dual language programs consistently outperformed their peers on state assessments.

One particular benefit that scholars have consistently identified is that students develop a strong command of both languages and a deeper understanding of their own and others' culture (Lopez, 2013; Whiting & Feinauer, 2011). In my study, parents saw the emergence and growth of their child's cultural awareness, including their interest and curiosity in the habits, traditions, and ways of living in other cultures. This finding corresponds with existing research such as Block (2012), where cross-cultural relationships were identified as a strength that parents kept their children involved with a dual language program. In my study, parents noted that the

unconditional acceptance of diversity was an admirable enhancement in their child's character. Parents see these skills and abilities as among those that will help them to have access to more opportunities for a successful future. Finally, similar to studies such as Call et al. (2018), Ee (2018), and Whiting and Feinauer (2011), parents reported that teachers had a profound impact on the relationships spanning beyond the time students are assigned to them into the future as they progress through the program.

In addition to my broad research question, I asked three subquestions that strengthened my data collection and helped to more clearly uncover specific issues identified by parents. Likewise, these questions helped me uncover programmatic areas that need further improvement for added success. First, I asked: *What are the most positive aspects of the program?* In response to this question, I found that **parents valued program outcomes, including preparing their child to be a global citizen, enabling them to achieve content mastery, and encouraging them to take responsibility and become independent.** In terms of preparation to be a global citizen, parents valued the cultural benefits for their child and described them as eye opening. Global citizenship is developed with an understanding of other languages and cultures, allowing for a deeper understanding and development of a diverse mindset. Building the global mindset also includes a cultural aspect that the program carries along with it. Participant Inez captured this by describing her perception that the program “broadened [her son’s] horizons and his understanding of the world.”

Parents also appreciated that their children achieved content mastery. The connections to high achievement and opportunities their child may have in the future emerged from each parent in this study. Responses were connected to excelling in specific content areas, abilities to think, making connections, problem-solving, and performance on state assessments. This is similar to

how Fleckenstein et al. (2019) noted the cognitive benefits of bilingualism on math performance as evidenced by achievement data. These authors' findings indicated that math instruction in a second language "promotes" and "accelerates" achievement. Inez recognized that her son developed the ability to think more critically—in two languages—as a component that helped her son do better in the area of math.

When learning a second language, content mastery is enhanced with the constant processing that occurs within the brain to make connections with the new content. Affirming findings from Hopewell (2011), parent participants from my study believed that dual language program involvement helped students think deeply about class activities and developed critical thinking skills unique to the bilingual brain. In the end, although my study was focused on the 90/10 model, parent participants emphasized the academic benefits of immersion programs that previous scholars have discovered—whether involvement is with a one-way 90/10 model or a two-way 50/50 model (Alanis & Rodriguez, 2008).

Finally, parents asserted that the program helped their children possess a high level of independence and responsibility, both in school and at home. The program prompts students to embrace habits of taking responsibility and owning their work with a clear level of independence. While this is not a specific area that directly emerged in the current research, it is implied as a reflection of students maintaining good work habits engaging them and keeping them attentive to task focus and completion. The study by McVeigh et al. (2017) revealed many of the cognitive benefits of the program that emerge through divergent thinking, metalinguistic awareness, and performing tasks requiring controlled attention.

Woven throughout the collected data, parents generally noted how students essentially complete homework on their own. Students not only take the responsibility to complete

assignments, but develop the ability to be independent and truly take ownership the work that they are asked to complete. They cultivate these habits from an early stage in the program and take care of what is needed based on the teacher directions. Elaine described how her child is not only independent and responsible, but “advocates for himself.” This area contributes to the body of existing research as to the benefits of program involvement identified by parents.

In the second subquestion, I asked: *What aspects might be changed or improved?* First, I found that **parents identified challenges with their child maintaining engagement with the adopted language along the way, primarily during transitions from elementary to middle and middle to high school.** It was quite clear throughout data collection that the transition to middle school was the most significant challenge for students and parents. Alex described that there has not been a bigger challenge and source of frustration than the shift into middle school. After being in the elementary setting for 6 years with the 90/10 model, they were not prepared for the middle school schedule with the reduction of Spanish to one class and no longer being delivered in a core content area. The consensus of my study’s participants was that the middle school transition is the area that would need the most attention if a change in the continuum of the program were to be made by the school system. This is similar to findings from the study of Giacchino and Piller (2006), who discovered that over half of the parents in their study were concerned with student participation in a dual language program beyond elementary school. Other studies such as Wesley and Baig (2012) noted that the expanded academic and enrichment offerings at the secondary level forced parents and their children to choose between the dual language program or different academic pathways offered by the school, such as an International Baccalaureate program.

In a finding not apparent in previous studies, some parents from my study considered friendships and the social aspect to be a challenge through transitions to middle and high school. Their children have been with the same peers for 6 years in elementary school, and as they enter middle school, the group is split into varied teams, classes, and environments. While Block (2021) celebrated the social aspect as an added advantage of dual language involvement, previous studies have not examined the potential loss of this environment upon the transition out of elementary school. It seems that program parents need advance notice on what to expect with the middle and high school transitions, including the scheduling process and impact on the social aspect.

Another challenge that participants from my study identified was providing help with homework and language application in a home where the language being learned is not used. This concern is similar to those expressed in existing studies (Giacchino-Baker & Piller, 2006; Kavanagh & Hickey, 2013; Lopez, 2013; Reese et al., 2006). Additionally, previous research has demonstrated that families lacked access to books and other literacy materials, simple homework help from a parent or family member, or community members who are knowledgeable about the language of acquisition (Block, 2012; Kavanagh & Hickey, 2013; Lao, 2004; Sanders, 2018; Zheng, 2020). The parents in my study stressed the need for the development of pathways for homework help and other supports. Similarly, they expressed worry over the loss of language skills over the summer and progress through the program if there are not opportunities to engage with the language. Scholars such as Giacchino-Baker and Piller (2006) have cited these issues as potential barriers for students to be able to apply language outside of the school setting in the home.

As another area for improvement and change, **parents perceive teachers to be the primary leader making a powerful impact in the program in terms of language and culture, however their children experienced challenges during periods of transition to new teachers.** For instance, in the area of teacher impact and relationships, parents described the role of the teacher as most impactful because of their training and abilities to bring so much to the classroom to enrich the state standards through a language program. Successful outcomes in any educational setting are linked to the preparedness of the teacher. Dual language requires a well-prepared educator who has the capability to recognize and measure student abilities in the students' native language in order to provide appropriate instruction at a meaningful level in the target language of acquisition. Similar to my parents' perceptions, Hopewell (2011) noted the importance of providing dual language program teachers with the resources necessary to create a classroom rich with language resources in both languages and also to have an educator who is skilled in language development in both languages for success with second language acquisition. Parents expressed admiration of the teachers' abilities to develop inter-personal relationships with all students. Holly described this best, stating, "I think that's, that's definitely in the top of why it's so great—is the relationships."

Alex described the experiences with a teacher new to the program as just being on a learning curve, that it takes them time to adjust to the United States, a new community and school. Recognizing so much is being thrown at them they may naturally flounder for a bit, but in no time, they are situated and provide a great experience. The problems reside in communications and an unfamiliarity with everything around them. Luckily, this parent frustration diminishes over time. Holly describes it as the worst experience but from a slightly different view. She notes how little support there is for the new teacher in relation to the personal

aspect, like finding a place to live and furnishing it, learning the community and building a social network.

The biggest academic challenge parents referred to involved the arrival of a new teacher from a country that spoke a different Spanish dialect. In two situations this occurred with some families when their child was in first grade and others when their child transitioned to the middle school in seventh grade. In each situation the incoming teacher was from Spain. While Spanish was their spoken language, it was Castilian dialect, which differed from the experience students had from other teachers in the program who spoke Latin American Spanish. The rate at which the language is spoken was also different, with Castilian Spanish delivered at a more rapid pace. Students grappled with this and their frustration led to parent frustration until program administrators identified the problem and helped to bridge the dialect differences for students.

Besides identifying specific challenges, I also found that **parents advocated for various ways to improve and enhance the program.** For instance, parents like Alex expressed the importance of maintaining a focus on native language use at home. Others echoed the ideas Janine provided that would be helpful for parents at any point in the program, like getting books in Spanish or watching TV shows and movies in Spanish. In addition, it was quite interesting and rather surprising to note the frequency with which participants like David indicated parents need to “back off” or to “give space” for the program to work and that it is ok for kids to struggle a bit. Inez captured this feeling by stating, “So, with this program, you kind of have to let them find their way.” Trusting in the program does not mean to let it all go, as parents need to provide some level of support and involvement that fuel the pathway to their child being independent and to be a problem-solver on their own.

Parents also provided specific recommendations for the program to consider, including more proactive communication. The first suggestion was providing this communication at key times of transitions, especially from elementary to middle and middle to high. Another key communication would be for the school to include details about the teacher and the country they are coming from, since different Spanish language dialects may have slightly different usages, accents, and implications. Parents also suggested finding ways to increase student demographic diversity in the program through advertising and encouragement of participation in different ways. Access to dual language programs are addressed in studies such as that of Zheng (2020), who noted that more work needs to be done around program student demographic diversity in order to avoid giving a perception that the program serves only a targeted demographic audience. Finally, the development of a road map of potential program outcomes or pathways may help with the parent/student focus on long-term goals.

In the final subquestion, I asked: *How do their children's experiences in the program compare to the anticipated outcomes that originally prompted the parents to enroll their children in the program?* I found that **parents reported that their original visions for their children's futures upon program enrollment remained intact.** Parents explained seeing valuable program outcomes that they were hoping for as well as some pleasant surprises along the way. Parents had a variety of reasons for enrolling in a dual language program. When I asked whether the program was delivering what they expected it to deliver when they enrolled their child, the answers were in the affirmative from all participants. Parents celebrated the level of engagement and how it kept students engaged in the learning.

Naturally, the intended outcome of being bilingual was expressed across all participants and how the involvement enhances their future through opportunities. Multiple studies have

reflected the long-term benefits of being involved with a dual language program. The investment in the program brings significant commitment, despite the fact that there are no guarantees to parents of the outcomes that previous research studies have captured. Studies such as those by Block (2012), Ee (2018), Lopez (2013), and Whiting and Feinauer (2011) have revealed a variety of long-term positive benefits in areas such as career opportunities, travel, and stronger abilities to communicate with others, problem-solve, and easily recognize and accept diversity. These specific areas also emerged in my study, with parents expressing the benefits and opportunities now available and accessible to them.

Discussion

Participants provided a great deal of insights during the interviews. It was thrilling to hear the excitement in their voices as they shared about their child's dual language experiences. I could tell how passionate each parent was with their commitment to the program and to their interest in their child having a better future. As I was reflecting on the collected data, it brought my research to life. I was quite taken by the responses that were provided during each of the interviews. I knew there were connections to the literature I reviewed in Chapter II, but it was not until I looked at the data in totality and compared my findings to existing literature to see how connected it all was, as well as areas I was surprised that emerged. For example, the existing studies I reviewed did not reveal much about the passion and enthusiasm participating parents had about program involvement. Nor did existing studies capture the sacrifices and measures parents took to be involved with a dual language program, the continual support of their child, and the others involved in the program. In this section, I discuss some important issues from my findings.

Passionate Parents and Self Interest

Parents possessed a true passion for global learning and language acquisition. While it may not have existed for all parents upon program entry, those who continued to enroll their child valued the influence the program had on their child(ren) and the impact it has had on their abilities, habits, and character. They also came to realize the potential impact on their child's future as a global citizen. Ultimately, the parent decided to enroll their child based on their hope for their child's educational experience to be as successful as possible. Reconnecting to my theoretical framework, Shuls (2018) described the theory of self-interest in a study specific to parents' personal decisions regarding school choice and their broader support for school programs as being specific to an "individual's personal decision on where their child goes to school" (p. 80). Shuls found that parents from his study wanted to do what was best for their children, but also wanted a larger system to help all kids in relation to schooling opportunities.

In my study, although parents may have wanted to support the greater good, they also made a personal choice to follow a path that they deemed best for their child and acted in the end in their own self-interest. They were informed consumers and the desire to make their child's future better by equipping them with a second language and cultural competence was a driver of their choices. Perhaps their perspective is that involvement in the dual language program would allow their child to bridge a language and cultural divide through communication and understanding with significant impact for the greater good in breaking down barriers of language and culture? Or perhaps their perspective is that the program could provide their child an advantage over other children in life?

Until I applied Shuls' (2018) theory to analyze my findings, I had not considered how those families involved in dual language programs were making an investment in their child's

future that will further have a ripple effect on those people they encounter long into the future through career, travel and their open mindedness. Even as a parent of a bilingual child, I had not fully realized that my child's participation might benefit others in some ways. At the same time, in my position as a principal of a dual language school, I sometimes see an aspect of self-interest that suggests that parents make choices that are more about themselves than their child. For instance, there are cases when a student struggles and, despite school-provided supports, a parent must consider the administration's recommendation of moving the child to a traditional classroom. Parents would do anything to keep their child in the program, even if the administration strongly advises the parents to remove their child. Yet, the parents deny the change. In examples like these, the parent's choice to enroll their child in the program suggests that it is because doing so carries some sort of social status. And, even if their child is struggling academically, the parent is reluctant to change direction if it means no longer being in the program. In the end, the reasons that parents' enroll their children in language immersion programs are quite complex. Due to this complexity, I could not ultimately pinpoint the exact basis for their decisions beyond what they told me in the interviews. Perhaps future research studies can focus more specifically on this issue.

Considering Cultural Awareness

An additional area of significance of my study was the insight it provided into some of the values that students gain from program involvement. In two specific situations, parents shared experiences where their child confronted their parents' biased (whether unintentional or not) action. Francine and Janine recalled their experiences where their child confronted them for an assumption they made that challenged their child's cultural understanding. Francine, for instance, was reprimanded by her child when they approached a taco truck and Francine

encouraged her child to order in Spanish. Her son confronted her about what she said, calling it “racist.” Francine acknowledged the assumption she had made was that they were Spanish speakers just because they were working at a taco truck. Similarly, Janine described an experience with her son when they were visiting a foreign country. As they were exploring, Janine referred to something as “weird” and her son quickly pointed out to her that it is “not weird, it’s just different,” thus reminding his mother about the danger of cultural assumptions. The children’s courage to confront their parents about these issues suggests the important role that language immersion programs can play in helping students, and by extension, their parents enhance their cultural awareness. While not a direct focus of this study, this finding is important to bring forward, as more work needs to be done in this specific area of how dual-language programs affect students’ cultural awareness, understanding, and acceptance of others.

Parent Privilege

At the end of my interviews, I inquired whether parents remembered why they originally chose to enroll their child in the program. As this was a decision made many years ago, I thought that this could have been since forgotten. To the contrary, I was surprised with how well parents remembered how they became aware of the program and why they decided to enroll their child in it. The action that surprised me the most was that three of the parents in this study intentionally purchased their home in the school attendance zone in which the program was offered. This action makes quite a statement as to the value these parents placed upon the program—especially compared to families who enrolled just because the opportunity was there in their existing attendance zone and the school had a positive reputation. This specific action implied that the language immersion program benefits are worth moving into a school attendance

zone to have the opportunity for their child to become involved. The ability to relocate this seemingly easy, however, is not likely a possibility for all families.

While not a focus area of my study, future researchers may wish to delve deeper into this issue with an attention to the role of privilege. The fact that three of the families I interviewed noted the importance to reside in the attendance zone in which the program was offered is significant. In situations where families were not living in the school zone, they had to secure a school transfer from the Shady Lakes District office. With an approved transfer, families must then provide transportation to and from the school on a daily basis. In previous studies that highlighted equity issues (Palmer, 2010; Rubinstein-Avila, 2002; Whiting & Feinauer, 2011), the location of dual language programs required some families to provide transportation, thus creating a hardship for those parents who had limited ability to transport their child. This obstacle also represented a major factor preventing broader and more diverse access to a dual language program. In my study, 50% of the participants attended the elementary dual language program on a transfer. I asked each of them whether transportation was an issue; in each case, it was not. One wonders how many potentially interested families could not afford to provide transportation for their child to attend a program their family may have desired their child to attend.

Recommendations

In this section, I provide some recommendations related to the practice of dual-language programs as well as future research.

Recommendations for Practice

Clear Map of Program Progression

Parents expressed that they had to quickly problem-solve and seek district support on areas that arose through the course of program implementation; some problems were rather surprising. Parents stated that they need to know the long-term program goals and outcomes with district pathways to support these goals. It is a strong recommendation that a clear map be developed outlining the pathways toward end results through each phase of the program beginning at the elementary level, through middle school and through the completion of high school. It is during times of specific transitions that could be discouraging and create a great deal of worry that the children will lose their language abilities. Based on the cautions given by parents, there are proactive ways to address the perception of program decline and potential language learning loss, and the pathway map may be quite helpful to address this area of need.

Support for Student Transitions to Secondary School

As the parents in this particular district experienced, adapting to the middle school structure was not easy because the organization of middle school itself presented a challenge to school leadership to absorb and blend an immersion program into the components of school offerings. Some of the challenges included the size of the incoming group being comparatively small, which did not align with the district's teacher-student ratios with staffing. The block schedule allowed for time where students experienced elective courses of their choosing in addition to core classes. This seemed to be the obvious scheduling solution to provide access to Spanish within the elective schedule; however, there was a problem with this solution. It would be a full-year component, which would prevent access to other elective areas in the performing arts such as band. Parents raised the concern and advocacy for the program continuity to remain

strong and not shortchange students by preventing access to other electives if they chose to stick with Spanish. School district leadership heard the concerns voiced by dual language parents; through problem-solving, they devised a strong plan to address this concern with making dual language part of their core scheduling. A second strong recommendation would be to develop the model for secondary level learning to avoid the problem of making students and families choose between language and other enrichment opportunities such as band or athletics.

Consider expanding enrollment

Schools operating a 90/10 program might consider moving native Spanish speakers into the cohort of immersion students when the level of language development aligns with a specific grade level. In my current setting, I have been able to replace vacant seats in the program with bilingual students whose first language is Spanish, yet they are also fluent in English. If the instruction is geared toward biliteracy, at a point in the program the first language should not matter. Considering this option for students not only diversifies the program, it further magnifies that being bilingual is being bilingual regardless of native language. As indicated in the previous section, a researcher may consider this an aspect of privilege to explore further – specifically, if a student in our English-speaking nation demonstrates success in a second language immersion program, they become bilingual. However, if a non-native English speaker is involved with English language development support, they are not described as bilingual, but fall into some category of English as a second language learner. If bilingualism is mastering two languages, does it really matter what the native language is; aren't they equally bilingual?

Support for Parents

During data collection, I posed a question to parents related to the creation of a parent resource guide or list of some sort. Existing research has shown that parents may not be fully

aware of reliable resources accessible to them in the community, such as tutoring (Lao, 2004; Giacchino & Piller, 2006; Kavanagh & Hickey, 2013; Bucknam & Hood, 2020). In these situations, parents seem to rely heavily on the school to ensure that these academic supports are provided regarding student progress, community opportunities, and resources available. I compiled the suggestions from parents into a chart (see Table 1) of what a parent resource list could look like and the items it might include. If developed and distributed by the school, I would strongly recommend that parents and dual language teachers have a leading role in its development.

Table 1: Parent Resource List

PARENT RESOURCE LIST	
Ideas generated across all study participants	
Local Community Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate and offer events at book stores, cultural events/festivals, public library, restaurants, and local university programs and events • Increase summer language offerings across the community through agencies, organizations, and businesses.
Networking Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance social media connections through mechanisms such as a dual language parent Facebook network, Google Translate, online tutorial programs or Aps, Twitter feeds • Disseminate more information about language and cultural event postings, clubs and after school/summer programs, teacher suggestions, school level student support teams, and school district offerings. • Possibly connect with families who have older children in the program or graduates for suggestions and ideas of how they keep connected.
Resources you may not always think of having access to already	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look for access audio books, movies, Spanish TV, Spanish tutors, and basic vocabulary cards to review at home. • Make simple connections to allow students to just talk with others in Spanish, access Spanish publications such as newspapers, and make magazine subscriptions. • Continue with typical things at home like reading together in English with rich conversations with varied vocabulary. • Conduct local internet searches for Spanish language and related cultural events in the local and nearby communities.

This parent resource guide could be developed into a more personalized guide for a specific school or district. Modifying this guide for parent and school use may be beneficial and even serve as a basis for parent information sessions for targeted groups of families. For example, I would arrange a parent gathering with fifth-grade families around mid-year to talk about what to expect through the transition to middle school. This would be a great time to do this, especially if the middle school begins prescheduling for fall at this time of year. I would include the middle school dual language teacher and traditional teachers to talk about the structures in place for students to access language and cultural connections.

Similarly, parents in the study suggested a great number of ideas to include in a quick reference/resource list. This list would include local events where students could experience language and culture beyond the school walls. This might list locations of bookstores where titles in Spanish are available, restaurants, stores, and even educational offerings from local agencies and higher education communities. Ideally, this resource list would include programs for children to keep them engaged with language over breaks and through summer months. Finally, establishing a local parent network to join the connections and sharing of ideas, resources, and experiences could be quite beneficial for families involved in a dual language program.

Recommendations for Future Research

The Shady Lake district's investment in this language immersion program appears to be worthwhile, as the positive outcomes are evident in terms of participant feedback. Despite some struggles along the way, persistence seems to have made a difference not only with student achievement, but with helping enhance students' cultural empathy and individual character. The pathway presented to students through the dual language experience may bring about enhanced opportunities for future success, in which they have a firm grasp on their world view at an early

age and are positioned to become productive members of a global society. Students' development of cultural competence is an area for further study as it is a harder outcome to identify as compared the mastery of a second language. I would strongly advocate for a study to explore whether the dual language program helps the learner develop a well-developed sense of cultural understanding, including the acceptance of diversity. In addition, as I suggested in the Discussion section above, a future researcher might encourage parents to think more critically about the choices they are able to make to enroll their child(ren) in a dual language program and the role that privilege plays in those choices. Of particular relevance to this issue is my finding that families purchased homes in the school zone or had the option to consider a transfer where transportation is not a hardship. Finally, future studies might explore the issue of parent self-interest in dual language programs more deeply.

Final Thoughts

Parents were able to easily articulate the positive aspects of the dual language program, identify the most impactful events upon their child, compare their experience to that of others not in the program, and to express the need for change to improve the program. They can capture how their feelings may have changed over time, as well as how their current experience aligns with their anticipated outcomes connecting back to the reason for pursuing involvement with a dual language immersion program in the first place. They were equally able to describe areas of concern they expressed. At first, I thought this was all somewhat odd; however, upon reflection, it made sense as they experienced the problems and then problem-solved among stakeholders (i.e., teachers, students, other parents, administrators, and district leaders). They essentially owned the issue and the solutions that were developed. Parents are keen, outcome-driven observers and investors who hope their child enjoys optimal success. To conclude this study with

final thoughts, I will share two areas that stayed with me throughout the study as well as immediate actions I could take as principal of a dual language school.

First, parents are a valuable component to a successful program if they are made to feel welcome and a part of the team to make great things happen for kids. The support and investment made for their child demonstrates a commitment to learning and program sustainability. Their advocacy brings a concerned voice and perspective to the table. Secondly, relationships matter. The impact on student learning is quite powerfully enhanced by the types of relationships developed between teacher and student, as well as teacher and parent. Educators are certainly aware of this already; however, the depth of the relationships in immersion programs is something to be admired and replicated in any instructional setting.

Throughout my study I gained a great deal of insight from parents on the many facets of dual-language programs, some I was blind to and some I was quite aware of that existed. The most compelling part of this study involved the interview component that allowed me to connect with parents in a detailed conversation about their experiences and perspectives of the program. The data could not be harnessed in any other better way. I appreciated the energy, emotion and enthusiasm they expressed for the impact the program had on their child and their family. I exit this side of my study to reenter the school setting with a new lens on the “why” many parents choose dual-language. I am able to immediately infuse ideas to enhance our school’s program and to bring about change with communications to dual-language parents on what to expect each year. For example, the percentage of Spanish access declines after kindergarten and first grade as formal English instruction begins. It then declines even more as student progress through elementary school. I have never put that in a trajectory map for the parents in my school. If they can see the program actually moves from a 90/10, to an 80/20, 70/30, 60/40 and 50/50 in

Elementary, the sequence of decrease in Spanish immersion would be expected to continue as they progress into secondary level learning. Perhaps that will help them navigate the stark differences they each experienced when their child entered middle school.

As another takeaway from this study, I am in an ideal position as principal to create a parent resource list specific to our school community and distribute it to parents throughout their time in the program. At the start of the school year we have a parent welcome back event. Compiling a folder of related data may be helpful for parents if it is provided annually so they know what to expect each year as they matriculate through the program. Ultimately, I plan to employ what I have learned through my study with other school leaders to consider as ways to enhance the programs at their schools. Upon final completion of my study, I will share a presentation of my findings with the other global school principals who offer a dual-language program to see what they may want to adopt into their local school community.

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YOU ARE INVITED!



This invitation is to participate in a Spanish Immersion research study on programs in your area!

The research is currently being conducted by Jack Davern, Ed.S. a graduate student at The University of North Carolina, Greensboro

What is the study about?

Parent perspectives and experiences regarding their child's extended involvement in Spanish immersion.

What is required to participate?

Participants must be a parent or guardian of a student who is currently involved with a Spanish immersion program at the middle or high school level. The program involvement must have started in an elementary school operating a 90/10 program model.

Who do I contact?

Parents interested in participating can express interest by sending an email message to Jack Davern using the following email address: j_davern@uncg.edu

How will participation occur?

Participation will involve an interview that will occur through a scheduled virtual meeting. The questions are intended to collect data from a variety of individuals to inform the findings related to the area of study. Interviews will last approximately 1 hour.

What are the benefits of my participation?

You will be contributing to a body of educational research accessible to school leaders to capitalize upon when operating a dual language program with specific attention to parent perspectives.

Additional Information: IRB # FY22-532 – Approved: 4.20.22



APPENDIX B: PARENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Demographic information collected at the start of each interview.

1. How would you describe your race/ethnicity? If you prefer not to say, just state that.
2. What is the highest degree level that you have completed? If you prefer not to say, just state that.
3. What is your current employment status? If you prefer not to say, just state that.
4. What is your marital status? If you prefer not to say, just state that.

Student information and parent perceptions of their children's experiences

5. What grade is/are your child(ren) currently in?
6. How do you perceive your child's experiences with dual language up to this point?
7. How would you describe your child's level of confidence in their adopted language?
What about levels of independence? Responsibility?
8. How has your child responded to the cultural aspects of the program? In what ways might you be able to describe their cross-cultural attitudes?
9. In the area of academics how would you describe the skills and abilities of your child in the area of Mathematics? Reading? Science? Language?
10. Tell me about the teachers along the way – in your opinion, were they well prepared?
How were the relationships with your child? With you?

Positive Aspects of the dual language program

11. What, if anything, have you/your child enjoyed up to this point with the dual language immersion program?
12. Describe what you have observed to be among the most powerful benefits, if any, for your child through their dual language involvement.

13. While not necessarily related specifically to immersion, what experiences does your child often talk about when reflecting on school memories?
14. Do you see your child applying Spanish language skills in their future, after graduation and beyond? If so, in what ways?

Suggested changes or improvements

15. What, if anything, have you/your child not enjoyed up to this point with the dual language immersion program?
16. Describe what you have observed to be the most concerning or negative aspects, if any, for your child through their dual language involvement.
17. If there was a self-help handbook for immersion parents, what topics would you hope to see in the table of contents?
18. What would a school include on a parent resource list that would be helpful to have along their dual language journey?
19. If there was anything that you wish you could go back and change about any aspect of the program, what would that be?

Changes over time in perceptions and experience

20. Over time, what were the areas of greatest change that you and your child had to adapt to? How might you have been supported through this adjustment?
21. Has your child complained or asked you to take them out of the program at any point along the way? Do you recall the situation? What made that feeling fade?

How do their children's experiences in the program compare to the anticipated outcomes that originally prompted the parents to enroll their children in the program?

22. Thinking back to when you began with the immersion program, do you recall how you became aware of its existence and why you originally chose to enroll? How does your experience at this point relate to that original intention?
23. In your view, has your child responded to the program in the ways that you had been hoping when originally enrolling? What are some of the anticipated outcomes you are hoping to see with your child through continued growth in the future?

Conclusion

24. If you were in a conversation with a parent who had a child entering kindergarten and were thinking about applying for the program at their school, what would you tell them? What would you celebrate what would you caution them about?
25. Through your extended involvement, has there been a time that you wanted to withdraw from the program? If so, what kept you from doing so? If not, what kept you anchored?
26. Our time together has covered many aspects of the dual language program, is there an area you are surprised I did not ask about? What would you like to say about that area?
- As we conclude, are there general comments that you would like to share from your perspective as a parent on the overall experience this program has had on your child and your vision for your child with continued involvement?