Race, Power, and Equity in a Multiethnic Urban Elementary School with a Dual-Language “Strand” Program

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Dual-language education is often lauded for providing high-caliber bilingual instruction in an integrated classroom. This is complicated, however, when a dual-language program does not include all members of a school community. This article examines a “strand” dual-language program that attracts middle-class white students to a predominantly black and Latino community; yet, only some Latino students and almost no black students are included in the dual-language program. Although rarely directly discussing race, teachers and parents simultaneously commend the program for bringing diversity and enrichment to the campus, and accuse it of exacerbating inequities in the educational experiences of different children at the school. Taking a critical race perspective, and in particular using the principle of “interest convergence” and the frames of “color-blind racism” (Eduardo Bonilla-Silva 2006), this article works to uncover the forces underlying these tensions. [two-way immersion, dual-language education, African Americans, critical race theory]

Dual-language education, also known as “Two-Way Immersion” (TWI), is an increasingly popular form of bilingual education in the United States in which English-speaking children and minority language speakers learn together in the same classroom, with the goals of bilingualism, biliteracy, cross-cultural understanding, and high academic achievement for all (Lindholm-Leary 2001). Dual-language classrooms typically divide their days or weeks between the two languages of instruction, expecting all class members to interact in only one language at a time (Hornberger 2005; Pérez 2004; Reyes 2001). An effort is made to ensure a balance of students between Spanish and English native speakers in each classroom. Teachers teach both languages through content according to preset program design decisions.

Even as traditional bilingual education programs are under attack in the United States, dual-language education is on the rise (Center for Applied Linguistics 2003). Although there have been some critiques of the model, posing the question of who these programs actually serve and wondering about the effects of incorporating English-speaking children into bilingual classrooms—particularly powerful, middle-class English-speaking children (Valdés 1997)—researchers, practitioners, parents, and students almost universally applaud this relatively new model for bilingual education, and encourage its expansion (Christian et al. 1997; Cloud et al. 2000; Lindholm-Leary 2001; Thomas and Collier 2002). The model calls on teachers, parents, and school leaders to pay explicit attention to cultural and linguistic diversity and to help children reach across divides. There are explicit stated goals of cross-cultural understanding and high academic achievement for all students in TWI classrooms, implying that equity for all participants is a priority. This article draws on the “interest convergence” principle in critical race theory (Bell 1980; Dixson and Rousseau 2006; Ladson-Billings and Tate 1995) to interrogate the equity of one Two Way program, looking in particular at admissions policies, enrollment patterns, and faculty and staff attitudes about African American involvement (or lack of involvement) in the program, and using a methodology of ethnographic observation and interview.
Although many dual-language programs eventually take over entire school sites, the program that is the focus of this article is a “strand” program. This means that it is situated in an English-language mainstream public school much as a transitional bilingual education program might be, with one classroom out of two or three at every grade level dedicated to Spanish–English dual-language instruction, and the other classes conducted entirely in English. It is only a strand program, rather than a “whole school” program, because the TWI program at Medgar Evers (pseudonym) was designed to replace, year by year, the transitional bilingual education program that existed previously. It is only in the year of this study that the first cohort of TWI students has reached fifth grade, and the transitional program has finally been phased out completely.

Taking a snapshot in the year of the study, the school appears on the surface to be very integrated. The student body is split almost evenly between African Americans, Latinos, and whites. Yet a closer look reveals some irregularities. Except for the odd student here and there, African American students are not enrolled in the TWI program, and a significant portion of Latino students are in English-medium classes, because half the spots in TWI classrooms (unlike the transitional bilingual classrooms they replaced) go to mainly white middle-class, English-speaking children. Thus, the TWI program, explicitly designed to promote equity and help children bridge cultural and linguistic differences, at the same time appears to exclude African American children. Furthermore, begun in a spirit of equity, to improve the academic achievement of the marginalized population or Latino Spanish-speaking students, the program as enacted reduces the number of spots available to those children in favor of mostly white, middle-class, English-speaking students. Although teachers and school leaders recognize these problems, on various levels and for various reasons they have not moved to remedy them.

Who benefits most from this TWI program? I argue that the principle of “interest convergence,” identified in critical race theory can help us respond to this question (Bell 1980; Dixson and Rousseau 2006; Ladson-Billings and Tate 1995). The Latino students in the two-way program benefit from its high caliber academic offerings, and the students of color (both black and Latino) throughout the school benefit from the added resources of the white middle-class families who have joined the campus to take advantage of the attractive two-way program. However, it is only possible for these marginalized communities to reap the benefits of the program because of the converging interests of the white middle-class community. Merely gaining admission to the special magnet TWI program poses serious challenges to both blacks and Latinos in the neighborhood surrounding the school. The reasons for these challenges are complex, and involve not only institutionally sanctioned admissions and administrative policies but also attitudes of “color-blind racism” (Bonilla-Silva 2006) and an unwillingness to openly confront issues of race (Castagno 2008).

**Literature Review: African American Children in TWI Programs**

There is still very little research around the participation of African American children in TWI programs. Not surprisingly, it appears clear in the limited studies that have been conducted that African American children have the same capacity to excel in language-immersion programs as children from other racial backgrounds (Holobow et al. 1991; Lightbown 2007; Nicoladis et al. 1998). Yet the inclusion of African American children in TWI programs still appears to be controversial and challenging for a number of reasons, and therefore worthy of further study (Bender 2000; Krause 1999; Valdés 2002; Wiese 2004). First of all, as Valdés (2002) points out, many—if not most—two-way schools tend to view their populations in dichotomous terms, with generally white middle-class children as the “English-dominant” students and Latino immigrant children as the “Spanish-
dominant” students. In describing the school she called “Metro2,” a dual-language school in a large urban school district in Southern California, Amanda Lewis (2003) notes that there are very few African American children in the school; this is not uncommon, and was the case in the school that is the subject of this article. Of the 335 TWI programs that are currently listed in the “Directory of TWI Programs,” only 13 report that more than 50 percent of their native English-speaking students are African American, whereas 189 report that African Americans compose less than five percent of their native English speakers (Center for Applied Linguistics 2008).

There are TWI schools that explicitly strive to serve African American children. However, the task of educating urban African American poor or working-class children, in particular, in a dual-language program appears to be a challenging one, according to some research. Some researchers have documented situations in which African American children appear to be underserved in two-way programs, their particular cultural, linguistic, and academic needs remaining unmet (Bender 2000; Krause 1999; Wiese 2004). Krause (1999) found that despite a school’s specific efforts to include African American heritage components in the curriculum and to provide African American students with enhanced supports, African American children were more likely to leave the school before graduating from fifth grade and were more likely to be behind in reading than their white or Latino peers. The author speculated that perhaps it was not race but dialectal issues, that is, speaking black vernacular English, rather than a more standard register, that was the true predictor of low reading level and high rates of attrition among black children.

Weise (2004) tracked a school’s struggle to find ways to adapt their TWI program model to better meet the needs of low-achieving African American students who appeared not to be gaining from Spanish instruction. Largely through the lens of one teacher who struggles with the decision of whether to compromise her adherence to the two-way “program model” to adapt to the unique needs of her students, Weise presents the tension as one between “following the model” and “meeting the needs of” largely poor African American students. Bender (2000) explores the attitudes of teachers toward language use and intergroup relations in a dual-language program serving entirely African American and Puerto Rican children in poverty. All of the children in the program Bender describes were speakers of nonstandard dialects of either English, or Spanish, or both. She found that the program’s successful implementation was constrained in part by teachers’ misconceptions about the process of language learning, lack of preparation in curriculum or teaching of language and content, and deficit attitudes toward their minority students. Furthermore, structural features of the program and administrative decisions failed to address the root causes of the intergroup tensions the program had been developed to help overcome.

Thus, according to these researchers, integrating African American children in TWI settings poses unique challenges that researchers and practitioners have yet to fully investigate or overcome (Valdés 2002).

Others, meanwhile, have documented two-way programs making concerted efforts to specifically address the needs of African American students, or have shown that these programs can serve poor, urban black children better than their regular neighborhood schools (Holobow et al. 1991; Howard et al. 2003; Lightbown 2007; Nicoladis et al. 1998). In 2000, Parchia (see Howard et al. 2003) interviewed African American parents and children in two TWI schools on the East coast. She found that although parents and children did not feel that their own particular cultural or academic concerns were reflected in the TWI programs in which they were enrolled (rather, the programs focused more on Latino culture), they chose to stay in these programs to enhance future educational and job successes. Her interviewees also reported that TWI schools did a far superior job at offering children integrated cross-cultural experiences than the non-TWI schools with which they had had contact.
Lightbown’s (2007) study of one TWI school in which most of the English speakers were African Americans from low socioeconomic backgrounds used assessment data to show that these children outperformed children of similar background in English-only programs. The author went on to argue that the TWI program “provided a rich educational opportunity for two groups of students whose academic performance is a source of concern in many schools across the United States: English language learners and African-American students from low socioeconomic backgrounds” (Lightbown 2007:30). Nicola-dis and colleagues (1998) looked at the performance of African American children to demonstrate that, in a language that is not their first language (and is therefore in a sense an “equalizer” between white and black English speakers), African American children can perform as well as white English-speaking children—particularly when controlling for nonverbal intelligence. Holobow and colleagues (1991) looked at African American children in French-immersion programs in Cincinnati, finding that they did no worse (nor really any better) than African American children in regular educational programs, and yet as a bonus they were able to perform at least some of their academic work in French as well as English. Overall, the jury is still out on the question of whether African American children can be well-served in TWI programs, and most TWI programs do not appear to make much effort to explicitly address their unique language and cultural needs (Valdés 2002).

Throughout this research, both educators and researchers toe a fine line between documenting the successes and failures in TWI education to reach and teach black children, and expressing deficit orientations toward black children, their families, and their language (Valencia 1997b). Couching their observations in language terms, educators—both the researchers and the teachers they are studying—express concern that African American children who are speakers of African American vernacular English, or black English, will not provide adequate modeling of English for their English-learning peers. In addition, educators express concern that African American children themselves will struggle in language-immersion programs because they are not “native” speakers of the dominant language of standard English. There appears to be an assumption, hiding within the premises of much of this research, that the value of immersion programs for African American children—unlike for white children—is still in question. There is a certain irony to this, given that among the stated goals of TWI are both high academic achievement and cross-cultural awareness and understanding among all students. Why would this not include African American children? Surely, the challenges posed by a nonstandard dialect of English can be overcome within a program designed to promote multilingualism and multiliteracies. I argue that the dynamics of enrollment and other institutional complexities of schools, as well as the unexamined ideologies of at least some educators within them, may be at least partially responsible for this disparity.

Theoretical Frame: Interest Convergence and Color-Blind Racism

This article is an examination of a set of ethnographic observation and interview data of the parents and teachers of white, African American, and Latino second grade students in a school with a reputable “strand” dual-language program. For the purposes of this analysis, two specific areas of current theory on race will be most useful: the principles of interest convergence and the “absolute right to exclude,” as explained in the frame of critical race theory; and the pervasiveness of deficit orientations among educators toward students of color in schools, which can be most clearly understood in this context through Bonilla-Silva’s (2006) construct of “color-blind racism” and Hurd’s (2008) construct of “normative whiteness.”
Emerging from the legal tradition, critical race theory argues that economic forces drive the continued pervasiveness of racism and marginalization of communities of color (Dixson and Rousseau 2006; Ladson-Billings and Tate 1995; Parker et al. 1999). Short of an economic revolution, inequities will continue; someone must always be on the bottom. Middle-class and white communities, those in power in both a governmental and economic sense, have allowed overt racism to fade on many fronts, but only in ways that do not truly undermine their maintenance of power. One of the basic principles of critical race theory, known as “interest convergence,” argues that whites will only allow change to happen in the interest of greater equity for disempowered minorities in ways that coincide with their own self-interests (Bell 1980; Donnor 2006; Morris 2006). In other words, every time it appears that whites are giving ground to people of color, in truth the change operates in their own interests.

The privileges of whiteness, referred to as “whiteness as property,” include the right to exclude others (Harris 1993). Schools, being institutions that serve those in power, reserve the “absolute right to exclude” certain children through various means, including magnet programs, tracking, access to advanced courses, and so forth (Ladson-Billings 2005:146). This analysis of one TWI program illustrates the principle of interest convergence and the right to exclude. Although the TWI strand program at Medgar Evers gives an appearance of providing greater equity for the children of color at the school, it only does so insofar as it serves the needs of the white and middle-class families who travel across town to attend. Furthermore, spaces in the program are coveted by white community members, and the lottery system and other admissions processes operate in such a way as to make it very difficult for neighborhood African American children to gain entrance.

Deficit theory is the “blame the victim” phenomenon that has plagued our public institutions for at least a century (Ryan 1971; Valencia 1997b). If students of color are failing in schools, according to deficit reasoning there is something wrong with them: either with their genetics, their culture and communities, or their families (Ladson-Billings 2005; Maeroff 1994; Payne 1984; Valencia 1997b; Villenas 2001). In Ladson-Billings’s (2005) study, a group of teachers, while ignoring the issue of race in their conversation, methodically marginalized African American students in their literacy instruction. Their failure to teach their black students to read appears to be, at least in part, a direct result of their low expectations for them, which in turn reflects their deficit views of the children.

Deficit orientations toward African American children may be partially responsible for these children’s low levels of participation in TWI programs in the United States, as such programs are often viewed as enrichment programs, and African American children may be more likely to be labeled “at risk” and placed in remedial educational programs. Deficit orientations toward black students are often couched in the slippery ideological styles that modern racism takes on, described by Bonilla-Silva (2006) as “color-blind racism.” Bonilla-Silva lays out four general frames for “color-blind racism”: (1) abstract liberalism, in which whites appeal to values of equality or individualism to justify excluding people of color from privileges; (2) naturalization, in which whites assert that racial phenomena such as segregation are just “the way it is”; (3) cultural racism, in which whites appeal to culture, rather than race, to explain intergroup differences and inequities; and (4) minimization of racism, a mechanism of essentially denying the impact of racism in today’s society. He argues that speakers draw on a mix of these frames in convoluted, irrational and often incoherent (although deeply felt) ways to justify their racist views while simultaneously presenting themselves as nonracists. Color-blind racism is, according to Bonilla-Silva, “racism without racists” (Bonilla-Silva 2006:29). Hurd (2008) similarly argues that normative whiteness, or an assumption of “color blindness” and an expectation of assimilative integration, marginalizes students of color even in schools that are making overt (if still somewhat superficial) efforts to include diverse communities.
Like Ladson-Billings’s (2005) study, this analysis illustrates the relationship between teachers’ deficit orientations toward African American children and the systematic exclusion of these children from opportunities to enrich their education. In other words, although deficit theory, in particular the construct of “color-blind racism,” offers a mechanism for understanding teachers’ unexamined ideologies that negatively impact children of color, critical race theory provides a powerful tool for placing these ideologies in a larger institutional context, in which it is possible to understand the systematic ways in which children are offered and not offered opportunities within this school. I attempt to make visible the complex nature of the construction of inequity in this particular context by offering “precise descriptions of specific behaviors that specific people actually display in [this] specific context” (Pollock 2008:370).

Methods and Data Sources

This analysis draws on interview and observational data from a year long study conducted in a multiethnic, urban elementary school in Northern California. The school serves a diverse community, both in the surrounding neighborhood and citywide. The neighborhood surrounding the school has traditionally been predominantly African American, but has recently undergone a demographic shift with a rapid growth of Latino/a (primarily Mexican) immigrants. It is a working-class neighborhood with mainly small single-family and multifamily homes and a few larger apartment buildings. Because of a long tradition of integration in local public schools, students are also bused to the school from the more affluent and more white parts of town. A total of approximately 350 students attend the school.

Among the research questions that guided this study was: what are the discourses around equity and diversity in this setting? I was a doctoral student at a large public university near the school. A white woman, Spanish–English bilingual and former dual-language fourth grade teacher (at a different school in the region), I had served as this school’s “English Language Development Coach” for one year, a half-time position offering coaching to teachers (both within and outside the TWI strand) on ways to better serve their English-language learners within their classrooms. I resigned my position and reentered the site as a participant-observer for the school year 2002–03.

The study focused mainly on the discourse among members of the second grade dual-language classroom, and the overwhelming majority of the data collected were conversational recordings in that classroom. However, to better understand the larger discourses impacting the classroom, and to triangulate my findings, I also spent at least three hours per week volunteering and observing in the classroom and throughout the school, including in the lunchroom, on the playground, in the teacher’s room, in several school and district meetings, and in the office. I recorded all observations in field notes, using audio recordings as a back up for my participant-observation whenever permissible and possible. In addition, during the second semester of the year, I conducted in-depth, open-ended interviews (Rubin and Rubin 1995) with a total of seven children’s parents and eight staff members. This analysis draws on the schoolwide observation and interview data.

Because the focus of the study was on the classroom discourse of the children in the second grade dual-language classroom, I did not conduct a large number of parent interviews. In fact, I did not have permission to formally interview parents beyond the focal classroom. With only one African American student and one biracial (half African American) student in the class, this was a severe limitation in terms of my ability to make inferences about the intentions or desires of the African American parent community in this school. For this reason, parent interview data is merely intended to round out and in
some cases confirm the information gathered through more unstructured data-gathering activities in which I spent the majority of my time on the campus: participant-observations and recordings of student–teacher interactions within the second grade classroom and throughout the school. Furthermore, I do not have the data to draw any significant conclusions about the perspectives of the African American families at Medgar Evers Elementary. The many questions around what African American families hope for or expect from dual-language programs remain open to be explored in further research.

Overall, I interviewed the parents of four Spanish-speaking students and three English-speaking students, including the one African American student and the student who was half African American. All seven were members of the second grade dual-language classroom that was the main focus of the study. These seven students were focal students in my study, and interviews focused on reasons for choosing the dual-language program and satisfaction with the program (see Appendix 1). Of the four interviews with Spanish-speaking families, two were with only mothers present and two were with both mother and father (and children) present; all four families were two-parent families. All four would also best be described as working-class families, with parents in working-class jobs and of fairly low levels of education, ranging from those with a few years of primary schooling to high school graduates. Of the English-speaking families interviewed, two—both clearly middle-class families with parents highly educated—were conducted with both mother and father (and children) present. The third English-speaking family interviewed was a single mother, a high school graduate, and the mother of the only African American participant in the class.

Staff members interviewed included the principal, a former principal, two resource teachers, both second grade TWI instructors (English teacher and Spanish teacher), a third grade teacher in an English-only classroom, and the instructor in the schoolwide science magnet program. During staff interviews, I explored participants’ perceptions of the role of the dual-language program at the school, and the construction of equity and inequity. Because staff members had such varying roles and experiences at the school, I drafted guiding interview questions prior to each formal interview, basing these on my current perceptions of the issues relevant to my research questions and the particular person’s role at the school. For instance, with the former principal and founding staff member, I included questions about the history of the school and the origins of the dual-language program. By contrast, with the current principal, I asked about schoolwide dynamics during the current school year and the impact of district decisions on the program and school. In every case, I drafted questions in advance, but allowed the participant to guide the conversation as much as possible, seeing the interview as a conversation and an opportunity to gain insight into their perspectives.

I began the analysis of data as I collected it, in an effort to ensure that I was collecting the data I needed to accurately respond to the research questions. As soon as possible following a visit to the school, I sat down to fill out my field notes. When applicable, I played (and replayed) the recording of the event to guide my development of notes. Within my notes, but separated from the description by italics and parentheses, I included my own reflections, evaluations, and connections. In addition, I took time periodically to read through the entire set of notes up to that point, to flag particular events that struck me—for a variety of reasons—as worthy of transcription and closer analysis, and to develop an ongoing and evolving set of codes (Bogdan and Biklen 1998). As larger themes emerged from the data, I attempted to piece them together into a narrative that reflected as accurately as possible the reality at the school at that time. I shared my narrative with several members of the school community, as well as returning a number of times to field notes and interview transcripts. Although it is impossible to capture accurately a complete picture of the reality at this school, I have attempted, through what Geertz (1973) called...
“thick description,” to unpack a small corner of that reality. This description, although as “thick” and accurate as I could make it, inevitably reflects my own perspectives and decisions.

A Note on My Position in this Research

Although I was only on the staff at Medgar Evers for one year, my position as a former staff member had a powerful influence on my data collection process, as well as the process I have since gone through in analyzing and reanalyzing these data. Luckily, as my role on staff consisted almost entirely in working with teachers and district administrators, rather than children, few parents (or children) knew me as a teacher; rather, they saw me as a participant in the bilingual education parent organization, a “helper” in the classroom, and member of the local community (I lived near the school). Staff, however, afforded me their trust in ways they might not have done were I not a member of their community. Although I think the staff’s trust in me impacted my data collection in mainly positive ways, allowing me windows into their attitudes I might otherwise have been excluded from, I believe it made me more reticent to see some of the harsher attitudes my colleagues were suggesting to me. As a white teacher myself and wanting to maintain affiliation with the staff at the school, I was willing to remain blind to some colleagues’ at times blatantly racist attitudes. Having taken a few years to distance myself, both physically and mentally, from the Medgar Evers community, I am able to see more clearly the thin glosses for racism, the deficit-oriented attitudes, and the truly damaging staff behaviors that occurred at the school during my data-collection period. The process of conducting this reanalysis using a critical race theory approach has been an eye-opening experience for me.

Along these lines, I also wish to assert that it is not my purpose to lay the blame for any problems at this school onto the teachers in the study. All of the teachers I studied worked extremely hard to offer all their students rich and equitable opportunities to learn and excel. Although they may be responsible for their role in the complex problem, as I was for mine during the time I was on the staff, they are far from the root of the problem. It would be overly simplistic, unproductive, and inaccurate to lay blame on them for the clear wrongdoing experienced by their students.

Defining the Problem: Color-Blind Racism

Internal Segregation

Serving a traditionally progressive city, this school district proudly states that it was one of the first in the nation to voluntarily desegregate its schools in the late 1960s. Through years of shifting national climate on the issue of desegregation, the district has worked hard to maintain integrated, diverse schools. Because of Proposition 209, passed in California in 1996, race is not allowed as a factor in the assignment of students to schools. However, the city has developed a system using zip codes and innovative districting that attempts (with mixed results) to maintain diversity in the schools. In school board meetings and district level planning meetings, “integrated” is for all intents and purposes equated with “equitable.” More importantly, “segregated” schools are avoided at all cost.

There is research to suggest that integrated school environments do make a difference for poor and minority students and help reduce racist attitudes in society (Orfield 1981; Schofield 1995). However, research also indicates that merely having diverse children share a campus does very little to promote equity without explicit efforts at educating for diversity (Fuller and Elmore 1996; Noguera 2003; Olsen 1987; St. John 1981). In the discourse of meetings in this district, the subtleties of “real” integration and educating for
diversity are often overlooked, whereas any form of intentional segregation for any reason is subject to spurning. The school district’s overt efforts to maintain integrated schools while ignoring the local details and subtleties reinforces Bonilla-Silva’s assertion that color-blind racism is very slippery and often hard to identify in all the convoluted efforts people (and institutions) make to appear nonracist (Bonilla-Silva 2006).

Although the population of Medgar Evers School overall is diverse, there is a sharp contrast between the diversity of dual-language classes and that of the so-called mainstream, English-medium classes that are not part of the TWI strand program. As one mainstream teacher explained, “On paper our school looks integrated and it’s less integrated than you might think if you walk into different classrooms.” Although the entire school population is approximately 30 percent African American, on average dual-language classes contain only about five percent African American students, leaving the mainstream classrooms filled almost 50 percent with African American students (see Table 1). Latinos and whites in the larger school are represented by 38 percent and 28 percent, respectively. In the two-way program, ratios are maintained artificially with 50 percent Latino Spanish speakers and approximately 45 percent whites. It is rare to find a child of any other ethnic or linguistic background than these three groups in the dual-language program, although the larger school actually contains numerous other groups including Ethiopian, Sri Lankan, Japanese, and non-English-speaking European.

So-called mainstream teachers, or teachers who work in non-TWI classrooms, view this internal segregation as a serious impediment to equity at the school. The third grade mainstream teacher I interviewed explains several disadvantages to the internal segregation in terms of the predicament it sets up for her non-TWI students:

Since there’s one [class of TWI students per grade] level only, those kids are together year after year after year. And unfortunately, de facto so are the other [non-TWI] kids. Who aren’t so charming sometimes you know. And they come up all together learning their negative stuff—in regular ed[ucation] classrooms I’m talking about now. Without the benefit of it being a chosen program. It’s just who’s there. And they’re stuck together year after year. You get kids together who really shouldn’t be together. There’s not that many options for, to separate them, especially by the older grades. Another bad thing is that more affluent children, more socio-economically advantaged, more what’s the right word for this, where you just have more experience, the more ready-to-learn kids, I hate to say it like that but I just will, leave after third grade a lot of times or before third grade. This last year I know for sure several of the kids who weren’t in immersion who were more middle class kids left the school. And so you keep winnowing down the pool of kids in the non-immersion classes which so I mean this is to me this is the problem is that on paper our school looks integrated and it’s less integrated than you might think if you walk into different classrooms.

Appealing to the district’s long-standing commitment to desegregation in the interests of racial equity, and simultaneously drawing on the deficit assumption that middle-class

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white children are “more ready-to-learn” whereas the majority black students in the regular education classes are “all together learning their negative stuff,” she argues that this two-tiered system, with some children in a “chosen” program and the rest who are “just who’s there,” is detrimental to the academic progress of children in non-TWI classrooms. Among many of the teachers in mainstream classrooms, there is a great deal of resentment with regard to this internal segregation. Like the above teacher, they claim that dual-language classrooms are easier to teach and the students overall better behaved.

In fact, the mainstream classrooms do have more students who have been identified with special needs, including learning disabilities and emotional disturbances, and more families taking advantage of the school’s various social programs (and therefore likely struggling with poverty or emotional upheaval of various kinds). Yet the teachers’ strong statements that these children are therefore more difficult to teach brings to mind Valencia’s (1997a) deficit construct of the general “educability” of children. The poor African American children are seen to be very difficult to teach, whereas the respectful Latino students and middle-class white students are perceived as easier. One mainstream teacher commented that she had even overheard TWI staff claiming that special education students were “not immersion material,” although two-way teachers deny this, and will point to students in their own classes who are served by special education as well as by the school’s counseling center and various social programs.

The TWI second grade English teacher had spent her previous three years teaching in the mainstream program at Medgar Evers. From the vantage point of her unique positioning, having worked both within and outside the dual-language program, she explains, “This year feels like I’m actually teaching and last year it felt like I was trying to teach but I was also being a social worker and in some cases parenting some of these kids, making sure they were eating.” The science lab teacher, who works with all of the classes in the school, remarks that the same lesson conducted with mainstream and with dual-language classes will invariably work better with the dual-language students, as she spends less time disciplining students and more time teaching. She points out that this creates a spiraling effect, wherein the dual-language class, each week, has learned the previous week’s lesson better and is more ready to move on. “Dual language students are learning more science than mainstream students,” she concludes wryly. It must be assumed that she believes the students to be at fault for her difficulties in managing the mainstream classes. In a way admitting to a difference even as they try to deny its inequity, two-way teachers counter mainstream teachers’ complaints about their “easier” classes with their own complaints about the “pushy” middle-class parents who constantly meddle in their classrooms.

This debate emerges periodically during staff meetings and informally over lunch in the faculty room, and is a source of ongoing tension among teachers. The ways in which teachers debate this issue are indeed convoluted, slippery, and subtle, and I find myself “excavating the rhetorical maze of confusing, ambivalent answers speckled with disclaimers” as Bonilla-Silva describes (2006:53).

For example, as I frequently overheard during staff room lunchtime or faculty meeting discussion, non-TWI teachers assert that the dual-language classes have more than their fair share of “supportive” middle-class parents (implying—but not directly stating—that the African American parents, often struggling in poverty, are not supportive of the school or of their children’s education). Although some would argue that most of the middle-class white parents in TWI classrooms are only in the school because of the presence of the TWI program (data are inconclusive on this point), several mainstream teachers articulate an inherent unfairness in the visible discrepancy. They brand the TWI program as “elitist” (field notes, staff lunch room). Meanwhile, the English-language development (ELD) lead teacher explains, “I know parents, six or seven of them from second and third grade
[non-TWI classes], leave [the school]—good strong parents—every year for the last few years.” These statements draw, in a truly convoluted way, on both a cultural racism–deficit frame in their assumptions that poor parents do not support their children’s education whereas middle-class parents are “good” and “strong,” and an “abstract liberal” frame in their appeal to equity. Interestingly, when asked to provide a solution, some teachers suggest moving the TWI program to another campus, a result that would likely further segregate their black students—but would render the inequity less visible.

The mainstream teachers’ label of the dual-language program as elitist appears to be reinforced by the English-speaking middle-class families’ assertiveness toward the leadership of the school and district. The TWI coordinator, in a grant-funded position designed to help support the two-way teachers and parents as the program is getting established, related a recent incident intended to demonstrate TWI parent audacity. Parents came to a district meeting to demand that upper grade TWI teachers be given aides because recent budget cuts required their children (like other children in the district) to be placed in split-grade classes in the upper grades:

The TWI parent association would show up at the TWI task force (district meeting). They were advocating for their kids. And I have to say I look at them like, your kids can’t have that if everybody else doesn’t have that. You know they want a classroom aide . . . And okay if we give the immersion program a classroom aide we’re going to have to give everybody else a classroom aide and there’s not money for that.

The sense of entitlement of dual-language parents guarantees the success of their own children and, because they share the classroom with Latino Spanish speaking children, presumably also those students; this is a clear example of “interest convergence.” However, because of the separate nature of the two strands at the school, there are times when this is at the expense of the children in the mainstream classes.

Although there is strong evidence that the population differences are real between two-way and mainstream classrooms at Medgar Evers, it is important to examine the orientation of deficit held within the mainstream staff to understand their perceptions of difference in “educability” between their classes. There has been research showing a strong connection between a deficit orientation toward certain children and a disproportionate number of referrals to Special Education (Donovan and Cross 2002; Harry and Klingner 2006). Research also suggests the role that special education pullout programs sometimes play in further segregating students of color and denying them enriching educational opportunities (Ladson-Billings 2005). On any given day in this school, it is not uncommon to see at least one or two black boys sitting in the office awaiting discipline. Further, there is a special education class on campus that is almost entirely populated by black boys (there is one Latino boy). Although special education children are assigned to this classroom by the district and do not necessarily come from the classes at this school, and although some children are assigned to special education for academic reasons and have no behavioral difficulties, their presence on this campus adds distinctly to the ethos of negative behavior around black male children. Not surprisingly, race is not discussed directly in the context of behavior, but it is referred to in only thinly veiled ways. Thus, children who are disruptive in class are referred to as “behavior problems,” and their difficulty is understood as family dysfunction, poverty, social issues, etc., drawing on a frame of “cultural racism” (Bonilla-Silva 2006). The fact that they are nearly all black males is not generally mentioned (Castagno 2008).

The school’s prior principal points out that the perceived difference in classroom “educability” predates the TWI. She attributes it to cultural difference, explaining that the Latino (bilingual) group was always “very docile, very respectful and in admiration of the teacher as the authority figure, and that’s not true for our urban population in the straight
English program.” Because of the racial makeup of the English mainstream classes (i.e., over 50 percent black), it seems clear that the “urban population” to which she is referring are the black students. The fact that she comfortably uses cultural labels, but avoids labeling or discussing race, is typical of the discourse surrounding these issues at Medgar Evers, as at other U.S. schools (Castagno 2008; Ladson-Billings 2005). It is quite likely that the difficulties teachers experience with the African American students are exacerbated by their race-based negative and adversarial attitudes toward their students’ behaviors and capabilities.

**Delving Deeper into the Problem: The Critical Perspective**

There are a few members of the staff who appear to agree with this more critical interpretation. The principal attributes the “easier” nature of TWI classes to the teachers’ high level of classroom management skills, rather than any inherent better behavior among children from different cultural or class groups. Although not talking directly of race, she identifies the deficit orientation toward children that permeates many mainstream classrooms at the school. In her interview, she explains:

One of the concerns I hear from some of the staff is that the dual language classes have all the good kids... I don’t see it as just having good kids and the non-immersion kids being bad kids... it comes down to the expectations in the classroom.... Dual language classes with a few exceptions the teachers have a very structured routine. They make their discipline rules and their classroom rules very transparent.... They are very consistent and... very fair.... They appear to want to see every child be successful and they’re always working and questioning why certain kids are not making it.... I noticed that my non-immersion teachers tend to be inconsistent in their disciplining.

The principal believes firmly that two-way teachers have greater success not because their students are inherently “good,” but because they have clear, fair expectations in the classroom and they work hard to make sure every child succeeds. In so asserting, she counters some teachers’ deficit attitudes toward black students as being the “bad kids” on the campus.

Offering a different interpretation of the problem, the TWI Coordinator observes that apparently with the old Transitional program it was acceptable to put a challenging “behavior problem” or two into a bilingual classroom even if they were English-only (and, usu., African American) students.

So I don’t know maybe the immersion program does add to the lack of collegiality. There’s resentment. Which is kind of funky to me anyway because the truth is in [my old district] years ago they did away with having English speakers—which were predominantly African American probably—in the bi-lingual classrooms... because before they were being put in there to thin out some of the behavior problems and stuff and [the superintendent] years ago said no that’s not going to be done anymore... But here they never did that and so you know they were still thinning out behavior problems by putting kids in bilingual classrooms... And that’s not the way to deal with behavior problems anyway but you know.

She expresses her disapproval of this practice, pointing out that her old district had long since done away with the practice, but observes that it is likely that non-TWI teachers at Medgar Evers resent having this option taken from them by the dual-language program’s more stringent, academically oriented policies.

The second grade Spanish teacher, Ms Melanie, is the only person on campus who readily talks about the roles race and racism play at the school. Having been raised in a working-class African American community and having majored in Ethnic Studies as an
undergraduate, she fits Bonilla-Silva’s (2006) definition of a “race-traitor,” that is, one who demonstrates loyalty to a race other than one’s own—often a young white woman raised in contact with working-class people of color (or others’ definitions of an “ally”) (Tatum 1994) and seems to see right through her colleagues’ delicate dances around issues of race and power. Ms Melanie once brought up the issue in a staff meeting, confronting the race issue head on. In response to an onslaught of mainstream teacher complaints about the inequity of having dual-language classes on campus, she stated, “I think we don’t know how to deal with our black students.” The room remained in a stunned silence for at least ten long seconds, and several teachers followed this comment with thoughtful reflections on their desire to deal better with African American students and their families, and their frustrations with a problem that seemed to them far beyond their control to fix (field notes, faculty meeting). Ms. Melanie later brought up the same issue in her interview:

The overwhelming majority of the English speakers in dual immersion come from middle upper class, highly educated parent families . . . All the other teachers are pissed off because . . . they want more of the upper middle class white kids and less of the lower income black kids who they have discipline problems with. So it creates a conflict in our staff.

Ms. Melanie offers a solution, which fits with the principal’s analysis of the problem as being one of classroom management and a deficit orientation toward children:

It has a lot to do with how I deal with that behavior from the beginning of the year . . . I really express real individual concern about why they’re doing what they’re doing and my belief in their goodness as kids. . . . And you . . . let them know that you really care about them and you don’t see them as this nuisance problem in your classroom that you can’t stand. . . . Whereas I think that the language that I hear from a lot of teachers is that they’re bad kids. And if a kid feels like you think they’re bad of course they’re going to act bad.

Thus, Ms Melanie feels that her fellow teachers confound the students’ behavior with their identities, and asserts her view that genuine caring can reach all students.

Non-TWI teachers are not open to any of these explanations; when others suggest the possibility that the problem of their unmanageable classrooms could at least partially lie with them, they reject this suggestion out of hand. Instead, they argue that the behavior problems and emotional disturbances brought about by poverty, neglect, and dysfunction are the root causes of students’ school failure. This framing of the problem places the blame (and therefore the need for change) outside the classroom—indeed, outside the school, in the families and communities of students (Maeroff 1994; Payne 1984; Valencia 1997b; Villenas 2001). Teachers do not blame children directly, certainly, but they sidestep any responsibility for addressing students’ school failure. What’s more, although teachers acknowledge society’s role in disempowering these children through institutional racism and chronically underfunded social services, they tend not to accept what they view as the added burden of working in the classroom to reverse these trends. As one mainstream teacher explained:

I think one of the hard things is that the staff doesn’t feel there’s any solutions and so they don’t really want to try. And everybody feels kind of beaten down by all the stuff that’s going on in education now . . . you know when you’re at a school that’s mostly poor kids, mostly not doing very well kids, lot of social problems, lot of emotional problems, it’s already hard. And then to have to see a dream class across the way, and then to not even have that teacher admit that [the difference is] REAL!

The ELD lead teacher, whose job is to help make the school more aware of the needs of language learning students, explains that African American students’ “behavior problems” are bleeding over onto the English-language learner (ELL) students in their mainstream classes. In her words:
I think behaviorally the Latino children were better behaved in bilingual because they when you put them together and then you add a few other kids they’re pretty calm and pretty good. When you put them in with the mostly African American kids, they are copying the behaviors of those African American kids and they’re more of a behavior problem and they pay attention less and I think they’re learning less, those EL kids. So I think for the EL kids who are not in two way immersion it’s been worse. And then the African American kids don’t have as [many] peers that are high level because they’re just not here anymore like they were seven years ago. So I think so I am not a proponent of two way immersion.

It appears that her description of “peers that are high level,” is a thinly disguised gloss for white middle-class students. She proposes integrating TWI students more into the mainstream classes to give the mainstream ELL children better language and behavior models to follow. In contrast, in the TWI model, as an explicit reversal of dominant power norms, it is the ELL students who are expected to serve as Spanish-speaking role models for their English-speaking peers. The ELD lead teacher’s reversal of the function of role modeling in TWI typifies the discourse of deficit with regard to both African American and Latino students among many of the non-TWI teachers at Medgar Evers.

Another Problem: Serving All Spanish Speakers

Another disadvantage of the TWI program according to many of the teachers is that the dual-language program serves half the number of Latino families that were once served by the transitional bilingual education program. Instead of 20 spaces in each cohort for language minority students (the official class size limit for California’s primary grade classes during the period of this study), the new program has only ten spaces, with the other ten spots reserved for English-speaking children. Teachers express their awareness that there are other Latino families who would like to have their children in the TWI program but who could not get in. In the words of a mainstream teacher:

Not all the second language learners are in that program, even all the ones that want to be in, because it’s very competitive . . . I don’t think it’s necessarily serving the kids it was intended to serve. It’s serving more the people who are savvy enough to go through the process of putting their papers in on time and know how to play the political game of getting their kids where they want ‘em to go even though it’s a lottery you know.

The former principal admits, “I keep hearing out in the community that there’s disappointed Latino families that didn’t get in.”

In fact, as the teacher above explains, because of the timing of the lottery that fills the program long before the start of school in September, the families who do get into the program, both Latino and English-speaking, are inevitably the families who are aware of their options and know the system. As the second grade TWI Spanish teacher echoes, “The process by which the dual language kindergartens are selected is inequitable in that [the lottery occurs long before kindergarten starts].” The families with such cultural capital, as the former principal pointed out, are not the ones the program was designed to help. As the mainstream teacher states, “I’m sorry, but that’s not the point you know! Unless it’s working for the [lower income, recent immigrant] Latino kids, it’s an awful lot of trouble.” It appears that the white community has a virtual monopoly on access to this program through a highly competitive lottery system that many people I spoke with describe as unfair.

The kindergarten TWI teacher and I had made an effort to remedy this problem the previous year while I was on the staff; we had gone together to talk to the Parent Access Coordinator at the district office, asking him to reserve spots in the TWI program for
late-entering Spanish-speaking families, and to sell the program to these families. In my notes from field notes during a TWI staff team meeting the following year (i.e., during the study year), I note:

[The TWI kindergarten teacher] tells the group that last year, she and I sat down with the Parent Access Office coordinator, the person who directs families to the various programs in the district, and got some concessions for him to reserve spots for Spanish speakers late-entering, and convinced him to do a better job of selling the program. Well, says [the teacher], she has the strongest Spanish speaking class she’s had yet! So something worked!

A temporary solution at best, dependent on the cooperation and goodwill of one particular individual within the system, we both understood at the time that we were merely scratching the surface of a systemic inequity. This seemed clear when, according to my field notes, immediately following the above comment, the teacher went on to point out that the TWI program still reflected a “lack of diversity,” which the principal (and everyone else in the room) understood to mean a lack of black families. We all agreed (field notes, TWI team meeting, March 17, 2003).

**Debating Solutions: Expanding TWI?**

There is frequent discussion (although no district support yet) of the possibility of expanding the program to provide space in TWI for all the Latino students who need it (and help shorten the waiting list for all the English-speaking families who want it—another example of interest convergence). There is even the suggestion of forming an entire TWI school. Presumably, as long as the TWI school was located at a different site, the teachers at Medgar Evers would have greater flexibility in forming classes and collaborating to balance gender, behavior and academic challenges, and “other factors” (such as the unspoken “race”). The school could focus better on its environmental science magnet program. Staff would not have the apparent added burden of seeing colleagues with “easier” classes day to day. The TWI program itself would be better able to fulfill its goals and remain true to its program model with schoolwide use of and respect for Spanish (see Palmer 2007 for further analysis of this issue). Overall, there is much support, both within the TWI program and among the rest of the staff, for a dual-language school—so long as that school is located somewhere other than Medgar Evers.

However, support is not nearly as strong to turn Medgar Evers itself into the dual-language school. Even though the current principal believes Medgar Evers to be the perfect location for the district’s first schoolwide TWI program, other staff members are skeptical. Explained the mainstream teacher, “I don’t think this is the appropriate site... it’s a really strong African American neighborhood and I don’t think that’s right. They already kind of feel like they’re second class citizens you know and then to be like well this school’s not for you anymore.” Others on staff share this teacher’s assumption that the TWI would drive African American students away, rather than attract them. The ELD lead teacher speculates that a whole school TWI program “might be able to spread out the behavior problems better... It might integrate them better... It might just drive them away from this school.” The TWI coordinator expresses her doubt that even heavy recruitment of African American families would bring them into the TWI program: “I mean they say that they’d do a lot to recruit African American students but it hasn’t been successful in other immersion schools.” Their assumption that black students would not be interested in dual-language education, and would be unfairly displaced by its expansion, again draws on the color-blind racism frames of “cultural racism” and “abstract liberalism.”
Some staff go even further to suggest that the TWI program might not even be appropriate for black students. When asked whether she thought that making Medgar Evers a school wide TWI program might increase the number of African American students enrolling in dual language, the mainstream teacher confided, “I doubt it. And I’m not actually... sure it is a good idea if your Standard English is not so great in the first place to go into a program where you’re trying to learn basically a third language and you don’t have early experiences that build language.” The ELD lead teacher echoed these doubts: “I don’t know if Two Way Immersion is good for the African American kids. I don’t know how you help kids learn Standard English.” She observed that it seemed a shame that the Latino children who were not in the immersion program were emerging from the fifth grade speaking black English, rather than standard English—“and they don’t even know it.”

The one African American parent in the second grade dual-immersion class during the study year said she often experiences people both within and outside the African American community questioning her decision to place her son in TWI:

> ...You wouldn’t believe that some people, “why do you do that? Don’t you think it’s going to be hard?” I even had—he [my son] was talking to one of the social [workers] [and] she says, “Don’t you think you’ll put him at a disadvantage by putting him in a classroom where all the kids speak Spanish and he doesn’t?”

This parent speaks highly of the program, and proudly responds to others’ doubts with descriptions of her son’s accomplishments in two languages. Yet her description of the discouraging comments she hears even from persons in positions of authority such as the school’s social workers would imply that racism in the form of school personnel’s attitudes toward the appropriateness of TWI for African American students is operating to exclude black children from the program. Playing as they do on the mainstream stereotype of African American students as incompetent users and learners of language and in need of remedial, as opposed to enrichment, experiences, these attitudes among the staff also undermine black students’ academic efforts at the school in general.

In summary, mainstream teachers at Medgar Evers argue that the TWI excludes many students at the school, including many of the Latino students it was designed to help, and that it creates an inherently inequitable two-tiered system leaving them with difficult and demoralizing classes full of “behavior problems.” When certain members of the school community bring up the possibility that racism, or a deficit orientation toward black children, could be exacerbating the problem, teachers are unwilling to entertain these discomfiting ideas. Yet, it is clear that at least some teachers maintain a belief that the African American children at the school are at the root of a serious problem of inequity, that their cultural and linguistic poverty renders them very challenging to teach and inappropriate for the dual-language program.

**Conclusion**

In many ways, this school stands as a microcosm of the larger society. It is a racially and socioeconomically diverse community, struggling against what appear to be entrenched inequities in delivery of services. Unlike the vast majority of schools in the United States, where intense segregation and in many cases resegregation have made the challenges of diversity all but invisible on the local level (Orfield and Eaton 1996), here teachers and students from diverse communities face each other head-on, every day. And unfortunately, access to a powerful bilingual education, or to a powerful education in general, is still not the purview of African American citizens of this “desegregated” community. While paying
lip service and minimal curricular attention to ways of bringing black students into a powerful learning community, staff members’ unexamined attitudes continue to oppress black children, exclude their discourses from the classroom, and limit their learning opportunities. This is akin to Hurd’s description of the “normative whiteness” silencing Mexican American students at a California high school (Hurd 2008). District and school policies coupled with teachers’ unexamined biases continue to systematically undermine black students’ access to the highest quality programs.

It is clear that such diversity creates a set of challenges that were not there when the school was less diverse, and this can be very painful and frustrating. Sharing across class, race, language, and culture lines puts people into Pratt’s “Contact Zone,” a dangerous and uncomfortable place (Pratt 1999). But working within the contact zone has its ultimate rewards; it is only there that the possibility exists for attaining the authentic equity that all members of this school community claim to desire. It is the work of educational anthropologists to offer deep descriptions of the construction of inequity in specific settings like this one, where individuals from many different groups come together and struggle over education, to support efforts to think more thoroughly about these issues (Pollock 2008).

To find the payoff, it is necessary to pay attention to issues of race and power in two-way settings, and it is absolutely essential to address them as openly and equitably as possible (Castagno 2008). As Cummins (2000) argues, we do indeed need to transform bilingual programs from subtractive, deficit-oriented transitional programs to additive, enrichment-oriented dual-language programs that are desirable even to the most elite, just as Medgar Evers Elementary did. Two-way bilingual education can be a powerful model for Latino students’ academic success and bilingual and biliterate competency (Christian et al. 1997; Freeman 1998; Lindholm-Leary 2001; Pérez 2004; Thomas and Collier 2002). However, it is not enough simply to bring in the middle-class (often white) families and end it there (Valdés 1997). The program will inevitably end up serving the needs of the dominant majority, leaving Latino and other minority students out of the picture, except insofar as their interests converge with those of the dominant majority. We must explicitly examine issues of race and their impact on language programs, and we must explicitly work to develop ways to better serve speakers of both minority languages and dialects of English within enrichment bilingual programs to ensure equitable access to a powerful bilingual education to all members of our community.

Furthermore, there is a powerful need for further research on the topics explored here. I hope that this study will inspire more in-depth research on the participation of African American students and students of other minority ethnic and racial groups in bilingual and dual-language programs in the United States. We need to explore questions regarding equity of access, equitable delivery of services, and equitable treatment in the classroom. We need to more clearly understand the specific strengths that African American students (and students of other diverse groups) bring into dual-language programs, as well as the specific needs they have—linguistic, cultural, academic, or otherwise. In general, the issue of race is underexamined in bilingual education; too often, bilingual education researchers confine their work to questions of language and fail to take into account culture, race, class, and other factors that particularly influence bilingual learning spaces just as they influence other diverse learning spaces. Further research is needed to push our understanding of bilingual and bicultural education into a more multidimensional realm.

As a former two-way teacher and current researcher of these programs, I remain a strong advocate for TWI. I have spoken with many parents, teachers, and school leaders about the advantages TWI programs provide, and I find people universally enthusiastic about an idea that seems so full of hope for all who participate. However, as the data in this study reveal, if allowed to evolve without explicit attention to the dynamics of race and power, TWI can also serve as a textbook example of interest convergence, which is not
surprising given that the program model has evolved in a U.S. racialized context. If the project of TWI becomes merely one of offering enrichment foreign-language immersion to middle- and upper-class white children, it will be a lost opportunity for transformation. The structural and attitudinal barriers to true race and class integration that plague many of these schools (just as they do non-two-way schools) must be addressed, or ultimately the wave of two-way bilingual programs will make no real progress at helping us and our children to address the deeper issues of racism and classism in this society.

Note

1. The terms black and African American are used interchangeably throughout this article.

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Appendix I. Guiding Questions for Open-Ended Family Interviews

(Interviews conducted in family’s primary language.)

Why did you choose the Dual Immersion program for your child?
¿Por qué escogió Ud. el programa de inmersión dual para su hijo/a?

Has the program fulfilled your expectations?
¿Y en su opinión el programa ha sido lo que esperaba?

How has your child done in the program so far? (Academically, socially, linguistically)
¿Cómo ha hecho su hijo/a en el programa hasta ahora? (Academicamente, socialmente, lingüísticamente)

How have they enjoyed it?
¿Cómo se ha disfrutado de la escuela?

How are your child’s bilingual language skills? Has the program helped with this? Any lackings in this area?
¿Y que tal sus destrezas de idioma bilingües? ¿El programa ayuda con eso de mantener sus dos idiomas? ¿Ud. ve algún problema en este area?

How has it been for you as a family? Have you been involved with the school? Do you find it is a warm and supportive environment?
¿Y para Ustedes como familia, cómo ha sido? ¿Han participado en la escuela? ¿Se sienten bienvenidos en la escuela?

Have there been any important challenges or issues for you or your child about the program?
¿Ha pasado cualquiera dificultad o problema importante para Ud o su hijo/a sobre el programa y/o la escuela?

The program has both native English speakers and native Spanish speakers. Have you found this to be an advantage for you/your child? How/why?
El programa bilingüe tiene tanto inglés-hablantes como español-hablantes. ¿Qué piensa de eso? ¿Es ventaja, desventaja? ¿Cómo/por qué?

Do you think the program is equitable to both language populations? Does it deal well with the differences?
¿Usted piensa que el programa es justo e igual para los dos poblaciones? ¿Piensa que maneja bien las diferencias entre los dos grupos de niños, de padres de familia?