

A Study of Teacher Engagement in a Dual Language Program

by Alexandra Bauer


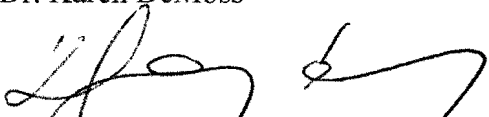
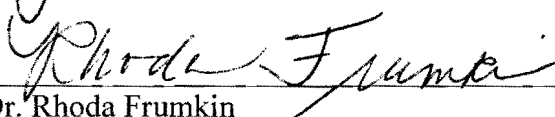
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### **Abstract**

Researchers have found that high-quality and long-term dual language programs promote academic achievement and high levels of language proficiency for learners from both language groups (Hood, 2011). The purpose of this study was to explore how a dual language approach was fostered in a new school designed to promote bilingual education. The study analyzed teachers' efforts to navigate language learning, teaching, and cultural assumptions. Results indicate that the dual language approach in the new school was supported through effective collaboration and planning to meet the needs of diverse English Language Learners. This study also explored the importance of lived teacher experiences of this new school. Each teacher was brought into the school with a different educational background. Although their backgrounds were different, they were brought into the school to work towards the school's goal: creating a successful dual language program. Their perception of what the program was going to be like before starting the school year went through major changes throughout the first four months of school. Teachers' understandings changed as a result of a series of meetings that were held throughout the first four months discussing the program and its effectiveness for students. Teachers' ability to share their ideas and feelings about what was working and what was not working was important for the change in attitudes and building of shared understandings. This study focuses on the six teachers who came together to apply the ideals and methods of the dual language program within each of their classrooms and in the school as a whole.



## **Chapter 1: Conceptual Framework and Literature Review**

### **Part I: Serving English Learners**

English language learners (ELLs) are one of the most prominent populations of students found in United States public schools today; this demographic is continually growing in every state of the country (Hill, 2006). People often assume, stereotypically, that the term English language learner signifies students who speak Spanish as their first language. According to the Census Bureau, “approximately 5.5 million students in the United States are English language learners. They speak over 400 different languages but 80% of them speak Spanish in the home (U.S. Department of Education, 2007)” (Hagan, 2010). However, English language learners speak a variety of languages and are culturally diverse. ELLs come from an abundance of backgrounds from all over the world, but all speak a language other than English as their first language. Retaining their first languages should be an important educational goal since bilingual or multilingual students are an asset to this country. Schools should foster and promote their native languages.

While there are many languages spoken among ELLs, Spanish is the most prominent in New York City. In New York City, 14.3% of students are English Language Learners. Of these, 66% are Spanish speaking. Within this population, one quarter are not proficient in English upon entry to the school system. Queens has the largest number of ELLs in New York City, 45,316 (47.7% of the city’s total), and

research has shown ELLs are most populous in the early elementary grades (Baker, 2011).

There are a number of different approaches that have been developed to support non-native English Learners in their acquisition of English, or their second language (L2). All of these approaches vary in the degree to which they support the child's retention and development of the first language (L1). In New York City these programs are classified as follows. The most common approach by far is English as a second language (ESL), where 71% of English language learners are enrolled. The second most frequent is the city's transitional<sup>1</sup> approach, where students are taught content areas such as Math, Science, and Social Studies in their home language and literacy in English. The percentage of time learning subject matter in the native language decreases over time. Although smaller, a significant number of students, over 10,000 English language learners, are classified as Special Education students who are ELLs. Some of these students may have specific needs and Individualized Education Programs as part of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, but others are enrolled in submersion or immersion programs that help transition students into English instruction. The submersion program has hopes of assimilation and there is limited to no L1 support. In the immersion programs, students are taught in English and teachers can understand and speak students' L1, providing specialized language supports in regular education classes. All of the instruction is in English, but teachers are able to support ELL students with directions and modifications in their home language. Finally, the most linguistically progressive model is dual language, which sustains home language as well as teaches a

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<sup>1</sup> New York City uses the term "bilingual" to refer to programs that use the native language initially but transition students out of the home language quickly. For the purposes of this study, such programs are named "transitional" to distinguish from "bilingual."



second language, creating true bilingual students (Pacific Policy Research Center, 2010) and often serves children that may not be ELLs.

These four types of ELL programs all have differing impacts. The submersion or immersion model mainstreams non-native English speaking students into regular English-speaking classrooms. The goal of this model is to have students adapt immediately to the United States and become dominant English speakers. The first language is not supported in the submersion program; therefore, it is usually lost over time, unless it continues to be supported at home and in the community. The immersion model offers some L1 support to aid in student understand of curriculum, but still has the end goal of English dominance. Such programs may have negative cognitive effects, and students have a difficult time throughout their schooling career (Roberts, 1995). The ESL model has students “pulled out” of regular classes to receive ESL instruction. There are many challenges with this model because schools have difficulty determining which class students should miss, or be “pulled out” of, in order to receive their ESL instruction. Critics note that ESL students miss instruction in these classes and fall behind in order to receive ESL language support. This model allows students to have support in their home language during pull out times, but it may also cause stress and disconnect them from their English-speaking peers (Roberts, 1995). Not all ESL teachers speak L1, thus resulting in support provided in English. The English-only instruction may also eventually result in monolingualism and compromises students’ identity, connections to family, feelings towards school, and personal growth and success (Menken, 2013). The submersion or immersion model shares the English dominance orientation, but students are not pulled out; rather, teachers intersperse supports within the regular English-

speaking classroom. Effects on students' identity would be anticipated to be the same as for ESL because of the dominance in English instruction. The transitional model provides instruction in the native language but moves to English after about three years, and the native language eventually fades out, still promoting English as the dominant language. The dual language model differs significantly from the other models. The goal of this approach is to promote bilingualism and biliteracy. A students' native language is seen as a benefit and resource to their English learning. This model is associated with positive cognitive outcomes because it promotes the learning of two languages (Roberts, 1995).

In a 2010-2011 report by the New York City Independent Budget Office on program placement of English language learners, evidence shows that students can be in placed in one of the four program models. The programs start in Kindergarten and can go until 12th grade, depending on the ELL status of each student. Table 1 indicates that more than 71.1% of ELLs were being served in English as a second language programs. 18.1% percent of ELL students were in transitional (stated as "bilingual" on Table 1) classrooms. The remaining 10.8% of ELL students were in either dual language programs or in programs determined by their Individualized Education Plan (IEP), which is set for each student in special education programs. Nearly 73% of students in transitional programs in 2010-2011 were in those programs for three years or less, while 59% of students in English as a second language programs were participating for three years or less. While this might suggest that students in bilingual programs move to English language proficiency more quickly than those in ESL programs, data are also influenced by variation in the number of students entering a program each year. The

higher percentage of students in bilingual programs for fewer than three years might simply be due to more students entering that program in the most recent two years, and not be indicative of the rate at which students exit that program (NYCIBO, 2013).

Table 1: ELL Program Placements in New York City

Number of Years in Program	Bilingual		Dual Language		English as a Second Language Only		Special Education/ Individualized Educational Program	
	Number	Cumulative Percentage	Number	Cumulative Percentage	Number	Cumulative Percentage	Number	Cumulative Percentage
1	9,137	32.8%	1953	31.9%	26,770	24.5%	1723	16.6%
2	7,222	58.7%	1512	56.6%	22,792	45.3%	1006	26.3%
3	3,971	72.9%	875	70.9%	14,921	58.9%	1315	38.9%
4	2,725	82.7%	718	82.6%	12,813	70.6%	1262	51.1%
5	1,753	89.0%	477	90.4%	9,845	79.6%	1200	62.6%
6	1,147	93.1%	293	95.2%	7,159	86.2%	1188	74.0%
7	599	95.2%	167	97.9%	4,949	90.7%	901	82.7%
8	438	96.8%	65	98.9%	3,468	93.9%	678	89.3%
9	291	97.9%	54	99.8%	2,464	96.1%	517	94.2%
10	222	98.7%	7	99.9%	1,568	97.5%	338	97.5%
11	153	99.2%	4	100.0%	1,125	98.6%	158	99.0%
12	94	99.5%			674	99.2%	64	99.6%
Over 12	129	100.0%			893	100.0%	40	100.0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>27,881</b>	<b>18.1%</b>	<b>6,125</b>	<b>4.0%</b>	<b>109,441</b>	<b>71.1%</b>	<b>10,390</b>	<b>6.8%</b>

New York City Independent Budget Office

Source: New York City Independent Budget Office (2013)

The research supporting the use of dual language model extensively documents the effectiveness for ELLs developing proficiency in both English and the native language. For example, a longitudinal study released in 1991 by the U.S. Department of Education found that the more schools developed children's native-language skills (L1), the higher they scored academically over the long term in English. Students also benefited from acquiring fluency and literacy in two languages (National Association for Bilingual Education, 2014). This federally funded study traced the progress of more than 2,000 Spanish-speaking ELLs in nine school districts in five states over a four-year period. It found that students in developmental bilingual programs – which featured a

gradual transition to English – significantly outperformed their counterparts in quick-exit, transitional bilingual programs and in all-English immersion programs when all three groups were tested in English (National Association for Bilingual Education, 2014). This study establishes the efficacy of fostering native language development and helping students become academically fluent and linguistically bilingual in both their native language and English. This fluency is much more easily developed with a gradual, natural transition, where students are encouraged to practice both languages throughout their schooling experience. Being bilingual, rather than assimilating to English culture and becoming monolingual, has proven to have tremendous impacts on the human brain. According to the *New York Times*, “being bilingual, it turns out, makes you smarter. It can have a profound effect on your brain, improving cognitive skills not related to language and even shielding against dementia in old age” (Bhattacharjee, 2012). Bilingualism was long seen as a hindrance or interference to academic and intellectual development, but extensive research has shown that the intellectual challenge of thinking bilingually is a positive exercise that develops a unique, powerful brain.

The effectiveness of bilingual education has been a popular debate for years, but time and time again, research has shown that students whose native languages are supported and used in school are likely to outperform their counterparts in English-only programs and have a more effective and successful academic career (Menken 2013). It is evident that language and literacy skills are transferable between English and home languages used by the students. Although words and letters may differ, the *skills* used to read, write, listen, and speak are interchangeable. Therefore, learning in both the home language and English would greatly benefit students because they gain background

knowledge in their home language, which they are familiar and comfortable with, and in English. This generates greater abilities and advantages in English because students have the foundations already with their home language. This large and growing base of research supports students using their native/home language (L1) throughout the school day to ensure their success (Menken 2013).

Despite this research evidence, many schools in the United States only have English instruction. If students are lucky, they may have ESL pull out services for a limited amount of time per week where they are instructed by someone who speaks their home language or are provided additional English support outside of the classroom. Often, though, even ESL services are lacking and students are simply required to learn in “English only” programs. Despite the extensive research supporting bilingual education, the United States still has mixed feelings on immigrant students because of the influx into public schools. Research has shown, “The adoption of restrictive language education policies, which limit the usage of students’ home languages in school to support their learning, has characterized the US language policy landscape in recent history” (Menken, 2013). There is also research that supports the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 to have a strong link between the accountability requirements necessary to have a “passing school” and the recent disappearance of many bilingual programs in NYC schools (Menken, 2013). With high demands on performance NCLB requires, there are also laws ensuring the equal schooling of the ELL population. According to Jennifer Woodward (2009):

There are requirements and instruction of ELLs in New York that are found in Commissioner’s Regulations part 117 and part 154. CR Part 154.1

requires that each school district shall provide pupils with limited English proficiency equal access to all school programs and services offered by the district commensurate with their ages and grade level, including access to programs required for graduation (p. 6).

Indeed, many schools' push towards English proficiency through an English only route due to the pressures of standardized tests, the Commissioner's Regulations, among other laws, have looked to overrule policies that ban or diminish transitional and dual language education.

With an influx of emergent bilingual students, public schools have created transitional, submersion/immersion, and dual language programs, instead of only providing freestanding ESL pull out services. In doing so, these school programs seek to meet the needs of a tremendous number of English language learners who deserve an equal education. The push for bilingual education is extremely important because of this growing immigrant population; English is no longer the only dominant language in our country. The debate against these programs may pose a struggle for teachers and schools debating on whether or not to take on the obstacles and challenges of bilingual education. However, the benefits and positive outcomes for these ELL students are infinite.

There are teachers everywhere who are committed to bilingualism and meeting the needs of their ELLs. Teachers need to navigate language learning and teaching, and by choosing a program that fits the needs of each school, the first step to success is taken. Parent and teacher involvement has a profound impact on children's education (Froiland, 2013; Jasis, 2012), so once teachers decide to be involved and committed to promoting and engaging students in bilingual instruction, they are greatly impacting each student's

development of language. Parents have a tremendous impact on children's first language, and teachers can have an even larger influence on fostering that language as well as teaching a second language. In a bilingual classroom, it is the teacher's role to make language learning exciting and beneficial to all. Parents of students who do not speak English at home may greatly appreciate the benefits of the dual language program because it fosters children's home language, as well as giving students foundational skills in English. For children, being able to learn in their home language as well as in a new language is exciting and allows students to connect with their teachers, peers, and family. Children's experiences with language play essential roles in learning it, so the more positive experiences they have with two languages, and the more support they get from their teachers, peers, and parents, the more likely it is that they will want to learn.

### **Teacher Experiences with Trust**

Teacher experiences in schools are a key aspect of making a school successful, especially a new school in an urban setting. Schools are made up of administrators, staff, teachers, students, and parents. Without teachers, a school would not function. Teachers are the backbone to schools and can make or break a school's success. As much as school is about the students and their experiences, it is also about teacher's experiences. Bryk (2002) states:

We have learned, based on our research on school reform in Chicago, that a broad base of trust across a school-community lubricates much of a school's day-to-day functioning and is a critical resource as local leaders embark on ambitious improvement plans. Moreover, we maintain that this social trust is

especially important as we focus on disadvantaged urban schools and their task of educating “other people’s children.” (p. 5-6).

Evidently, in urban schools, teachers’ social trust with each other makes a school work day in and day out. It is also essential in working together and collaborating to make changes and improvements with curriculum. Teachers need to trust each other in order to value each other’s opinions and work together and determining student strengths, weaknesses, and needs. In an urban setting, many students have high needs, and teachers need to not only pay attention to academic needs, but also social needs. When teachers trust each other and create a positive community, the students, who may not have the best life outside of school, feel a sense of belonging and importance in a nurturing learning environment. Once teachers trust each other, their trust must permeate parents as well. Parents and teachers need to form a bond and trust each other as well, and parents need to realize teachers have their children’s best interest in their heart at all times and vice versa. Many times, “instead of working together to support the academic and social development of students, teachers and parents find themselves operating in isolation or, in worst cases, in opposition to one another” (Bryk, 2002, p. 6). However, in order for a school to succeed, especially a new school, teachers and parents need to communicate often and share constructive efforts to help the students succeed.

There was a five-year study performed at the University of Wisconsin at Madison of school restructuring efforts. They found that

Human resources- such as openness to improvement, *trust* and *respect*, teachers having knowledge and skills, supportive leadership and socialization- are more critical to the development of professional community than structural



conditions...the need to improve the culture, climate, and *interpersonal relationships in schools* have received too little attention. (Bryk, 2002, p.8)

The social dimension is evidently one of the most important aspects of a successful school. In order to make improvements, teachers have to be open, open to collaboration, to each other's thoughts and ideas, to constructive criticism, and to respecting and trusting one another. When teachers trust each other, they forge a relationship that is the foundation of the school. In a new school, academics are vital; however, social learning is also key to student's learning. Students must learn how to socialize with their peers and build relationships with other students as well as adults, such as teachers, staff, and administrators.

Creating a warm learning environment, where students are open to building these relationships and trying new things, is key to their success. With a positive learning environment, teachers allow their students to make mistakes and know that it is okay. In a new school, not only is the classroom environment important, but the school chemistry is essential as well. Students are nervous to come to school for the first time, or transfer to a new school, so having an inviting and collaborate staff for the students is imperative to creating prosperous students.

### **School Context**

Education has undergone a tremendous transformation in the United States. In New York City alone, the opening of new schools has proliferated in an effort to meet the needs of diverse students. This study is about a new school that is trying to do just that. Elm Tree Elementary School is a new school that is located in Elmhurst, Queens. The school opened in September 2013, and currently has 6 Kindergarten classes. With a student population of 145, each class has almost 25 students. There are 75 female

students and 70 male students. Of the 145 students, 140 are Hispanic, 1 is Indian, 3 are Asian, and 1 is black. Within the population, 123 students are English language learners. This information was crucial when the principal was determining what program would best suit the needs of the students; thus, she chose a dual language program. There are 6 classes, 3 Spanish, and 3 English. The students alternate daily between Spanish and English, having two teachers. Due to the ELL population, the dual language program has been having some enormous impacts on the students. In the beginning, they were confused, alternating teachers and languages. However, now that the routine is set in place, the students are comfortable and are making connections between the two languages. Meeting the needs of the majority of the students by teaching in both their home language and in English is a main priority of the school.

Whether a teacher is new or has many years experience, everyone starts anew when opening a new school. When teachers are hired and are set to come together to work collaboratively, there is a certain foundation that brings them together. Within a school community, building a trust amongst teachers, parents, and school leaders is essential for reform and to set the tone in a new school (Bryk, 2003). In an effort to build this trust, the principal of Elm Tree Elementary School had a week long professional development retreat in August to have the teachers meet and form relationships before the school year. The sense of community developed there created a positive atmosphere and affected the students and their feelings when they entered the school in September.

Social and emotional learning is also a key component of the school's foundation. In order to instill social and emotional learning in the classrooms and school community,

Responsive Classroom is used throughout the school. Every class starts their day with a morning meeting and morning message to present to their students. Throughout the meeting, every student is greeted and recognized, starting the day with a sense of community. After the greeting, students direct their attention to the message, where they are given a chance to build vocabulary in the language they are using that day and to work on their reading and language skills because they read the message aloud with the teacher. Not only is the message an opportunity for them to use their language knowledge, but usually there is an activity presented in the message, in which students are asked to answer a question or fix a sentence. Working together to figure out the question or whatever may be presented is a chance for students to interact socially and emotionally. The idea of this theory and practice is carried out throughout the day, as children are asked to share what they have written, drawn, or done at the end of each lesson. The sense of community is obvious and the positive energy of all of the classrooms is felt throughout the entire school.

Another part of the curriculum that is present within the entire school is having specials. Elm Tree Elementary is fortunate to have four main specials and two extra curricular activities as well. The four specials are Art, Theater, Science, and Yoga. All classes have Art and Science two times a week and Theater and Yoga once a week. The students are enthusiastic about all of their specials and appear to connect what they learn in class with what they learn in the specials. The specials also follow Responsive Classroom and have a “message” for the students to read when they enter their classrooms as well. The students’ imagination and creativity is stimulated and used in every single class. Their energy is also channeled in Yoga and Theater, which is

essential for children of this age. The two extra curricular activities that also occur once a week for every class are Cookshop and Studio in the School. Every Wednesday, the school participates in Cookshop. Cookshop is a city program that teaches students about the importance of nutrition and all of the food groups. Every week the students are presented with various kinds of foods and are asked to help the teacher make a recipe and try new foods. The students love participating and feeling like real chefs. Every Thursday, the school participates in Studio in the School. This is also a city program where another teacher comes into the school and has the students do unique art projects. These art projects are then displayed throughout the school. The best part is, the teachers get to participate as well, so the students feel connected to the teacher as they are doing the same projects with them. The students are proud of their work, and so far their work has been extremely inventive and unique. These activities may not always seem “academic,” but they teach Kindergarten students essential life skills that they will always use and remember because they are having fun in the process.

The concepts behind this research are important because they directly affect language learning of ELLs. Bilingual education is essential for young learners’ cognitive growth and development. Teachers who are committed to bilingual education must plan every day in order to ensure the success of their students. The school that will be focused on, in Elmhurst Queens, is part of the dual language model. The 6 kindergarten classes used as a framework for this study from which to explore the approaches and efforts of the teachers in a dual language school. The school culture and attitude towards bilingualism are extremely important to the success of the students learning the languages. The interdependence of school atmosphere and attitude and student

achievement makes it essential for teachers to work together to collaborate and plan effective bilingual instruction. This is the school context surrounding the 6 classroom teachers, 1 special education teacher, and 2 specials teachers from diverse backgrounds whose shared goal was to figure out how to successfully implement a dual language program.

The questions that framed this study are as follows:

- How do teachers who come from different pedagogical philosophies and teacher experiences come together in a new school to apply the ideals and methods of a dual language program?
- What programmatic aspects of the school do teachers find help them realize dual language goals?
- What additional supports or changes in the school would help teachers be more effective?
- How have teachers been able to build close collaborative relationships?

### **Definition of Terms**

*ELL*- English language learner

*Home Language/Native Language (L1)*- A student's first language

*Second language (L2)*- A student's second language, usually English in the case of ELLs

*Dual language*- Students are taught in both their native language and English

*Transitional (bilingual)*- Students start instruction in L1, but over time L2 (English) is dominant

*Submersion*- Students are taught in English, with no L1 support

*Immersion-* Students are taught in English with L1 support

*ESL pullout-* Students are mainstreamed in an English classroom, but receive aid in home language and additional English support

*Language Assessment Battery-Revised-* NYS test to determine ELL status

*New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test-* NYS test to test out of the ELL program

*Participant Observer-* A way of collecting data for qualitative research

*Responsive Classroom-* An approach to teaching that creates a positive social and emotional environment for students as well as an academic environment ready for learning.

## **Chapter 2: Methodology**

### **Study Design**

Naturalistic inquiry focuses on how people behave when they are absorbed in real life experiences in natural settings. It is a form of qualitative research that aims to comprehend how people in natural settings interpret the events and settings around them (Jacobs, 1985). As part of naturalistic inquiry in this study, I journaled about the experiences I had over the first few months of the establishment of this new school. In determining this journaling experience and the procedures following, first it was important to establish the main research question that would focus this study. It was important to document some of my own experiences through the first few months of the school's opening to provide context for this study. As a participant observer, I journaled about meetings and reflected after class time to interpret how our meetings and discussion played out in the classroom every day. The journal insights helped determine the interview protocol by highlighting important programmatic aspects of the school that teachers might have interesting perspectives on (Appendix B).

The goal of the interview questions was to learn about how teachers from different pedagogical philosophies and teacher experiences came together in a new school to realize the ideals and apply the methods of a dual language program. I also wanted to learn about the programmatic aspects of the school that teachers found helpful in realizing dual language goals, the additional supports or changes in the school that

would help teachers be more effective, and how teachers had been able to build close collaborative relationships in order to come together and create a successful environment.

After analysis of the themes in the interviews, I decided to conduct a focus group to help interpret the findings and to provide teachers with an opportunity discuss next steps. The main purpose of the focus group was to discuss the role trust had in helping teachers come together to realize the dual language goals of the school. The journals and interviews both indicated the essential need for teacher trust, and a focus group would help illuminate its role.

In order to ensure confidentiality and present the risks at hand, teachers were presented with an Informed Consent Form as outlined in the approved human subjects review board application (Appendix C). The approach to this study was highly naturalistic, with the goal being to provide documentation of the journey of all teachers working to build this new school's bilingual commitment. Teachers would not be asked to participate in any activities that were not otherwise engaged in outside the normal school activities as determined by the principal and our dual language teams.

### **Instrumentation**

The interview questions (Appendix B) were designed with a purpose of exploring the research questions in the study. There were nine questions in total, and each question helped the teachers discuss different aspects of the school that all connect to each other. The purpose of the interviews was to gain knowledge of diverse teacher experiences and learn not only about the teachers, but also about their thoughts and concerns about the programs within the school. I wanted to know what they thought had been working and what needed improvement. I also wanted to see if there were similarities and/or



differences among teacher answers, to find common ground around each question, and determine what that meant in regards to creating a successful school.

The main idea discussed in the Focus Group was teacher trust. Prior to presenting the discussion topic, I explained the process of determining that we would explore the question of trust. The teachers already had prior knowledge of the study because of the interviews, so they all were aware of the research questions and ideas being explored throughout the study. I described to them the different interview answers and the themes that occurred in all of them. Then, I explained how after interpreting the interview answers, it seemed that building teacher trust was something that could help all of us create a successful dual language school. Accordingly, the question presented to the group was “On a scale of 1-10, how much trust among teachers do you believe is currently present in the school?”

### **Analysis**

Journals, interviews, and focus group notes were all typed and analyzed using qualitative methods to explore shared and divergent themes. Lenses of social trust and dual language programming provided key analytic frames. Through the analytic frames of social trust and dual language programming, I was able to separate results into the common themes found throughout all data.

### Chapter 3: Results

#### Responsive Classroom

Teachers believed strongly in many of the programmatic aspects of the school. Across all interviews, teachers believe that Responsive Classroom, which was a school wide program, was the most important aspect of the beginning of the year. Teachers referred to Responsive Classroom as a way to “build a community and comfort zone within the classroom” that would be essential for dual language education. Teachers stated how it helped students “build a bond with their teachers and classmates” and it kept children “positive and excited about learning.” (See Appendix B for all interview responses.) With a predominately English Language Learner population, Responsive Classroom was key to building a positive relationship between teachers and students and also to creating a warm learning environment and community as a whole school. The fact that every class participates in Morning Meeting, a Responsive Classroom technique developed a sense of collaboration and community in the school.

Teachers also believed that Responsive Classroom proved helpful in the dual language program throughout the year. Responsive Classroom worked best “because of the importance of community and use of language skills” needed during morning meeting and throughout the day. Teachers stated students “respond nicely to this approach and it is evident in the atmosphere.”

### **Professional Development**

Of the trainings attended, teachers felt that Responsive Classroom training, where teachers learned about building a positive learning environment, New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test training, where teachers learned strategies to help students pass this standardized test, Curriculum training, where teachers learned how to navigate and implement math and literacy curriculum, Effective strategies for ELL students, where teachers learned different methods to meet the needs of diverse learners, Teacher's College Reading and Writing, where teachers learned specific strategies from Teacher's College program, Meeting the needs of diverse students, where teachers learned about the importance of knowing their students, Questioning and discussion techniques, where teachers learned the power and significance of high level questioning and open ended questions, New York State Association for Bilingual Education, where teachers were provided with various workshops on bilingual strategies, and Achievement Reporting Innovation System Questioning, where teachers were able to watch videos on effective questioning and other Danielson Framework components, were the most helpful in moving forward. They were all important because teachers were able to collaborate and learn together about these different areas that are essential to a dual language program. Collaborating and attending professional development sessions allowed teachers to come back to the school and share their knowledge whether they attended outside activities or the professional development occurred at school. Many teachers believed that Responsive Classroom set the "comfort level" for Kindergarten students who were attending school for the first time. It also gave students a "sense of belonging" and helped them learn to "respect each other" in a "warm learning environment."

In addition to answering questions about various kinds of professional development, participants were asked to discuss the proportion of time the school's professional development focused on dual language goals and on the programmatic aspects of the dual language efforts to support children. Teachers believed, on average, that 78% of our professional development and reflection time was targeted toward dual language goals. Answers varied from 50% to 100%: 50% (1), 75% (3), 80% (1), 90% (2), and 100% (1). Teachers believed that, on average, 69% of our professional development and reflection time was targeted toward the children and the dual language program, with answers varying widely: 25% (1), 50% (2), 75% (1), 80% (1), 85% (1), 90% (1), and 100% (1).

### **Additional Needs**

Teachers identified several additional supports needed to help them be more effective. They asked for workshops on English language learners with disabilities and reading practices and methods for bilingual students. In terms of curricular support, they wanted leveled readers for students to read on their independent reading level in both English and Spanish, more rigorous writing tasks for the students, and Foundations (English) and Estrellita (Spanish) phonics support. Teachers felt that in order to meet dual language goals and be the most effective teachers in a dual language program, more information and tools on these topics would be beneficial for the school to learn and grow from. These were all central concerns of the teachers, and the school addressed many issues through meetings and professional development held in the school. Also, the school provided some materials and curriculum in order to help teachers. For example, leveled readers were ordered in both English and Spanish because of the inquiry requests

of the teachers. Also, some teachers have attended workshops on Foundations, Estrellita, and strategies for students with disabilities as a result of the teachers' expression of concerns.

Importantly, they also wanted Spanish language support for English teachers. It is easy for the Spanish teachers to codeswitch between English and Spanish and understand and use both languages when necessary; however, for the English teachers, it is sometimes difficult to communicate with some students who are learning English. In a predominately English Language Learner population school, the majority of the students' native language is Spanish. They may understand some English, but when responding to a question or asking a question, they sometimes use Spanish. The English teachers have learned some basics in the language but would like more of a command of Spanish to better understand and communicate effectively with their students in their home language.

### **How the school has developed**

Teachers were asked to tell a story about how they felt about the dual language program in the first week of school and to tell a story from the past week that showed how they felt about the dual language program in its current state. They were also asked to describe the changes between these two times. Teachers stated how it "has been a complete roller coaster with ups and downs." Teachers also talked about the "inconsistency" and "confusion" they felt in the beginning of the year. Teachers were "worried," "frustrated," and "overwhelmed" in the beginning of the school year. This was due to the fact that it was a new school with all new curriculum. Also, teachers discussed how students were confused having two teachers and beginning to learn two

different languages. However, all teachers talked about the improvements their students had made over several months. In the beginning of the year there was confusion, but 4-5 months later there was “comfort and community.” It was a “long process,” but “gradual” and “natural.” This change was also described as “structured and sustainable.” This change has been part of a process of starting a new school with Kindergarten students who speak two languages.

### **Social Trust**

In the focus group, teachers met to discuss trust and collaboration found in the school. Through the discussion of the interview answers and thinking about how the school could move forward to improve the areas in which teachers need improvement, teachers felt that there was a nice foundation of trust in the school. Teachers were given a piece of paper with a scale of 1-10 and were asked to circle the number they believed effected the “trust” present in the school. For example, 10 would mean they felt there was an excellent foundation of trust and they could work with all teachers and staff closely, and 1 would mean they did not feel comfortable working with other teachers and staff because there was a lack of trust. On a scale of 1-10, looking at the average score of all of the teacher responses, teachers agreed that trust is at an 8 right now. In order to build more trust and have the number improve from an 8 to a 10, even more collaboration in areas lacking needed to happen. Teachers saw trust as being built through the professional developments held, common planning sessions, inquiry meetings, and book studies. In these areas, heavy collaboration is needed, and trust in each other’s abilities and experiences, along with the ability to share experiences in all these areas, were key to building trust. In recognizing the importance of helping the students succeed, teachers

noted that they must share the responsibility school wide. As a result of the focus group, teachers decided on next steps to working on trust and towards our common dual language goals. Teachers stated that more time should be spent curriculum mapping as a whole teacher team, because it is evident through our experiences that we know our students best and can make the curriculum based on students' needs. Also, teachers discussed that in order to build this trust, we must help build the community in the school. Teachers also discussed how students can feel the trust amongst teachers, so if teachers are able to bring the number from 8 to a 10, the students will also want to meet these high expectations established by the teachers. If trust is low, it creates a negative environment in the school, and impedes students' performance. In order to keep moving forward and improve in areas in need of improvement, creating these strong bonds are essential.

During the focus group the following statement was discussed, schools that have very strong trust are also top quartile schools, and low trust are low quartile schools (Bryk, 2002). Teachers discussed the importance of not only trusting each other, but administrators as well. At a score of 8, there was a mutual respect in trust amongst teachers and principal. As time goes on, teachers discussed that the hope and goal is to reach the score of 10 to establish trust amongst all. If this happens, support in professional development will happen for teachers and all members of the school community. In a new school, teachers note the difficult, yet exciting time for all to build this positive relationship.

In an opportunity to engaged in this thought that, "one might interpret most of our language as meeting English goals, instead of dual language," we as teachers came up

with two essential things we can focus on in order to not stray from our dual language goals. First, in realizing that our students are labeled as “English Language Learners” it is our job as dual language advocates to think of them more as “dual language learners.” The fact that they are in early stages of language acquisition, they are both Spanish and English learners. Not only are they learning a second language, but they are also developing their first language. Providing students with the academic language in both English and Spanish is key to other interpreting and understanding our goals as dual language school. Additionally, keeping in mind that in order for these students to be successful, they will need their home language and English to participate in a multicultural and multilingual world, especially in New York City. Although the LAB-R and NYSESLAT are required English assessments that test their abilities in reading, writing, listening, and speaking in English, the Spanish teachers must help prepare them for this test in both languages. Building vocabulary and literacy skills in their native language has been proven to help students transfer skills and language to their second language. Remaining focused on dual language and helping students build their confidence in their native language will help them succeed in their second language. In a new dual language school, it is vital to use language related to “dual language learners” and not just “English Language learners,” in order to stay true to the true vision of the school.



## Chapter 4: Discussion

Through the journaling experiences, interviews, and focus group used throughout this study, the research questions were explored. The questions that framed this study were:

*What programmatic aspects of the school do teachers find help them realize dual language goals?*

*What additional supports or changes in the school would help teachers be more effective?*

*How were teachers able to build close collaborative relationships?*

The big, underlying question of the study, “How do teachers who come from different pedagogical philosophies and teacher experiences come together in a new school to apply the ideals and methods of a dual language program?” was explored thoroughly throughout the study as well. With teachers from all different levels of experience and background, it was essential for them all to come together to apply the vision of the dual language program, the basis and principle of the school. In order for new schools to develop and see success, teachers must collaborate. The mix of different pedagogical philosophies and backgrounds has proven to be useful and beneficial thus far in creating an innovative and open environment in which teachers can share their best practices and experiences with materials. Through all of the Professional Developments, Inquiry Meetings, Common Planning, and Book Studies, the school has remained true to the ideals of the dual language program. The principal had a vision of creating biliterate and bilingual studies for the future, and her vision and goals still remain. The teachers were selected for a reason, to follow through on these ideals and to apply the effectiveness of

the dual language program to their classrooms. In a predominately ELL school, maintaining and supporting the students' home language, while helping them learn English (or vice versa) has been, and will remain the essential goal of the program and school. As the school grows and moves forward, finding teachers that believe in this motto will be imperative to the success of the school, and more importantly, to the success of the students.

The journaling experiences allowed me to look at my school through the two lenses of promoting bilingualism and social trust. I was able to reflect on the Professional Developments I was attending and the everyday events of the classroom. These journaling experiences allowed me to think about the ideals the school shares and how they were affecting the dual language program. It was the first step in framing this study and what I wanted to focus on, and it wound up giving me a lot of information on where I wanted to focus. After all of the journals, interviews, and the focus group meetings, I explored the meaning of social trust and the importance of promoting bilingualism. In doing so, I learned that as teachers grew and learned, all of their unique experiences were essential in creating a successful school built on collaboration and trust.

Through my journaling experiences I found that from the very beginning of the school year, social trust began to form by faculty attending different Professional Developments together. The first Professional Development we all attended was Responsive Classroom. Coincidentally, Responsive Classroom is based on social interactions and the importance of community in the classroom. Within a week, we were able to meet and learn a lot about each other and our prior experiences with teaching. The social foundations were being set up, and a natural sense of trust began to evolve.

Then during the Professional Development in August held at the school, we began the discussion of promoting bilingualism in the classroom. The principal set the values and goals of the school and explained the importance of the Dual Language program in creating bilingual students. After she set the tone of what the school stood for, it helped me in determining my study and what I wanted to explore. Throughout the year, I wanted to explore the ideas of social trust and programmatic aspects that has helped us in staying true to the value and motto of our school of creating bilingual students.

After I transcribed all of my journals and analyzed them through the lenses of social trust and promoting bilingualism, I began to think about my interview protocol. Through documental analysis, I came up with questions that would help me understand each teacher's perspective on the Dual Language program and different programmatic aspects that they believed worked or did not work in regards to meeting our bilingual goal. Each question that was constructed was made to draw on teacher experiences and help me interpret my own thoughts that occurred throughout the journaling experience. I wanted to learn more about their thoughts and opinions, and I did just that. The interview questions allowed me to look at things from their lens and help me find patterns in both strengths and weaknesses of the program. With an interesting array of answers, the questions and their answers opened our eyes for the future and was a reminder of the importance of the repetition and reiteration of our dual language goals and our focus around them.

After the interview questions, I developed a Focus Group question that would tie together all my thoughts and exploration I discovered through the journaling and interviews. I learned through the journaling and interviews that the one aspect of the

school that needed to be addressed in order to improve other areas was social trust. I asked the question to the other teachers about how much trust they feel they have with everyone in order to find out the general consensus in the building. After hearing their answers and seeing what the average number from 1-10 was, I re-analyzed all my findings with this new insight. What I realized is that the journaling experiences informed my interviews, my interviews then informed my focus group, and my focus group is what is going to help us tie everything together and move forward in improving social trust and promoting bilingualism. With more trust, the better we would be able to promote bilingualism and help meet the needs of all our students.

Although much of our time was spent on the program and children, it was evident that more time should be focused on the students and their needs. With many factors at play, it was easy to lose focus on the “student centered” curriculum. With the pressures of the NYSESLAT (English) Assessment and Danielson Framework for teachers at play, it was important for teachers to remain true to the mission and goals of the program, to create biliterate, bicultural, and bilingual students. Each year there will be struggles, but the important thing is for all of the teachers to communicate with each other and collaborate on ideas and concerns. It is also important to realize with student success, comes teacher success, and the focus should always remain on the students and what teachers need to do to help them meet their goals. In doing so, teachers will in turn meet their goals and succeed in their teacher practices.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A- Journaling experience**

#### **Journal #1- July Entries**

School has not even started yet and the nerves are setting in. This week we have Responsive Classroom Professional Development. I have never heard of Responsive Classroom before, but I am excited to learn what it is about. I know that it is an approach to teaching, but I look forward to finding out more this week!

As the week goes by, I have met some of the teachers in my school! We are all young women who have different levels of experience. Coming from all different backgrounds and teaching experiences, we are all excited and eager to start our jobs at a new school together. I am learning that Responsive Classroom is an approach to teaching that creates a positive classroom environment and community within the class, and school. Each day, we are going to start with a morning meeting, which entails a greeting, a share, an activity, and a morning message. We practice writing morning messages and learn about different greetings, shares, and activities we can do with our classes. This Professional Development is getting me really excited to have my own classroom! This program teaches the importance of teacher language and how teachers have a huge impact on students' engagement and behavior. When I spoke with the principal over the summer, she talked a lot about Responsive Classroom and how important social learning is for Kindergarten. I know that this Professional Development will have a heavy influence on our classrooms and the way we all start our days. I also think it will serve



grave importance for helping bilingual students become familiar with each other and the languages in the classroom.

### **Journal #2- August Entries**

Today I am going to a Professional Development in the city with two other teachers and my Principal. We are going to learn about MOSL- Measures of Student Learning. I do not know a lot about New York City Measures of Learning, so I am curious to learn what it is about and how it will be applied to our school.

After attending the Professional Development, I learned the importance and significance of Measures of Student Learning. For our students, being that we will be a predominately ELL school, the LAB-R will be the benchmark test for our students as well as Discovery Math. Then, at the end of the year, we will have the NYSESLAT to assess student growth over the year. As a dual language school, I am nervous that we may not have many students that score well at the end of the year. Bilingual students, whose second language is English, often have a difficult time with developing Literacy skills in Kindergarten. It will be our goal as teachers to set the skills and foundations in both English and Spanish in reading, writing, speaking, and listening to have students meet their goals and do as well as they can at the end of the year to demonstrate their progress. In the meantime, throughout the year we must build on their strengths and weaknesses we find in the LAB-R to work effectively with our students and help them reach their goals. Students may start off slow in the beginning of the year, but as time goes on, students will hopefully increasingly learn more and more reading skills and apply them to both languages.



**Journal #3- August Entries**

This week we had another Professional Development at our school. I was able to meet the rest of the teachers and staff that I will be working with this year. Throughout the week we talked about many different things that are essential to creating a successful dual language school. People that work for the Envision Math program as well as Reading Street came in to discuss and help us set up our curriculum. It was very nice to learn that both the Math and Literacy programs have Spanish equivalents. All of the materials for both programs are available in English and Spanish, which makes planning and congruency easier. Establishing the curriculum was extremely important in order to set the foundations for the school. It was also essential in order to start to manipulate and learn the ins and outs of the materials so we optimize use of the materials to help engage our students. The curriculum was set as well as the “colors” for the dual language program. Purple was assigned for the Spanish classrooms and green was assigned for the English classrooms. All charts, words, and labels in the language must be written in those colors, in order to signify and exemplify the language the students are currently practicing.

Aside from the curriculum, we also learned about effective reading and writing strategies for English Language Learners or bilingual students. We learned about how many of our students will come in with little to no English, and little academic background in their home language. Strategies to engage bilingual students include hands on activities, as well as visual, audio, and kinesthetic materials that will effectively reach all students in differentiated ways. From what I know about bilingual students and students who are learning two languages, especially English, helping them realize that the

skills they learn in one language are transferable in the other language is exceedingly important. For example, with writing, most grammar skills, such as capitalization and punctuation apply to both languages, so it will be our job to help them learn and apply these skills in both English and Spanish. Also, learning vocabulary words and helping them connect the words and their meanings in both languages will help enrich their literacy skills and become effective readers.

**Journal #4- September Entries**

These first few weeks of school have been overwhelming. Being in a classroom with 25 students and just myself has been something I have had to adjust to. Luckily, I am on the Spanish side of the dual language program, so my students understand and communicate with me without hesitation. I have two classes, and in one of my classes I have an Asian and Indian student, both of which do not speak Spanish. I am worried that it will be a challenge to teach them the language, considering they have no prior knowledge of Spanish. However, I am confident that by the end of the year they will know a lot more than they do now and will feel comfortable enough to use Spanish outside of the classroom as well. My English co-teacher has been popping her head into my classroom to ask me some translation questions, because most of the students have little to no English experience. I can imagine how much harder it is for her at this stage of the school year, but am curious to see how things shift and change as time goes on.

The first week of school was confusing. Materials were still coming in, and we were still sorting out our schedules and specials to make sure we all had “prep” periods that worked with both classes. We also did not switch classes for the first three days, to have the students settle in and be comfortable in a classroom setting first. After the first three days we switched and had our other class for two days in a row. Students were nervous and some had a harder time adjusting to the school schedule than others, but things got easier for all of us day by day. The whole first week we stayed after everyday. The principal met with all of the teachers and we sat down and discussed what we thought was working and what we thought was not working so far. We also exchanged ideas and activities we were doing with our classes in order to build a community that

fosters language and social growth. Our ELL coordinator also sat down and talked about the importance of labeling and pictures in a bilingual classroom.

**Journal #5- November Entries**

We are now three months into the school year and everything is starting to go smoothly. Students have finally learned all of the rules and routines and are aware of what it means to be a student in a dual language school. They know they are learning both Spanish and English, and are enthusiastic and curious about both languages. There are still several students that are struggling with the abundance of information from two different languages, but they know the teachers are here to help them and answer any questions they have.

I recently attended a Professional Development on the program Estrellita. It is a Spanish equivalent to Wilson's Foundation Program. It was a two day PD and I learned a lot about the importance of letter sounds, syllables, and words in the Spanish language. Not only the significance of them all, but the order in which we teach them to our bilingual students. Students learn letter sounds, then syllables, then words, and then sentences. However, with Estrellita their program breaks it down to learning syllables, words, and sentences with "a" and then "a-e," "a-e-i," etc. After attending the PD, my Principal sat down with the Spanish teachers and we discussed how we can fit Estrellita into our literacy block considering we know it is needed to help students excel in the Spanish language. I am eager to start the program and to get my students on the right track with their literacy knowledge.

**Journal #6- January Entries**

We have just gotten back from our December break, and I am surprised to find our students still remember all we have taught them thus far. I was nervous that over the long break they were going to lose focus and forget some of the things we have taught them. But to my pleasant surprise, many of them are starting to excel. As I compare their work from September to now, I see the tremendous changes amongst work samples. Especially with their writing, in the beginning of the year many students had to write with traceable font, and now they are writing one or more sentences on their own. I have not realized the changes they were experiencing until I sat down and compared their across the board. Not only has writing changed dramatically, but their reading skills and comprehension has also increased. A few of my students have jumped from a Pre-A to a B reading level, and others are starting to comprehend more, and will be making that jump soon. Although generally Kindergarten students are supposed to be a D-E by June, it is different for bilingual children, so to get a majority of our students to a C level by the end of the year will be the goal. I am confident that if they keep doing what they have been and maintain their positive attitudes and curiosity, they will definitely experience success in multiple areas.

Additionally, I have been really impressed all year with their Math skills. I know we tend to focus a lot on their literacy skills, but Math is imperative to their success as well. What is nice about the Math though, is that there is a consistency everyday. Regardless of the classroom, students are being taught the same “topic” across the school and it is easy for them to understand it in both languages because it is an extremely visual and hands-on program. Envision Math has been a great tool for the success of our



English language learners. The manipulatives, workmats, videos, and homework sheets have demonstrated student success throughout the year. Although I do have some low students in both classes, a majority of my students grasp the math concepts really quickly and master the topic tests and tasks.

As the second half of the year starts, I look forward to watching students achieve their goals in Literacy, Writing, and Math.

## **Appendix B- Interview Questions and Interviews**

### **Interview Questions**

1. Our school shares these ideals (responsive classroom, curriculum, and specials), which of these things did you think would be the most important for the dual-language program at the beginning of the year? (What did you think would work best?)
2. Which of these ideals is proven to work best in our dual language program?
3. In terms of helping us move forward to help us be better dual-language teachers, think of 3 or 4 meetings/discussions that we have had that have been most helpful? Why were they most helpful?
4. In our efforts in the school, which do you think are the most effective as a teacher, to realize our dual language goals?
5. What percentage of our professional development and reflection time is targeted toward dual language goals?
6. What percentage of our professional development and reflection time is targeted toward dual language children and program?
7. Where would you want more guidance and support in our program?
8. Can you give me a story that tells me how you felt about this dual language program in the first week of school?
9. Can you tell me a story from the last week about how you feel about dual language now? Describe for me what you this change looks like.

**Interview #1:**

1. Our school shares these ideals (responsive classroom, curriculum, and specials), which of these things did you think would be the most important for the dual-language program at the beginning of the year? (What did you think would work best?)

*This was my first introduction to "Responsive Classroom". I did know much about it at the beginning of the school year. After reading books and watching videos I was able to see how it can be effective. Since the majority of our students are ELL students it is important to incorporate responsive classroom. Students need to build a bond with their teachers and classmates. This bond will create a comfort level for the foundation of learning. ELL students have a difficult time entering school especially at a kindergarten level. Unlike students who speak english they don't have that language connection. Responsive classroom builds a great learning environment. The RC language keeps children positive/excited about learning.*

2. Which of these ideals is proven to work best in our dual language program?

*I think "Responsive Classroom" works best. Building relationships with your students is very important. Especially with kindergarten students who speak a different language. Also teachers really don't notice how you talk in your classroom is important. Your classroom language sets the tone for the learning environment.*

3. In terms of helping us move forward to help us be better dual-language teachers, think of 3 or 4 meetings/discussions that we have had that have been most helpful? Why were they most helpful?

*Responsive classroom Language- We were able to see effective language and ineffective language. We were able to reflect on ourself and set new goals for ourselves. After*

*implementing a couple of responsive classroom strategies I was able to see the difference in students.*

*Responsive Classroom Morning Meeting- We were able to understand all the components that should be addressed during morning meeting and why it is important to ELL students.*

*NYSESLAT- We were able to learn more about the test and see sample questions for the exam. We had to use the lens of a kindergarten ELL student. This allowed us to see what we need to work on with our students.*

4. In our efforts in the school, which do you think are the most effective as a teacher, to realize our dual language goals?

*The most effective would be responsive classroom. Our students are kindergarten students who are ELL students. This might be the first time that any of them are going to school. The emotions that are running through their bodies are all over the place. The most important thing is to set a comfort level with the student and the environment where you teach. You don't want these children to be scared to come to school. You want them to enjoy it so instruction will be effective.*

5. What percentage of our professional development and reflection time is targeted toward dual language goals?

*80% of our professional development is focused on dual language. Everything that we do has to be in two different languages. During every meeting dual language and ELL is touched upon.*

6. What percentage of our professional development and reflection time is targeted toward dual language children and program?

*I would say that 25% of our professional development is focused on programs for dual language children. Examples Studio in the school, cook shop, and cool culture. We briefly touch on it and do not revisit as much as we should to make the programs effective.*

7. Where would you want more guidance and support in our program?

*I would like more guidance in ELL students with disabilities and literacy. I would like to attend more professional developments outside of the school.*

8. Can you give me a story that tells me how you felt about this dual language program in the first week of school?

*At the beginning for the school year I didn't really know how to feel about the program. I also felt that it was a little confusing to the children switching classes' everyday. One day they would be in English and the following in Spanish. So there would be a lot of inconsistency for them. Not only were we a dual language school but also we were a brand new school. The school had gone through so many changes that are uncountable. At the beginning of the school her I questioned myself are these children going to be successful. How are they going to learn how to read in two different languages at the same time. Students would be so confused in what they had learned the previous class because it was another language. When the teacher would ask the questions about what they learned previously in class they would answer with things that they had learned in the other languages class. It was so frustrating but things have changed significantly.*

9. Can you tell me a story from last week about how you feel about dual language now? Describe for me what you think this change looks like.

*Like I said previously. Things have changed so much in the school. At the beginning I didn't think that these children would learn how to read. But now they are reading. They are still at a level A but it is mostly because of comprehension. They are reading in both languages. Just at a slower pace than a single language student. But this is only because they are learning double the amount of information. The students now have the hang of it. They now don't mix the academics that they had learned for the other languages class. I think that it was a complete roller coaster with ups and downs. Now we are still on a roller coaster with fewer bumps. I feel that these students will be more successful in the following years if they are placed in the same program because they finally got the hang of it.*

**Interview #2:**

1. Our school shares these ideals (responsive classroom, curriculum, and specials), which of these things did you think would be the most important for the dual-language program at the beginning of the year? (What did you think would work best?)

*I thought using responsive classroom would be the most important thing while working in a dual language school. I have used it the past two years and it worked really well with students who have special needs and can't verbally express what they think or need. Since I have no Spanish speaking background I knew communication would be the hardest.*

2. Which of these ideals is proven to work best in our dual language program?

*Responsive classroom has worked best because it brings the teacher and students together. It created understanding of difference, patience, and how to help one another of they are unable to do something. The thing that students learned was that they could rely on a friend to communicate with me as well as their peers.*

3. In terms of helping us move forward to help us be better dual-language teachers, think of 3 or 4 meetings/discussions that we have had that have been most helpful? Why were they most helpful?

*The responsive classroom training over the summer taught me something's that I never learned. Reading street/Envision/La Calle de Lectura training have me a better idea of how to use the program. A training from a peer about the NYSESLAT was helpful to learn what the students will be tested on to see how much they grew.*

4. In our efforts in the school, which do you think are the most effective as a teacher, to realize our dual language goals?

*Responsive classroom works really well in our school. It makes the students feel comfortable and have a sense of belonging. They know they aren't judged, especially during morning meeting when there is open discussion.*

5. What percentage of our professional development and reflection time is targeted toward dual language goals?

*I feel that about 90% of our professional development and reflection time is targeted.*

6. What percentage of our professional development and reflection time is targeted toward dual language children and program?

*I think about 50% because it is touched upon on most meetings. We are constantly looking at data and how we can move the students to the next level by looking at their strengths and needs to form their next steps.*

7. Where would you want more guidance and support in our program?

*I would like to be offered classes to take to learn simple Spanish words and phrases. Because of the language barrier, sometimes I feel that students who could succeed high are falling behind because they do not understand what I am saying.*

8. Can you give me a story that tells me how you felt about this dual language program in the first week of school?

*The first week of school I was nervous and confused. Especially being an English teacher, it was really hard learning my student's names and getting to know them when they could not understand me.*



9. Can you tell me a story from the last week about how you feel about the dual language program now? Describe for me what this change looks like.

*Now, the students understand what I say to them. I have learned a few Spanish words, and they have learned a lot of English. I am very impressed with their improvements in English and this change has been relieving and exciting.*

**Interview #3:**

1. Our school shares these ideals (responsive classroom, curriculum, and specials), which of these things did you think would be the most important for the dual-language program at the beginning of the year? (What did you think would work best?)

*I thought Responsive Classroom would be the most important for the dual-language program in the beginning of the year.*

2. Which of these ideals is proven to work best in our dual language program?

*Responsive Classroom has proven to work best in our dual language program because of the importance of community and use of language skills.*

3. In terms of helping us move forward to help us be better dual-language teachers, think of 3 or 4 meetings/discussions that we have had that have been most helpful? Why were they most helpful?

*Learning about the use of pictures in the classroom so the students can identify their surroundings. We had a meeting about the importance of labeling the classroom and using visuals to help ELL students.*

*We also had a meeting about questioning techniques. I found this was most helpful because in this discussion we were given examples of certain questions that dual-language learners would respond well to.*

*I also really enjoyed the Professional Development on Responsive Classroom because I learned the importance of community inside and outside of the classroom and its impact on ELL learners.*

4. In our efforts in the school, which do you think are the most effective as a teacher, to realize our dual language goals?

*I think having a common curriculum and specials are effective in realizing our dual language goals because we get to see the parallels in both English and Spanish. We also get to see students strengths in one language versus the other and their weaknesses in one language versus the other. Specials also give students a common ground and help them make connections between curriculum and extra curriculum.*

5. What percentage of our professional development and reflection time is targeted toward dual language goals?

*75% of our professional development and reflection time is targeted toward dual language goals.*

6. What percentage of our professional development and reflection time is targeted toward dual language children and program?

*85% of our time is targeted toward dual language children and program. Many of our inquiry meetings are based on student work and strengths and challenges we found and what we can do to work towards meeting their needs and goals.*

7. Where would you want more guidance and support in our program?

*I would like more guidance and support in our program in learning how to help a dual language learner read fluently and efficiently.*

Can you give me a story that tells me how you felt about this dual language program in the first week of school?

*Being the art and theater teacher, the first week of school was very interesting for me.*

*The dual language program was confusing for me and I wondered how it would pan out in my classroom considering I do not speak Spanish. It was really challenging getting to know the students and their names. It was also really challenging establishing the rules*

*and routines of the art room, as well as the theater room, and making sure they were similar to that of the regular classroom teachers. Responsive classroom really helped me in establishing all of these essentials in the first week of school.*

9. Can you tell me a story from last week about how you feel about dual language now?

Describe for me what you think this change looks like.

*Currently, the students love art and theater. They really express themselves in both languages in my classroom and are able to use their imagination to create masterpieces. I think the dual language program is great now because students are learning English in my room, but use of their home language is also permitted and encouraged. The transition from craziness and confusion, to comfort and community has been an amazing change that has really positively impacted the students.*

**Interview #4**

1. Our school shares these ideals (responsive classroom, curriculum, and specials), which of these things did you think would be the most important for the dual-language program at the beginning of the year? (What did you think would work best?)

*I thought that Responsive Classroom would be the most beneficial for the dual-language program at the beginning of the year. I have had previous experience using it with ELL students so I knew it was an effective method.*

2. Which of these ideals is proven to work best in our dual language program?

*I still believe that Responsive Classroom has proven to work best in our school and I think the students respond nicely to this approach. It has built a community in our school and it is evident in the atmosphere.*

3. In terms of helping us move forward to help us be better dual-language teachers, think of 3 or 4 meetings/discussions that we have had that have been most helpful? Why were they most helpful?

*The following professional developments were most helpful for us as dual language teachers: questioning and discussion techniques, best practices and strategies for ELL students and meeting the needs of diverse students.*

4. In our efforts in the school, which do you think are the most effective as a teacher, to realize our dual language goals?

*The professional development I have found most effective to realizing our dual language goals is the "best practices and strategies for ELLs." This has allowed myself and everyone to learn about effective ways to teach our students effectively given that the majority are ELL students learning both English and Spanish.*

5. What percentage of our professional development and reflection time is targeted toward dual language goals?

*I think 100% of our professional development and reflection time is targeted toward dual language goals.*

6. What percentage of our professional development and reflection time is targeted toward dual language children and program?

*I also think we spend 100% of our professional development and reflection time on our students and the program in general.*

7. Where would you want more guidance and support in our program?

*I would like more support in effective practices with reading and writing.*

8. Can you give me a story that tells me how you felt about this dual language program in the first week of school?

*I felt the dual language program would be beneficial for the children especially with the use of the curriculum and materials available.*

9. Can you tell me a story from last week about how you feel about dual language now?

Describe for me what you think this change looks like.

*I feel the dual language program is helpful for our ELLs due to the vast amount of curriculum and materials available to them especially the technology component. The change of the way we instruct our students and how we utilize the curriculum and materials available to the students.*

**Interview #5**

1. Our school shares these ideals (responsive classroom, curriculum, and specials), which of these things did you think would be the most important for the dual-language program at the beginning of the year? (What did you think would work best?)

*I think that responsive classroom is important for the dual language program at the beginning of the year because it allows students to feel comfortable in a classroom. Students who are "shy" would develop the skills to be open and share as well as participate in activities.*

2. Which of these ideals is proven to work best in our dual language program?

*Responsive Classroom allows students to listen and speak to each other which will help them in preparation for the NYSESLAT.*

3. In terms of helping us move forward to help us be better dual-language teachers, think of 3 or 4 meetings/discussions that we have had that have been most helpful? Why were they most helpful?

*The meetings where we analyze student work allows us to reflect and think of next steps together as a team. We are able to analyze their strengths and weaknesses. The NYSESLAT PDs have been helpful because it allows us to see what to expect and better plan out how to teach the students the skills they need to master. The TC Reading PD that Kristina and I presented was a helpful PD because it also gave us lots of different strategies to use with ELLs to make them into independent readers.*

4. In our efforts in the school, which do you think are the most effective as a teacher, to realize our dual language goals?

*I think the Teacher's College PD is the most effective to realize our dual language goals because I learned a lot about different strategies to use with ELLs and help them become independent readers.*

*However, aside from the PDs, I think having the abundance amount of technology we have in the school is important. It allows our students to learn in different and interactive ways to further their growth. I feel that the stories they are able to listen to on the Kindle is a great function, because many students may not have parents who can read to them in English, but with the Kindle they can listen to someone read to them.*

5. What percentage of our professional development and reflection time is targeted toward dual language goals?

*I would say about 50% of our time.*

6. What percentage of our professional development and reflection time is targeted toward dual language children and program?

*I would also say around 50%. We can definitely focus more on the students' needs.*

7. Where would you want more guidance and support in our program?

*I would love to have actual leveled books in the classrooms to use to allow the classroom teachers to help the students grow in their independent reading levels.*

Can you give me a story that tells me how you felt about this dual language program in the first week of school?

*The first week of school I remember feeling anxious. I speak English, and teach English, but I also know Mandarin and some Spanish, so I was not nervous about communicating. However, the first week of school I was nervous about the students' reactions to switching classes and teachers. It was a bit hectic in the first couple of weeks of school.*



9. Can you tell me a story from last week about how you feel about dual language now?

Describe for me what you think this change looks like.

*Last week my students are writing complete sentences in English and counting their numbers in English. The transition has been a long process, but some of them are really starting to excel in both languages. Knowing that a majority of my students are Spanish and Chinese, they are starting to utilize both languages appropriately and are more comfortable with English than they were in September.*

**Interview #6**

1. Our school shares these ideals (responsive classroom, curriculum, and specials), which of these things did you think would be the most important for the dual-language program at the beginning of the year? (What did you think would work best?)

*Responsive classroom is most important during the beginning of the year. ELL students need to feel comfortable in their environment. The responsive classroom approach helps students feel as if they are part of the classroom community. Students are aware through this approach that all students are respected in the classroom and we treat each other like family.*

2. Which of these ideals is proven to work best in our dual language program?

*Again, responsive classroom for the same reasons.*

3. In terms of helping us move forward to help us be better dual-language teachers, think of 3 or 4 meetings/discussions that we have had that have been most helpful? Why were they most helpful?

*NYSESLAT- This meeting helped us learn the skills needed for our students to become proficient in English*

*Helping our students become Emergent Readers- I conducted this PD and went to the PD in Manhattan. This PD helped me learn how to make my students better readers.*

*Strategies and skills were provided to use to increase language/phonemic awareness and reading readiness.*

*During the beginning of the year we all went to a PD on the Dual Language program itself and talked about what the program was since all of us were basically new at the program. It helped to understand how the program was going to work and the different*

*things we needed to do inside BOTH our classrooms to keep the students organized as possible. Structure is very important.*

4. In our efforts in the school, which do you think are the most effective as a teacher, to realize our dual language goals?

*Our ideas are responsive classroom, curriculum that is HANDS ON. I find the curriculum that is HANDS ON as well as the I do, We do, You do approach MOST beneficial to our students.*

5. What percentage of our professional development and reflection time is targeted toward dual language goals?

*I think about 70% of our time is used to target dual language goals.*

6. What percentage of our professional development and reflection time is targeted toward dual language children and program?

*I think 90% of our reflection time is targeted toward our students and program.*

7. Where would you want more guidance and support in our program?

*I would really like to attend a training on Foundations since I have not been trained in the program.*

Can you give me a story that tells me how you felt about this dual language program in the first week of school?

*The first week of school I remember feeling confused. Being an English teacher, I was worried that I was not going to be able to communicate with my students at all.*

9. Can you tell me a story from last week about how you feel about dual language now?

Describe for me what you think this change looks like.

*Now, everything is a lot easier. The students are able to speak to me and ask me questions and vice versa. Although there are some daily struggles, many of my students are able to translate and help each other. The change has been gradual, but very rewarding.*

**Interview #7**

1. Our school shares these ideals (responsive classroom, curriculum, and specials), which of these things did you think would be the most important for the dual-language program at the beginning of the year? (What did you think would work best?)

*I believe the responsive classroom is key in the beginning of the year. Students are able to feel comfortable and are given a set structure.*

2. Which of these ideals is proven to work best in our dual language program?

*I notice that Responsive Classroom and specials work best.*

3. In terms of helping us move forward to help us be better dual-language teachers, think of 3 or 4 meetings/discussions that we have had that have been most helpful? Why were they most helpful?

*In terms of helping us move forward to help us be better dual-language teachers, I think that NYSESLAT training, ARIS questioning, and Teachers College Emergent readers were all Professional Developments that provided us with concrete strategies that could be implemented immediately into any of our classrooms.*

4. In our efforts in the school, which do you think are the most effective as a teacher, to realize our dual language goals?

*I believe that all three ideals, Responsive classroom, curriculum, and specials are all crucial to realizing our dual language goals.*

5. What percentage of our professional development and reflection time is targeted toward dual language goals?

*I think about 90% of our time is targeted toward dual language goals.*

6. What percentage of our professional development and reflection time is targeted toward dual language children and program?

*I think about 75% of our time is targeted toward our dual language students and program.*

7. Where would you want more guidance and support in our program?

*I would like more guidance and support in our writing program.*

8. Can you give me a story that tells me how you felt about this dual language program in the first week of school?

*During the first few weeks I think a common feeling is confusion no matter how long you've been doing it. I remember sitting in Bowes room one Friday afternoon trying to plan-and even after those few hours we still walked out confused and overwhelmed.*

9. Can you tell me a story from last week about how you feel about dual language now?

Describe for me what you think this change looks like.

*As time goes on you definitely feel comfortable with your partner to speak your mind and work through plans as a team. I would say a time I felt completely comfortable would be when we just created our new writing task. Kristina and I prior to the meeting had very similar ideas sort of identical. I think that similar thinking comes with time and the excessive amount of time you spend together talking and discussing. This change looks structured and sustainable.*

**Interview #8 (researcher's answers):**

1. Our school shares these ideals (responsive classroom, curriculum, and specials), which of these things did you think would be the most important for the dual-language program at the beginning of the year? (What did you think would work best?)

*At the beginning of the year I thought that Responsive Classroom would be most important for the dual-language program. After attending a week long Professional Development in August, I saw how effectively it can create a community and positive learning environment. In September, when classes started, I started implementing Responsive Classroom right away to get students comfortable with each other.*

2. Which of these ideals is proven to work best in our dual language program?

*Throughout the year, Responsive Classroom has proven to work best in our dual language program. It has created a warm, nurturing environment which is essential for English Language learners.*

3. In terms of helping us move forward to help us be better dual-language teachers, think of 3 or 4 meetings/discussions that we have had that have been most helpful? Why were they most helpful?

*Three meetings that have been most helpful in helping us be better dual-language teachers are NYSESLAT training, teaching us effective practices for speaking, listening, reading and writing with bilingual students. Also, questioning techniques was also very helpful in being better dual-language teachers because it has helped us in creating open-ended questions that gets students thinking deeper and more critically and facilitating their own discussions. Additionally, envisioning language was also helpful because it is*

*a great technique for bilingual students. Recently, we attended the NYSABE conference, where we learned the importance of having bilingual students and how powerful it is to know two languages.*

4. In our efforts in the school, which do you think are the most effective as a teacher, to realize our dual language goals?

*In realizing our dual-language goals, the NYSABE (NYS association for bilingual education) was most effective in realizing our dual language goals. This is because its focus was fostering and enriching bilingual classrooms rather than focusing on learning English. It was empowering to learn about the importance of teaching two languages and supporting students who speak two languages.*

5. What percentage of our professional development and reflection time is targeted toward dual language goals?

*I think about 75% of our professional development and reflection time is targeted toward our dual language goals. I think sometimes we can get caught up in the English side of the program because of the NYSESLAT as our MOSL (measures of student learning). However, although the NYSESLAT is in English, in the Spanish classes, we still do our practice tests and questions in Spanish to help build their responses and vocabulary in both languages.*

6. What percentage of our professional development and reflection time is targeted toward dual language children and program?

*I think 80% of our professional development and reflection time is targeted toward dual language children and program. When we discuss the book "Power of Our Words" and have our inquiry meetings based on student assessments, we focus on what we as*



*teachers can gather from our information and assessments and what our next steps can be in order to ensure the success of our students.*

7. Where would you want more guidance and support in our program?

*I would like more guidance and support in our writing program. I believe our writing objectives and assignments can be more rigorous.*

Can you give me a story that tells me how you felt about this dual language program in the first week of school?

*The first week of school I remember feeling confused and worried. I was worried that the students would not adjust to having two teaching and alternating day to day with English and Spanish and two different teachers. We stayed after every day of the first week to try and sort out any lingering questions we had after each day. The first week of school, my confidence was not high and I was nervous as to what the year would look like.*

9. Can you tell me a story from last week about how you feel about dual language now?

Describe for me what you think this change looks like.

*Now, the students know who they have when they come into school each day. They know when they have English and when they have Spanish. They know what language they need to use on each day and which teacher is associated with each language. This change has been a gradual and natural process that I never saw the first week of school. Looking back, the confusion and worry I had was all part of the start of something new, and where we are now is all part of the process.*



**Appendix C- HERB**

**INVESTIGATOR(S)**

Alexandra Bauer

**DEPARTMENT**

Education

**FACULTY SPONSOR**

Dr. Karen DeMoss

**TITLE**

A Study of Teacher Engagement in a Dual Language Program

**RATIONALE**

The purpose and logic of this study is to explore how teachers in a startup school express, enact, and sustain their commitment to bilingualism. The school and its mission are new to both the community and the New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE). I want to document how faculty come together in this new context to navigate their different approaches to language learning and teaching, how they engage intercultural opportunities the school presents, and ultimately how all of this supports their students learning Spanish and English at the school.

It is well established that parent and teacher involvement has a profound impact on children's education (Froiland 2013, Jasis 2012). Also, Emergent Literacy Theory (Whitaker 2009) states that adult interaction immensely impacts childhood development

of language and reading. These theories hold true with English language learners.

Parents have a tremendous impact on children's first language, and teachers in a new school when parents are bringing children to school for the first time can have an even larger influence on fostering language learning in both languages both through their instruction and their interaction with parents. Children's experiences with language play essential roles in learning it, so the more positive experiences they have with two languages, and the more support they get from their teachers, peers, and parents, the more likely they will be to learn--and to want to learn more.

### **SPECIFIC AIMS**

The study will explore how teachers in a new city school committed to bilingualism build a culture and processes that supports dual language learning.

*Some specific sub-areas that will be explored include the following:*

- How do teachers navigate language learning approaches across the paired Spanish and English classes and among themselves as individuals working together in a new small school?
- In what ways do teachers embody the philosophies implicit in the dual language approach?
- What aspects of a successful dual language program prove most challenging to realize?
- How do parents and students react to and benefit from the dual language program?

### **VARIABLES**

Although this is an exploratory, largely qualitative study, there are several distinct variables of interest that will inform the study's interpretive lenses. Variables include the teachers in the school and their linguistic and cultural backgrounds. There are 7 Kindergarten classes, 3 will be the Spanish classes of the Dual Language Program, 3 will be the English classes that are partnered with the Spanish classes, and 1 is for children of parents who do not want to be part of the Dual Language Program. Another variable will be how teachers internalize and enact the philosophies informing a dual language approach. In order to help students navigate language learning, dual language teachers will be required to navigate curriculum across Spanish and English classes so that no overlap occurs, making the curriculum and its planning a key variable. Finally, since the school is newly opened and allows formal dual language learning opportunities for the first time in the neighborhood, the school's efforts will likely attract more parental and student discussion than early schooling has in the past. How the school's constituents experience the school's efforts should, according to dual language philosophy, influence a dual language program's implementation, making parents' and students' experiences an important indicator. **SUBJECT SELECTION**

Elm Tree Elementary School is a brand new school with 7 Kindergarten classes. Six of these classes will be part of the dual language program, promoting bilingualism throughout the school. The seventh class will be for those who opt out of the dual language program. Being a brand new school afforded the principal to hire a set of teachers committed to promoting bilingualism and demonstrating its importance to the parents and students of the school. The school is located in Elmhurst Queens, an area that is largely populated by Spanish speaking people. For this study, I will use all of the

teachers and staff at the school as my subjects in exploring how the school's commitment to bilingualism is enacted throughout the semester in multiple settings. Parents' and students' normally-occurring comments about their experiences will also inform the study, as these comments come forth and are brought to faculty discussions about how to build a strong dual language school.

### **PROCEDURE**

The study will use participant-observer approaches (Patton 2001) framed within the action research model of school self-study (Anderson, Herr, & Niehlen, 2011).

This study will take place in fall/winter of the 2013-2014 school year. After seeking approval from the principal for the study, I will approach other teachers and staff at the school to explain my interest in documenting the school's development of a successful dual language program and seek their informed consent. During professional development days, which will be held every Wednesday throughout the year, along with team meetings and planning sessions, I will take notes on what we do. I will also record my own efforts to realize the goals of our dual language program and will document my partner teacher's and other teachers' perspectives as they arise naturally during the year. During parent teacher conferences and parent orientation night, I will be able to note what families find appealing and beneficial about the dual language program. Before publishing any findings, I will seek member checks from faculty, the principal, and parent representatives.

### **MATERIALS**

Informed Consent Forms

Observation notes from professional developments and team meetings

Documentation from school efforts to implement the dual language program

**DESCRIBE IN DETAIL ANY DECEPTION USED**

There is no deception used in this study.

**POTENTIAL RISKS & SAFEGUARDS**

I will have an informed consent form to explain what my study entails and what I will be asking teachers and staff members to allow me to document. This informed consent form will explain my confidentiality agreement between myself and all participants, demonstrating the seriousness with which I take the responsibility to safeguard against any breaches of confidentiality and unnecessary stress. I will notify them that if they choose not to participate there is no harm and if they do not want to share specific information, they will not be forced to discuss anything they do not want. In addition, all participants will have the opportunity to member check the presentation of the descriptive analyses and findings.

**BENEFIT TO SUBJECTS**

As a result of the study, the school community will be able to better understand the most important aspects of our work to develop an effective new school that promotes bilingualism. The action research approach should be supportive of faculty and staff as we learn to work together to address shared needs and goals.

**OTHER BENEFITS**

By doing this research, I could potentially help Elm Tree Elementary School construct a stronger dual language program, meeting the needs of their students and families. The school will receive an invitation to the Wagner College thesis symposium, and I will also share findings with staff at a meeting identified as appropriate by the principal. Also, based on my study I hope that teachers will feel empowered and encouraged to continue to be committed to teaching their students the importance of bilingualism.

### **INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

The Education Department's graduate programs at Wagner College support the practice of protection of human participants in research. The following form will provide you with information about the study I am proposing to conduct that will help you in deciding whether or not you wish to participate.

In this study, I will be documenting our progress towards developing an effective dual language program at Elm Tree Elementary School. Over the course of the year, I will take notes on faculty and staff perspectives about our work, for example, about how the



curriculum is working, what the benefits might be of learning both Spanish and English, and how students are responding to the program. The approach to this study is highly naturalistic, with my goal being to provide documentation of our journey building this new school's bilingual commitment. You will not be asked to participate in any activities that we would not be engaging in outside our normal school activities as determined by the principal and our dual language teams.

All information I record will remain confidential and will not be associated with anyone's name.

In addition, all members of the school community will have the opportunity to check my notes that incorporate their thoughts and to provide feedback on any discussion I provide about the school's development to ensure that the presentation is fair and supportive of our shared goal of improving the school's efforts towards bilingualism.

Your participation is solicited, yet strictly voluntary. If for any reason during this study you do not feel comfortable, you may end your participation and your information will be discarded.

If you have any further questions concerning this study please feel free to contact me through email: Alexandra Bauer at [alexandra.bauer@wagner.edu](mailto:alexandra.bauer@wagner.edu) or my supervisor Karen DeMoss at [karen.demoss@wagner.edu](mailto:karen.demoss@wagner.edu). Please indicate with your signature on the space below that you understand your rights and agree to participate in the study.

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Signature of Participant

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NAME, Investigator

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Print Name

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Department: Education

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