

Bilingual School Visit Summary
October 28, 2016

Blue Ridge:

Observations:

- English only and dual students mixed at the tables for English-Math
- Instruction in English and students were doing lots of choral repeating to practice math vocabulary
- All instruction in Spanish with only native Spanish speakers. Self-contained classrooms seem to have a nice community feeling with good routines. (SLA)
- Had assistants helping with groups of students.
- I didn't see bilingual pairs.
- It seemed teacher directed and student taking it in-didn't seem to have a lot of opportunities for students to practice the language.

Questions/Wonderings:

- Are all the teachers at Blue Ridge trained to teach ELL's? The mixing for math seems good for social reasons, but it's also important that all teachers have dual strategies.
- What will happen in 3rd-5th? Will they keep self-contained one-way classes that only mix for math? Do we have teachers qualified to teacher 3rd-5th ELA and SLA?

Green Park:

Observations:

- High level of academic Spanish due to all Native-Spanish and English speakers immersed since kindergarten. (Science)
- Lot of partner/group work. Lots of Spanish being spoken. (Science)
- Seemed like one-way dual, but there were a couple of Native Spanish speakers. (SLA)
- Since the native English speakers are high, it seemed like the level of instruction would stay high/on grade level.
- I learned the term "cooperative learning groups".
- Teacher had microphone that I thought delivered clearer sound and students appeared focused.
- For English expert parents wanting Spanish for their child and to provide a strong, adequate base for ELL's, a 80:20 or 90:10 program seems appropriate.
- I didn't see bilingual pairs.
- Teacher used a lot of English.

Questions/Wonderings:

- What is the plan moving forward? It doesn't seem sustainable to have an added 4th/5th teacher. Will they have a self-contained two-way dual at 4th and 5th like K-3?
- When is ELA being introduced to this group and how? (SLA)
- What is keeping additional staff from using microphones?

- There was talk amongst some of us trying to keep K-2 self-contained quality IF we can recruit enough Spanish teachers. 3-5 possible with a partner.

Edison:

Observations:

- Good to see kids mixed for part of the instruction, but kind of surprising to see all native English speakers working together in a small group and all the native Spanish speakers. (SLA)
- The work was fairly independent, so didn't see much academic interaction between students. All the kids did seem to be accessing the English instruction successfully.
- Instructor in English math portion mentioned she really finds an assistant beneficial.
- The students were NOT in mixed groups.
- I did not see them using bilingual pairs.
- Students English experts didn't understand what I was asking them in Spanish.
- Latino/Spanish Experts didn't see themselves as leaders during SLA.
- Teacher code-switching

Questions/Wonderings:

- Are they utilizing bilingual buddies? (SLA)
- What supports were built in for the ELL's in the room? (Math)
- They were seated with buddies, do they work with them? (Math)
- Does each student live in the neighborhood?
- Can a student come from a different area?

Sharpstein

Observations:

- Students responding in Spanish and trying to talk with their buddies In Spanish. (SLA)
- All writing in Spanish. (SLA)
- Working together translating for each other (Science)
- Using as much Spanish as they can and accessing instruction through visuals, posters, etc. (Science)
- 4th grade teacher asking critical questions in Spanish. This enhances critical thinking. And Luz mentioned that those students who may be struggling a bit with Spanish tend to get a better grasp of the language through critical thinking.
- It looked like kids did better when they had a buddy or small group to work in before being called on or presenting (4th)
- Students DID work with bilingual partners.
- They DID use the language of instruction.
- Could articulate why they liked learning Spanish and the challenges and the benefits for their future.
- Teacher stayed in language of instruction.

Questions/Wonderings:

- With that high level of academic Spanish, can all native-English speakers access the instruction? (SLA)
- Are there students in 4th/5th who struggle with SLA and slow down the class?
- Is that one hour of Spanish science at K and 1 enough to prepare the native English speakers for 50% of their day in Spanish at 2nd-5th grade?
- Is there a difference between language learning in the morning or afternoon?
- How important is classroom design as it pertains to dual language learners?
-

General Observations:

- The teachers, from an outsider's perspective, seemed uniformly very good, enthusiastic and dialed-in.
- Many of the kids speak English together during the Spanish sessions, but that doesn't appear to hurt their oral skills when they're called on.
- Really liked to see class that affirmed positive community and identity around bilingualism at the beginning of the lesson. It seemed to show kids why bother with both languages and the value of their schooling.
- It felt like we are "all over the board" regarding our practices. I don't want to be a robot teacher, but there should be structure and strategy non-negotiables. (ie. bilingual partners) Within that, teacher autonomy and best practices.
- Whatever "dual" becomes in WW, we need to be consistent.
- The level of dual teacher training and support during implementation is apparent. Going forward we need to ensure adequate teacher training (quality).
- When I asked a 4th grade student what would help them with instruction, one of the Native English speakers responded, more bilingual teachers and paras.
- When I asked a 4th grader his favorite class, he said, "Math." He said that he had started learning Math in Spanish, then switched to English. He was shy, so I couldn't get more details.
- All instruction in Science was in Spanish as was large group discussion. However, when the students switched to small groups some students conversed in English, some in Spanish.
- Concern for single class of traditional students who have had the brighter (more parental involvement) students filtered out.
- Concern for consistent programming across the school district meeting the needs of each school.
- Levels of Spanish at each school.
- Need refinement of strategies used across programs.
- Math instruction in English was mentioned as a challenge by students at 3 of the schools.

General Questions/Wonderings:

- Is a single program for the whole district possible? Feasible? Or does it need to be school-by-school because of staffing and yearly cohort changes? How equal can we be when things look pretty separate as far as dual vs. English-only strands.
- What's up with the fall-off we heard about from K's being K-ready to below standard by the end of 1?
- Could magnet school(s) or shared grades for single-strand English be tried out here?
- Wondering how bilingual programming impacts ability grouping. (Don't know much about how grouping works in schools in general.)
- Wondering what impact high levels of kindergarten readiness would have on how we evaluate programming. In other words, to what extent could greater kinder readiness close achievement gaps we currently see?
- Wondering how program decisions are made in the absence of local data that can tell us how well programs are doing.
- Is there data that would show how English-only strands are differentiated demographically? (Concern is segregation of low SES in those strands.)
- I wonder what training (not training for training sake, but quality) the district could provide for administrators, teachers, and para affected by dual as a prerequisite moving into change.
- Do we need to start thinking about 1-2 magnet schools? One K-2 other 3-5, or two K-5. Maybe one 90:10. Second 50:50. Solves the variety of dual and the traditional classroom issues (English only).
- Why just "dual" program? Why not other forms of immersion language?
- Offer other languages other than Spanish?
- What additional support/cost does the district see running a dual classroom vs. a traditional classroom?
- Need to clearly define expectations of what dual classrooms should look like, sound like and strategies that should be used everyday. Then provide many professional learning opportunities so that all teachers in Dual are well trained and instructional can be consistent across schools.
- How will we support consistency and best practices across buildings?
- How does support and the opportunity outside of the school day to practice the first and second language being learned impact overall progress and academic success?