
Improving Literacy Achievement for English Learners in Transitional Bilingual Programs*

William M. Saunders

California State University, Long Beach

Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence

ABSTRACT

This article reports the results of an ongoing effort to design, implement, and evaluate an effective transitional bilingual program. The program developed spans grades 2–5, and employs a specific language arts model. Evaluation results, based on comparisons of randomly selected matched samples of project and nonproject students ($n = 42, 42$), indicate the program is demonstrably more effective than the transition program students typically receive, producing higher levels of Spanish literacy, significantly higher levels of English literacy, and important literacy-related practices and attitudes for significantly larger numbers of students. Results have direct implications for educators seeking to improve programs for English learners. Questions regarding large-scale program implementation, however, remain.

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Address correspondence to: William M. Saunders, 5349 W. 127th Place, Hawthorne, CA 90405, USA. Tel.: +1(310) 536-0156. E-mail: bsaunder@ucla.edu

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By the most conservative estimates, no less than 2.8 million children enrolled in U.S. schools are limited English proficient (Crawford, 1997). Although estimates vary, perhaps as many as 50% of these students are in some form of “transitional bilingual education” (August & Hakuta, 1997) where they receive literacy and content area instruction in their first language while learning to speak and comprehend English. Once students have acquired a certain level of first language literacy and have acquired adequate oral listening and comprehension skills in English, they make the “transition” to English. In other words, they begin receiving formal instruction in English literacy. “Transition” age or grade can vary widely, depending upon the program and individual children.

In fact, there are several types of programs that have been designed to address the needs of English learners over the past 3 decades, most of which vary based on the amount and duration of instruction students receive in their primary language (see Genesee, 1999, for descriptions). At one end of the continuum, students receive no instruction in their primary language: Support is provided through specially designed English instruction. At the other end of the continuum, students receive a true bilingual education: Students are taught and learn in their primary language *and* English at all grades. Transitional bilingual programs fall in the middle of the continuum, using primary language instruction for a period of time and then gradually adding or transitioning students to all English instruction.

While there is evidence to support the use of transitional bilingual programs (Krashen & Biber, 1988; Willig, 1985), there are widely different views about its effects relative to other programming options for English learners. For example, based on their analysis of several studies that compared the elementary grade effects of transitional bilingual and structured English immersion programs, Rossell and Baker (1996) conclude that English learners are better served by early and intensive exposure to English. In sharp contrast, based on their analysis of the long-term achievement (through high school) of more than 40,000 students from several different programming options, Thomas and Collier (1997) conclude that English learners are best served by true bilingual programs that provide effective, sustained instruction in students’ primary language and in English throughout the elementary years.

Despite the complex larger picture, among researchers currently studying transitional bilingual education (Calderón, Hertz-Lazarowitz, & Slavin, 1998; Gersten, 1996; Goldenberg, 1996; Krashen, 1996) there is a growing consensus about two things: (1) the period of transition is pivotal to subsequent achievement; and (2) despite a growing literature that sets

forth potential directions, there are few empirical studies of effective transition programs.

Although many educators consider “transition” a positive indication that English learners are entering the mainstream (Gándara & Merino, 1993), transition can be problematic for both students and teachers. First, if transition is handled too abruptly, subsequent achievement tends to stall or decline. In a national evaluation of programs for English learners, Ramirez (1992) found that students from transitional bilingual programs who were abruptly transitioned into all English programs showed a much slower rate of growth in English reading, language and math than students who were transitioned more gradually and received continued instruction in their primary language throughout the transition period.

Second, even in programs where transition is handled more gradually, the transition period itself typically involves declines in academic challenge and student participation. In a large scale evaluation of bilingual programs in California, Berman et al. (1992) found what they called the transition “dip.” In comparison to earlier grades taught in the primary language or higher grades where students had more experience in English literacy, the transition period was marked by a decrease in the challenge or skill level of curriculum and instruction, less frequent student initiated interactions during lessons, and lower levels of student participation in class activities.

Third, transition is an enigma for most educators, even for those working in schools and districts with a long history of implementing transitional bilingual programs. Gersten and Woodward (1994) report that most teachers tend to describe themselves as overwhelmingly uncertain about the appropriate methods to use during transition. Berman et al. (1992) found that few schools in their sample (all of whom had been selected because they had “well-implemented” programs) had specific strategies and curriculum for transition. Moreover, most schools relied on individual teacher judgements to determine student readiness to begin transition, judgements that varied considerably from one teacher to the next. This sense of uncertainty and ambiguity is compounded by an addition finding reported by both Berman et al. (1992) and Gersten (1995, cited in Gersten 1996): transition classes tend to get assigned to less experienced teachers.

In sum, transition is a crucial period during which many English learners are especially vulnerable to academic underachievement. Unfortunately, educators have little research and few curricular models upon which to base policy and practice (Goldenberg, 1996). Gersten (1996) provides a conceptual framework and potential promising practices for transition derived from classroom observations of 27 teachers, some of whom were

selected specifically by the researchers as exemplars (see Jimenéz, Gersten, & Rivera, 1996). However, as yet, the framework and practices have not been studied empirically.

Calderón et al. (1998) represent one of the few, if not the only, empirical studies of a program developed specifically for transition: Bilingual Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (BCIRC). Although the results of their study are complex, the basic finding is that third grade students who participated in BCIRC for 2 years significantly outperformed comparable students in the same district who participated in the transition program students normally receive. Aside from their findings regarding BCIRCs specific effects, the broader significance of the Calderón et al. study is that with careful program design and evaluation, the literacy achievement of students in transitional bilingual programs can be substantially improved.

This article reports the results of a long-term, ongoing effort involving teachers and researchers in the Southern California area to design, implement, and evaluate an effective transition program for Spanish-speaking students. The goal is to substantially improve students' literacy achievement, in English and Spanish.

THE TRANSITION PROGRAM

As is true in other parts of California (Berman et al., 1992), educators in the Metropolitan School District (a pseudonym) were very concerned about low levels of student achievement as students transitioned from instruction in their home language to instruction in English (Saunders & Lennon, 1993). Our project team (18 teachers, 3 project advisors, 2 researchers) was formed to first examine how transition was operating in the project schools and then research and develop a more successful program. I will first describe the program we developed, then report how we evaluated its effects on student learning.

Multi-Year Design for Transition

The multi-year design for transition our project team developed optimally spans grades 2–5. Grades 2 and 3 are referred to as Pre-Transition, grade 4 is Transition I, grade 5 is Transition II (see Table 1). The multi-year design for transition presumes two things: (1) students receive effective language arts instruction; and (2) students receive a coherent program of language arts instruction from grades 2 through 5, from primary language through transitional language arts.

Table 1. Design and Goals for the Multi-year Transition Program.

Phases	Optimal Grades	Goal	Measurable Outcome
	K-1st	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial Reading & Writing Proficiency (Spanish) • Early Production II (oral English) 	Existing norm-or criterion-referenced measures
Pre-Transition	2nd-3rd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade appropriate Reading & Writing Achievement (Spanish) • Speech Emergence (oral English) 	Pass CARE (district transition instrument)
Transition I	4th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial Reading and Writing Proficiency (English) • Academic Oral Language Proficiency (English) • Grade appropriate Reading & Writing Achievement (Spanish) 	Existing norm-or criterion-referenced measures
Transition II	5th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade appropriate Reading & Writing Achievement (English) 	Redesignation: LEP to FEP

In this district, all Spanish speaking LEP students enrolled in the bilingual program receive language arts and content area instruction in Spanish while they are acquiring oral English proficiency, addressed primarily through 20–30 minutes of daily English language development instruction (ELD). This program continues until students demonstrate end of second/ beginning of third grade level proficiency in Spanish reading and writing and basic oral English proficiency, as measured by district developed assessments. When students demonstrate these proficiencies they qualify to transition and begin English reading and writing instruction, during which time they are to continue receiving Spanish language arts, as well. According to district guidelines, transitional language arts should last approximately 3–6 months and concentrate on nontransferable English skills, vocabulary development, oral and reading comprehension, and written language. Subsequent to this period, students enter a mainstream English program. Students are officially redesignated as fluent English proficient when they demonstrate grade level or close to grade level reading, writing, and oral language skills on standardized English language achievement tests.

As we began work at the project schools two things were apparent: (1) students were not being effectively prepared to qualify for transition; and (2) the transitional program students received when they did qualify was, at best, underspecified (Saunders & Lennon, 1993, 1996).

The concept of a Pre-Transition component is designed to emphasize the fundamental role of Spanish reading and writing and oral English development that precedes transition. Large numbers of students were not qualifying to enter transition because they were not functioning at or close to grade level in Spanish literacy, and they were not acquiring oral English skills. The understanding we tried to develop at project schools was that problems with the transition program could not be addressed without devoting serious attention to Spanish language arts and oral English development at the early grades. As part of this effort, we explicitly included grades 2 and 3 as a Pre-Transition phase in the larger transition program. The thrust of this phase is intensive Spanish reading and writing instruction and extensive oral English development. The Pre-Transition goal is to have all students performing at grade level in Spanish reading and writing, and at the speech emergence level (able to converse) or higher in oral English by the end of third grade. If the goal is achieved, students should have no problem passing the district assessment to qualify for transition.

The problem with transition itself was that schools grossly underestimated the amount of time that should be devoted to it. The district's 3–6 month guidelines encouraged schools to think of transition as a relatively short period of time sandwiched between Spanish and mainstream English language arts, so short as to prohibit any serious attention to curriculum or teacher training.

The concept of Transition I and II was designed to make explicit the need for a concrete transition program of serious substance and duration. By the end of Transition I students should be able to decode and demonstrate basic understanding of end of third grade English reading material (within a year of the students' academic grade). They should also increase their academic oral English language proficiency (intermediate fluency), such that they can participate actively in academically-oriented discussions. Finally, students should continue to demonstrate grade level Spanish reading and writing proficiency. We maintain Spanish language arts throughout the entire year of Transition I to support students' Spanish literacy development and draw clear connections between the processes of reading and writing in Spanish and in English.

By the end of Transition II, students should be decoding and comprehending grade level material in English. The goal is redesignation: Students have transitioned and can perform successfully in a mainstream

program when they have grade level or close to grade level English skills and can be formally redesignated from limited to fluent English proficient. We do not set forth a Transition II achievement goal for Spanish literacy. During Transition II, teachers promote students' self-selected Spanish reading and writing, but language arts instructional time is devoted exclusively to English reading and writing.

Instructional Components for the Language Arts Program

As part of our work on the transition program, we identified 12 instructional components that seemed most effective in serving the needs of students throughout the three phases of the program (see Table 2; see Appendix 1 for descriptions and citations of published literature for each component). Some of these instructional components were intended specifically to address the needs of transition students, but many of the components stand on their own as effective language arts strategies for the middle and upper elementary grades. However, operationalizing these components, integrating them together in a total language arts program, developing management systems, and applying them to programs for LEP students making the transition was essential.

Studying literature

Across all phases of the program, from Pre-Transition to Transition II – from Spanish to English language arts and from grades 2 through 5 – students study literature. We assumed that students would benefit from

Table 2. Instructional Components of the Language Arts Program for Grades 2–5.

Studying Literature	Skill Building	Other Supporting Components
Literature Units (experience-text-relationship)	Comprehension Strategies	Pleasure Reading
Literature Logs	Assigned Independent Reading	Teacher Read-Alouds
Instructional Conversations	Dictation	Interactive Journals
Culminating Writing Projects (writing-as-a-process)	Written Conventions Lessons ELD through Literature	

more extensive and intensive opportunities to work with text, to study interesting stories under the tutelage of a teacher. Based upon research conducted as part of the Kamehameha Elementary Education Program in Hawaii (Au, 1979, 1992; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988) and Spanish-speaking Latino communities in southern California (Goldenberg, 1992/1993), we adapted the Experience-Text-Relationship approach as our framework for literature units. Through ongoing discussions (instructional conversations), writing activities (literature logs and culminating writing projects), and reading, the teacher helps students study the story in relationship to their own experiences and a central theme. Discussions set up writing assignments and writings inform subsequent discussions throughout the course of the literature unit. Writing is an individual opportunity for each student to think about and articulate ideas, interpretations, and related experiences. Discussions provide a social opportunity for students and teacher to collaboratively build more elaborated and sophisticated understandings.

Literature units culminate with a written project that serves two goals: 1) developing a deeper understanding of some aspect of the unit (content, themes, related personal experiences), and 2) developing a high quality piece of writing. Teachers teach writing as a process in the course of these culminating projects. Students share drafts, receive feedback from peers, conference with the teacher, and revise and edit their work. They also receive teacher lessons specific to the kind of writing involved in the project (e.g., narration, persuasion, informational)

In terms of literacy development, we assume that through this recurrent process of individual and social discourse – of reading, writing, and discussing, literature units help students learn to comprehend text, to make connections between the text and their own lives, and develop more fully formed concepts (the themes). Students are learning to engage in meaningful discourse by participating in it (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). In terms of second language acquisition (Cummins, 1989; Krashen, 1987), we assume literature units help provide substantial comprehensible input – language that includes slightly more sophisticated structures or vocabulary than the learner can produce on his/her own, but is understandable within the total context in which it is used. The literature unit becomes a meaningful social context in which words, phrases, language structures, and concepts are used, acquired, and learned (see Saunders, O'Brien, Lennon, and McLean, 1998, for a more detailed explanation of our approach to literature).

Skill building components

As we found throughout our work, studying literature needs to be complemented by additional skill building components. Students need direct in-

struction in specific reading comprehension strategies (predicting, summarizing, questioning), and they need daily opportunities to read texts geared to their reading level – assigned independent reading. Comprehension strategies are presented in 2 week modules in the first and fourth quarter of the year. The assigned independent reading center runs throughout the year. Ideally, the center includes materials related to the literature unit; but teachers have used the basal or other reading kits (e.g., SRA, Barnell-Loft) to insure that students have materials they can read independently and can use to practice comprehension strategies. Students need similar study and practice for written language. As part of the weekly dictation program, students study a short but carefully targeted passage from the literature selection. The teacher provides lessons on specific conventions (punctuation, capitalization, grammar), and students practice writing the passage as it is dictated to them by a peer or parent, compose original sentences and paragraphs that include the target conventions, and study words from the passage they have difficulty spelling.

English Language Development through Literature (developed by project consultant Dolores Beltrán and advisor Gisela O'Brien) is a daily, 45 minute oral English program used in the Pre-Transition phases of the program. Instruction is delivered to students in small, homogeneous groups based on students' proficiency level. Lessons and independent activities are all drawn from a particular literature selection (typically one with predictable patterns, language structures, and target vocabulary for various domains). The focus of lessons and the teacher's talk are geared specifically to students' proficiency level. Literature seems to provide a meaningful and motivating context for learning and practicing specifically targeted English oral language skills. It also exposes children to English print well in advance of formal transition to English. ELD through Literature is an integral part of our Pre-Transition program (grades 2 and 3).

Other supporting components

At all grades, teachers read to students for approximately 20 minutes at least 3 times per week. Teacher read-alouds expose students to the language of expert writers and the fluency of an expert reader, engage students in material they may not yet be able to read on their own, and introduce students to new authors and genre. In addition, a portion of time each day is devoted to pleasure reading. Students chose their own books and stories, keep records of their reading, and for those books they find most interesting, they complete short assignments (summaries, synopsis, oral presentations, drawings, etc.). Finally, many Transition I teachers use interactive journals during the first half of the year when students are

making their first attempts at English writing. The immediate written response from the teacher provides both emotional support for the students and a highly contextualized and comprehensible English text for students to read.

Theoretical principles

Four theoretical principles under gird the program, all of which are assumed to promote first and second language acquisition and achievement:

- *Challenge*: consistently challenge students academically – challenge them to think, learn, and engage intellectually;
- *Continuity*: achieve continuity in curriculum and instruction as students move from primary to middle to upper grades, and from L1 to English language arts;
- *Connections*: build upon and make explicit connections between students' existing knowledge, skills, and experiences and the academic curriculum to be learned (including language, literacy, and content);
- *Comprehensiveness*: address both meaning and skills, both higher level thinking and appropriate drill and practice, and provide complementary portions of student- and teacher-centeredness.

These premises are conditions for learning and achievement, conditions we did not readily find when we began our work at the schools. They are also grounded in the research literature, specifically studies that have tried to identify the characteristics of more and less successful programs for English learners (Berman et al., 1992; García, 1992; Gersten & Jiménez, 1993; Ramirez, 1992; Thomas & Collier, 1997).

EVALUATION METHODS

The design of the evaluation study is longitudinal and comparative. We collected data on case study students from project schools ($n = 61$) and case study students from comparable, nonproject schools ($n = 64$). Project students represent the first cohort of students to participate in the multi-year transition program (Pre-Transition through Transition II, across grades 2–5). Nonproject students participated in the transitional bilingual program students typically receive in the district which includes a 3–6 month transition period. Data were collected on both groups for grades 1–5. Measures include: standardized tests of reading and language; language and literacy assessments used in the district to assess LEP students; and project-developed performance assessments and surveys.

Sampling Procedures and Evaluation Design

Project and nonproject case study students

All case study students met the following criteria: (a) they enrolled at their respective school by at least the beginning of first grade and stayed at the same school through grade 5; (b) their home language is Spanish, and they were classified as limited English proficient when they enrolled; and (c) they participated in a Spanish transitional bilingual program. The two groups of case study students are: (1) *Project*: students who were enrolled consecutively in the classrooms of project teachers at project schools ($n = 5$) across grades 2–5; (2) *Nonproject*: students from comparable neighboring schools ($n = 5$) who completed grades 2–5 during the same years as the project students. Ninety project and 90 nonproject case study students (approximately 18 per school) were selected randomly at the beginning of their second grade year from the pool of students who met the three criteria. Sixty-seven percent of project (61 of 90) and 71% of nonproject students (64 of 90) remained at their respective schools through the end of fifth grade.

Project and nonproject school demographics

Like project schools, all five comparable schools are members of the same school district, located within the same geographic area of southern California, and governed by the same district policies and guidelines regarding bilingual programs. Drawing from a pool of 8 neighboring schools that agreed to participate, the five nonproject schools we selected provided us with a nearly exact composite match to our five project schools. Schools were matched based on percentage of LEP students, total enrollment, percentage of students participating in free and reduced lunch program, ethnicity, and achievement scores (see Saunders & Lennon, 1996, for details). Project and nonproject schools have the following characteristics: mean enrollment is 880 (range: 478–1295); 96% of the student body is Latino or Hispanic (range: 93–99%); 74% of the students are limited English proficient (range: 65–85%); 95% of students qualify for free or reduced lunch (range: 80–100%). Grade 2 Spanish reading median percentiles for the year prior to the project ranged from the 29th to the 48th percentile; 8 of 10 were between the 44th and 48th percentile.

Subgroups within project and nonproject samples

Project and nonproject samples are made up of two subgroups:

- (1) *Transition 4*: Students who qualified for transition at the end of third or the beginning of fourth grade, began transitional English language

arts during the first semester of grade 4, and took standardized tests in Spanish at grades 1-4 and in English at grade 5;

- (2) *Transition 5*: Students who qualified for transition at the end of fourth or the beginning of fifth grade, began transitional English language arts during the first semester of grade 5, and took standardized tests in Spanish at grades 1-5.

All project and nonproject students qualified for transition based on the same criteria and instrument used at all district schools (see Instruments: CARE) and were administered standardized tests by school personnel following the same district guidelines and procedures. Students in bilingual programs are eligible to be tested in English 3 semesters after they qualify for transition. As such, students who qualify for transition at the end of grade 3 or during the first half of grade 4 are tested in Spanish at the end of fourth and in English at the end of fifth grade. Students who qualify later than the midpoint of fourth grade are tested in Spanish at the end of fourth and fifth grades.

Drawing matched samples

All comparisons to be reported are based on matched samples of project and nonproject case studies. Drawing from the pool of available project and nonproject case studies remaining at the end of fifth grade, students were randomly selected and matched as closely as possible (within at least 5 percentile points) based on first grade Spanish reading and language scores within each subgroup: Transition 4 and Transition 5. First grade measures were used because project case study students entered project teachers' classrooms beginning in grade 2 and participated in the Pretransition phase of the program across grades 2 and 3, albeit while the program was in development. In total, we matched 28 Transition 4 pairs and 14 Transition 5 pairs (see Table 3). To verify comparability, we conducted statistical tests on first grade Spanish reading and language scores (NCEs) for each subgroup. No significant differences were found (p values based on t tests all exceeded .73; means and standard deviations are reported in Table 5 of the Results section).

Evaluation design and comparisons available

Table 4 shows the measures available for comparisons at each grade for each subgroup. Where it is relevant, the specific language of the measure is specified (Eng or Span; "x" means data are available). Matching procedures allow for project and nonproject comparisons within each subgroup. Project and nonproject students within each subgroup qualified to begin

Table 3. Composition of Matched Project and Nonproject Samples.

Sample & Subgroup Information	Samples			
	1st Project Cohort Case studies ($n = 61$) Matched sample ($n = 42$)		Nonproject Cohort Case studies ($n = 64$) Matched sample ($n = 42$)	
Subgroup name	Subgroups		Subgroups	
	Tran-4	Tran-5	Tran-4	Tran-5
Transition grade	4th	5th	4th	5th
Official test grade	Eng	Span	Eng	Span
Number of case studies	39	22	40	24
Percent of case studies	64	36	63	37
Number in matched sample	28	14	28	14
Percent of matched sample	67	33	67	33

transition at approximately the same time, were administered standardized tests and performance assessments in the same language from one year to the next, and are matched based on first grade Spanish literacy measures, measures taken just prior to when project students began participating in the program. Matching procedures also allow for sample-to-sample com-

Table 4. Measures Available for Project and Nonproject Subgroups.

Grade and measures	Project and Nonproject Matched Subgroups	
	Transition-4 ($n = 28$ & 28)	Transition-5 ($n = 14$ & 14)
1st • Standardized Tests	Spanish	Spanish
2nd • Standardized Tests	Spanish	Spanish
3rd • Standardized Tests	Spanish	Spanish
• CARE passing (qualify for transition)	x	x
4th • Standardized Tests	Spanish	Spanish
• Performance Assessment	English	Spanish
• CARE passing (qualify for transition)	x	x
5th • Standardized Tests	English	Spanish
• Performance Assessment	English	English
• Reclassification (LEP -> FEP)	x	x
• Literacy Survey	x	x

parisons, collapsing across subgroups, because the samples are similarly comprised of 28 Transition 4 students and 14 Transition 5 students.

Instruments

Norm-referenced achievement tests

The Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS; CTB/McGraw-Hill) was the district-mandated English language standardized achievement test during the years of the study. For those Spanish-speaking LEP students for whom CTBS is not appropriate, district schools use APRENDA (La prueba de logros en español, Spanish achievement test; The Psychological Corporation, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.). Both instruments include subtests of reading and language.

Criteria for Addition of Reading in English (CARE)

To formally qualify to begin transition, LEP students must pass the district's CARE assessment, which includes three components: (1) oral English proficiency, (2) Spanish reading, and (3) Spanish writing. Benchmarks for passing are set to reflect end of second/beginning of third Spanish literacy skills and speech emergence proficiency in oral English (basically conversant in English). For the purposes of the study, we recorded when students passed CARE and qualified for transition.¹

Performance assessments: Content

Project-developed performance assessments measure: (1) Narrative comprehension – students read a portion of a grade level appropriate story, summarize what they read, and then write an ending for the story (scored for comprehension of story); (2) Informational comprehension – students read a grade level appropriate informational text, describe what they learned, and then respond to an inference question (scored for comprehension of text information); (3) Writing communication – students choose a favorite story they have read and summarize it (scored for the clarity with which students convey the content of the story); (4) Writing conventions – students' summaries of their favorite stories are also scored

¹Oral English proficiency measures should be included in evaluations of transitional bilingual programs. In fact, we collected teacher ratings of oral English proficiency based on the Student Oral Language Observation Matrix (SOLOM), the district mandated rating scale. Results showed a nonsignificant difference favoring project students. However, we had concerns about the accuracy of ratings for some project and nonproject students and chose not to report the results here. Data are presented and reliability concerns are detailed in Saunders and Lennon, 1996.

for conventions (spelling, punctuation, capitalization, usage); (5) Dictation – students take dictation for a grade level appropriate text (scored for spelling, punctuation, and capitalization); and (6) Independent reading and library use – students list books and stories they have selected and read on their own over the past year; they also indicate if they have been to the public library in the past year and list specific items they checked out.

The assessment is administered in a small group setting ($n = 6-10$) on three consecutive days (60–90 minutes each day). Students are given as long as they need to complete each task. The small group setting allows for close proctoring to insure that students understand all tasks. Project teaching assistants administered the assessments to all project and nonproject students following a manual that details uniform procedures.

Scoring the performance assessments

All student work was scored by project staff and teachers under the direction of the author. At each scoring session, “readers” were trained on each task to be scored. Scoring leaders (researchers, project advisors) reviewed the scoring rubric and anchor papers in order to prepare readers to make consistent and accurate judgments. Each paper was read and scored blind by two independent readers (papers were coded with identification numbers). Papers that received two different scores were scored by a third reader who adjudicated the discrepancy. Scoring sessions included papers from project and nonproject students and also students from other schools involved in another research study. Papers from each sample of students were randomly distributed in the stacks of papers scored by each reader. Procedures were designed to maintain high levels of reliable, accurate, and unbiased scoring.

Performance assessment reliability

The conventional index of reliability for rubric-based scoring is the rate of agreement between readers. Exact agreement is when two independent readers give a paper the same score. Adjacent agreement is when two readers “agree” within one score point (i.e., same score or scores that differ by one point). With a 5-point scale, exact agreement levels above 70% and adjacent agreement levels above 90% are considered strong levels of reliability (Gentile, 1992). Agreement levels averaged across all measures for the 2 years of results to be reported here are: 61% exact and 97% adjacent. Given these levels of agreement and the practice of adjudicating *all* papers, scores should be highly consistent with rubric criteria. (See Saunders & Lennon, 1996, for more reliability data).

Performance assessment data

In most cases, results to be reported are based on scores combined across tasks. We averaged students scores for narrative and informational comprehension to generate a single score for Reading. We averaged student scores for written communication, conventions and dictation to generate one score for Writing. Finally, we averaged all five scores to produce a single Combined score. Four statistics are reported: means, standard deviations, and the percentage of students averaging “4.0 or better” and “3.0 or better.” All tasks are scored on a 5-point scale. A score of 4 indicates students are meeting challenging grade level standards. A score of 3 means students are approaching those standards and have demonstrated at least basic competence for that grade level. Scoring rubrics were developed based on national and state models (National Assessment of Educational Progress, California Learning Assessment System).

Literacy-related practices

Measures are based on the fifth grade performance assessments. First, we tallied the items students listed on their reading inventories that were identifiable middle and upper grade stories and books (i.e., age appropriate). The kind of items we did not count include primers (Spot), familiar fairy tales (Little Red Riding Hood; La Caperucita Roja), Disney titles (Lion King), nondescript categories (book about dogs), and periodicals (T.V. Guide). Tallies were coded into three categories: 8 or more, 4–7 and 0–3 middle and upper grade stories and books. Results focus on the percent of students listing 8 or more. Second, responses to the question regarding library use were coded into one of 3 categories: No, YES and YES + Titles (reported going to public library and listed specific items checked out). Results compare the percent of students in the third category (YES + Titles), the best available indicator of actual library use, self-report notwithstanding. Third, the “favorite” story students chose to write about was coded into one of three categories: (a) middle/upper grade story; (b) primary grade story (The Hungry Caterpillar); and (c) familiar fairy tales (Three Little Pigs). These codings provide an indication of the quality and sophistication of students’ reading experiences. Results compare the percent of students who chose to write about middle or upper grade stories (age appropriate).

Literacy-related attitudes

Students completed a questionnaire at the end of fifth grade that asked about their attitudes towards reading and writing in their first language and in English. Questions regarding primary language reading and writing

appear first, then the same questions are repeated with respect to English. Questions include: Do you like to read and write (...in your first language...in English)? Do you want to continue learning how to read and write better (...in your first language...in English)? Response items are: not at all, not too much, pretty much, very much. Data to be reported are the percent of students who responded positively to each item (pretty much or very much).

Data Analysis

Analysis of variance or t-tests were conducted on all continuous data (NCEs for standardized tests and combined scores for the performance assessment). Effect sizes (proportion of a standard deviation separating project and nonproject means) were calculated by subtracting the nonproject mean from the project mean and dividing by the nonproject standard deviation. Chi squares tests were conducted on categorical or coded data. Significance level is .05.

RESULTS

Spanish and English Literacy Achievement

The project's multi-year transition program does a better job of cultivating literacy than transition program students typically receive in the Metropolitan School District. Across grades 2–4, project students scored higher than nonproject students on both standardized tests and performance assessments, most of which were taken in Spanish. At grade 5, when most students took English standardized tests and all students took English performance assessments, project students scored significantly higher than nonproject students on almost every measure taken. Project and nonproject sample differences are detailed first, followed by a synthesis of subsample results.

Standardized test results

Table 5 reports grade by grade NCE means and standard deviations in reading and language. On both measures, project students increasingly outperformed nonproject students from one grade to the next, with statistically significant differences evident at grade 5, when most students were tested in English. Effect sizes for reading across grades 2 through 5 are, respectively: +.26, +.38, +.40 and +.60 (grade 5 means are 41.90 and 34.51; $p < .01$). Effect sizes for language are: +.20, +.27, +.32 and +.59 (grade 5 means are 45.38 and 37.80; $p < .05$).

Table 5. Standardized Measures of Reading & Language Achievement, Grades 1–5.

		Subgroups						Effect Size
		Transition 4 Spanish 1–4 English at 5		Transition 5 Spanish 1–5		Samples All students		
		Project (<i>n</i> =28)	Non (<i>n</i> =28)	Project (<i>n</i> =14)	Non (<i>n</i> =14)	Project (<i>n</i> =42)	Non (<i>n</i> =42)	
Reading	1	49.12 <i>19.99</i>	49.17 <i>21.66</i>	28.34 <i>12.68</i>	28.15 <i>12.62</i>	42.20 <i>20.31</i>	42.53 <i>21.58</i>	
	2	53.92 <i>18.12</i>	50.58 <i>19.22</i>	36.54 <i>15.98</i>	27.61 <i>11.37</i>	48.13 <i>19.13</i>	42.93 <i>20.11</i>	+ .26
	3	59.60 <i>14.99</i>	53.66 <i>14.91</i>	36.24 <i>10.21</i>	27.10 <i>9.61</i>	51.81 <i>17.47</i>	44.81 <i>18.34</i>	+ .38
	4	61.81 <i>17.29</i>	57.16 <i>14.80</i>	45.25 <i>8.37</i>	33.21 <i>10.60</i>	56.29 <i>16.78</i>	49.18 <i>17.62</i>	+ .40
	5	40.56 <i>10.18</i>	33.62 <i>13.85</i>	44.56 <i>11.41</i>	36.29 <i>9.04</i>	*41.90 <i>10.64</i>	34.51 <i>12.40</i>	+ .60
Language	1	51.29 <i>18.68</i>	48.96 <i>16.97</i>	37.28 <i>17.80</i>	36.36 <i>11.55</i>	46.62 <i>19.37</i>	44.76 <i>16.37</i>	
	2	54.43 <i>15.04</i>	50.99 <i>15.94</i>	32.13 <i>14.08</i>	28.23 <i>12.81</i>	47.00 <i>18.03</i>	43.40 <i>18.37</i>	+ .20
	3	62.84 <i>17.34</i>	56.96 <i>16.95</i>	41.46 <i>13.08</i>	38.84 <i>13.08</i>	55.71 <i>18.87</i>	50.92 <i>17.84</i>	+ .27
	4	64.19 <i>17.31</i>	59.18 <i>16.47</i>	44.26 <i>8.72</i>	35.71 <i>15.78</i>	57.54 <i>17.66</i>	51.35 <i>19.57</i>	+ .32
	5	47.33 <i>15.63</i>	40.11 <i>12.81</i>	41.49 <i>8.99</i>	33.18 <i>12.13</i>	*45.38 <i>13.94</i>	37.80 <i>12.87</i>	+ .59

Note: Mean NCEs and standard deviations.

*statistically significant difference ($p < .05$).

Performance-based assessment results

Table 6 reports mean scores and standard deviations for reading and writing performance assessments conducted at the end of grades 4 and 5. Differences between project and nonproject samples are significant for both reading and writing at both grades. At grade 4, when Transition 4 students were assessed in English and Transition 5 students were assessed

Table 6. Performance-based Measures of Reading and Writing Achievement, Grades 4 and 5.

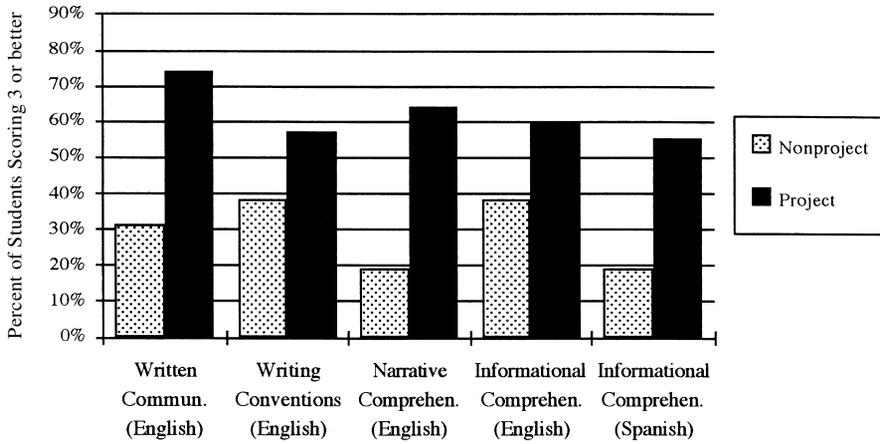
		Subgroups						
		Transition 4 English		Transition 5 Span. 4; Eng. 5		Samples All students		Effect Size
		Project (n=28)	Non (n=28)	Project (n=14)	Non (n=14)	Project (n=42)	Non (n=42)	
Reading	4	2.80 .50	2.66 .45	2.68 .50	2.29 .38	*2.76 .50	2.54 .46	+ .48
	5	3.07 .60	2.39 .42	2.21 .26	1.96 .46	*2.79 .65	2.25 .47	+1.15
Writing	4	2.90 .82	2.62 .53	2.67 .64	2.26 .53	*2.83 .77	2.50 .55	+ .60
	5	3.15 .78	2.67 .60	2.29 .54	1.76 .40	*2.87 .81	2.37 .69	+ .72

Note: Mean scores and standard deviations.

*statistically significant difference ($p < .05$).

in Spanish, the effect size for reading is + .48 (project and nonproject means are, respectively, 2.76 and 2.54), and the effect size for writing is +.60 (means are 2.83 and 2.50). Effect sizes are noticeably larger at grade 5, when all students were assessed in English. The effect size in reading is +1.15 (project and nonproject means are, respectively, 2.79 and 2.25), and the effect size for writing is +.72 (means are 2.87 and 2.37).

Figure 1 shows task by task results for the fifth grade performance assessment. Histograms compare the percentage of project and nonproject students who scored a 3 or better on each task. Project students were significantly more likely than nonproject students to score a 3 or better on three of the four English measures: written communication (74% and 31%, $p < .01$), writing conventions (57% and 38%, $p < .09$), narrative comprehension (64% and 19%, $p < .01$), and informational comprehension (60% and 38%, $p < .05$). In addition, students also completed a task that measured comprehension of an informational text in Spanish. Again, project students were significantly more likely than nonproject students to score a 3 or better, demonstrating at least basic comprehension of a fifth grade level Spanish language article (55% and 19%, $p < .01$).



Note. All differences except writing conventions are statistically significant ($p < .05$).

Fig.1. Grade 5 performance assessments results by task.

Passing CARE (qualifying for transition) and Redesignation Rates

Table 7 reports the percentage of students who passed the CARE assessment by the end of grade 3 or during grade 4 and the number of students who redesignated from limited to fluent English proficient by the end of grade 5.

Table 7. CARE Passing and Redesignation Rates, Grades 3, 4 and 5.

Indicator and Grade	Subgroups				Samples	
	Transition 4		Transition 5		All students	
	Project (n=28)	Non (n=28)	Project (n=14)	Non (n=14)	Project (n=42)	Non (n=42)
% passing CARE						
by end 3rd	61	25	0	0	*40	17
during 4th	96	89	29	0	74	60
% Redesignating by						
end of 5th						
LEP->FEP	57	18	0	0	*38	12

Note. Cumulative percentages.

*statistically significant difference ($p < .05$).

First, grade 3 CARE passing rates for project and nonproject students are 40% and 17% ($p < .05$); cumulative percentages for students passing in third or during the first half of fourth grade are 74% and 60% (ns.).² Whereas most project students passed by the end of third, most nonproject students passed during the first half of fourth. The higher passing rate at grade 3 means more project students at an earlier point had the skills necessary to pass CARE and the opportunity to do so: they were properly identified and assessed by their teachers and the school coordinator. This is consistent with the conceptualization and goals of the project's multi-year transition program: improve Spanish language arts and ELD instruction in the pretransition years so more students have the skills necessary to qualify for transition by the end grade 3 and the opportunity to take part in a full 2 years of transitional language arts. The low third grade passing rate among nonproject students indicates that more students did not have the skills to pass the assessment, and many who did perhaps were not identified and tested until grade 4. The prevailing 3–6 month guidelines for transition do not encourage schools to recognize that initiating CARE testing in grade 4 possibly shortchanges students from additional time they need in a transitional language arts program.

Second, project students were more than twice as likely as nonproject students to meet the criteria necessary to be redesignated from limited to fluent English proficient by the end of fifth grade, 38% and 12% ($p < .01$).

Literacy Practices and Attitudes

Independent reading, library use, and favorite stories

Table 8 reports results by subgroup and sample for independent reading, library use, and favorite stories for project and nonproject samples. Differences between project and nonproject students are statistically significant on two of the three measures. Project students were more likely than nonproject students to: (a) list 8 or more age appropriate books they had

²All project Transition 4 students began Transition I at the beginning of fourth grade. Seventeen students had qualified by passing CARE at the end of third, 7 passed at the beginning of fourth, 3 were expected to pass and did pass CARE shortly after the beginning of the year, and 1 never passed but was included based on the judgement of the school's language appraisal team. All nonproject Transition 4 students began the district's prescribed 3–6 month transition program sometime during the first half of fourth grade. Seven qualified by passing CARE at the end of third, 8 passed at the beginning of fourth, 10 passed later in the first semester, and 3 began transition based on the determination of their school's language appraisal team. As such, 100% of project and nonproject Transition 4 began transition during the first semester of grade 4; the vast majority (96% of project and 89% of nonproject) began transition after passing CARE, but 1 project and 3 nonproject students began transition based on the judgment of the school's language appraisal team.

Table 8. Self-reported Literacy-related Practices, Grade 5.

Indicator	Subgroups				Samples	
	Transition 4		Transition 5		All students	
	Project (n=28)	Non (n=28)	Project (n=14)	Non (n=14)	Project (n=42)	Non (n=42)
Independent Reading % with ≥ 8 age appro. items	43	11	7	7	*31	10
Frequent Library Use % Yes and listed items	68	32	29	36	*55	33
Favorite Story % Age Appropriate	82	54	36	36	67	48

*statistically significant difference ($p < .05$).

selected and read independently over the past year (31% and 10%, $p < .05$), (b) report using the public library and list actual titles checked out over the past year (55% and 33%, $p < .05$), and (c) choose to write about an age appropriate favorite story (67% and 48%, $p < .08$).

Attitudes towards reading and writing in English and Spanish

Table 9 reports results by subgroup and sample for 2 pairs of survey questions. There are no differences between project and nonproject students in their attitudes towards reading and writing in English: more than 90% of the students in each sample responded positively to the two English survey items. However, there are significant differences between project and nonproject students in their attitudes towards reading and writing in Spanish. Almost all project students but less than two-thirds of the nonproject students said they liked to read and write in Spanish, 95% vs. 60% ($p < .01$). Similarly, 86% of project students in comparison to 64% of nonproject students said they wanted to continue to learn how to read and write better in Spanish ($p < .05$).

Synthesis of Sample and Subgroup Results

Table 10 synthesizes all results. The organization of the table is designed to reflect the sequential and longitudinal nature of transitional bilingual

Table 9. Attitudes Towards Reading and Writing in English and Spanish, Grade 5.

Survey Questions	Subgroups				Samples All students	
	Transition 4		Transition 5		Project (=42)	Non (n=42)
	Project (n=28)	Non (n=28)	Project (n=14)	Non (n=14)		
Reading/Writing in English						
Do you like to...						
% pretty/very much	93	96	86	86	90	93
Want to continue learning...						
% pretty/very much	100	100	79	93	93	98
Reading/Writing in Spanish						
Do you like to...						
% pretty/very much	96	50	93	79	*95	60
Want to continue learning...						
% pretty/very much	86	57	86	79	*86	64

*statistically significant difference ($p < .05$).

education. Our premise has been that transition cannot and should not be treated as an isolated, short-term phase in students' elementary school experience. The extent to which transitional bilingual programs help students acquire English literacy is a function of the total program, beginning with Spanish literacy and oral English language development instruction in the primary and middle grades and carrying forth through the transition years. Table 10 provides comparisons between project and nonproject students through the various junctures of the transition program: Spanish literacy achievement at grades 1 and 3; CARE passing rates by the end of third and during fourth grade; grade 5 redesignation rates; grade 5 English achievement; and grade 5 self-reported literacy practices and attitudes.

Data for CARE passing, redesignation rates, and literacy practices and attitudes are the same percentages shown previously. In order to be statistically consistent, achievement indicators are also reported in the form of percentages. For grades 1 and 3 Spanish literacy achievement, we report the percentage of students scoring at or above the 50th national percentile in Spanish reading and language. For grade 5 English achievement, we report the percentage of students averaging 3.00 or better across all reading and writing performance assessment tasks (approaching or meeting

Table 10. Synthesis of Sample and Subgroup Results for Project and Nonproject Students.

Indicator	Subgroups				Samples All students	
	Transition 4		Transition 5		Project (n=42)	Non (n=42)
	Project (n=28)	Non (n=28)	Project (n=14)	Non (n=14)		
Grade 1 Spanish Achievement % ≥ 50th NP: Reading & Language	43	43	7	7	31	31
Grade 3 Spanish Achievement % ≥ 50th NP: Reading & Language	71	54	0	0	48	36
Qualify for Transition % passing CARE by end of 3rd	61	25	0	0	*40	17
by the end 3rd or during 4th	96	89	29	0	74	60
Redesignation (LEP → RFEP) % ≥ 36th NP Eng. R&L by end of 5th	57	18	0	0	*38	12
Grade 5 English Achievement % ≥ 3.00 on performance assessment	68	18	0	0	*45	12
Grade 5 Practices & Attitudes % reporting ≥ 8 age appro. books	43	11	7	7	*31	10
% reporting library use and items	68	32	29	36	*55	33
% who wrote about age appro. story	82	54	36	36	*67	47
% like reading & writing in English	93	96	86	86	90	93
% continue learning R & W English	100	100	79	93	93	98
% like reading & writing in Spanish	96	50	93	79	*95	60
% continue learning R & W Spanish	86	57	86	79	*86	64

*statistically significant difference ($p < .05$).

challenging grade level standards on all tasks). English achievement is also reflected in the redesignation rates: percent of students scoring at or above the 36th national percentile in reading and language on English standardized tests. We discuss the synthesis of results briefly for the two samples, and then within each subgroup.

Overall results: Sample differences

The program more than doubled the percentage of students who qualified for transition by the end of grade 3 (40% vs. 17%) and tripled the percentage of students who reclassified by the end of grade 5 (38% vs. 12%). What contributed to these overall results and or limited them is evident in the synthesis of results for each subgroup.

Transition 4 students

Results for the Transition4 subgroup present a strong case for the project's multi-year transition program. The evidence runs from the top of Table 10 to the bottom. At the end of first grade 43% of the students in each sample were performing at or above national norms in Spanish reading and language (50th percentile). By the end of third grade and the Pre-Transition phase of the program, percentages rose to 71% among project and 54% among nonproject students – a 65% increase for project students in contrast to a 26% increase for nonproject students. The achievement gains together with timely assessment and identification procedures combined to yield a 61% CARE passing rate among project students by the end of third grade. The lack of comparable achievement gains and likely less attention to timely assessment are probably the reasons for the substantially lower 25% third grade passing rate among nonproject students.

Ultimately, all project and nonproject Transition 4 students began transition during the first half of grade 4. Nonproject students received 3 to 6 months of transitional language arts and then entered mainstream English shortly thereafter. In contrast, all project students participated in the Transition I and II phases of the program across grades 4 and 5. By the end of grade 5, English achievement levels were markedly different: 68% of project but only 18% of nonproject students averaged 3.00 or better on the performance assessment; and 57% of project but only 18% nonproject students redesignated by the end of fifth grade.

Among Transition 4 students, then, the project's program yielded a 144% increase in the percentage of students who qualified for transition by the end of grade 3 (61% vs. 25%) and a 217% increase in the percentage of students who redesignated from limited to fluent English proficient by the end of fifth (57% vs. 18%).

Moreover, program effects were not confined to achievement alone. The percentage of Transition 4 students showing evidence of broader literacy practices was substantially higher for project than nonproject students on every measure taken: age appropriate independent reading (43% vs. 11%), library (82% and 54%), and age appropriate favorite stories (68% vs. 32%,). In addition, although all students reported positive attitudes towards English, considerably larger percentages of project students reported positive attitudes towards their first language (like to read and write in Spanish: 96% vs. 50%; continue learning to read and write in Spanish: 86% vs. 57%). This is likely a reflection of the project's emphasis on a strong Spanish literacy program prior to transition and maintaining Spanish language arts during transition. In the project's program, Spanish language arts instruction continues throughout the Transition I year, and students are explicitly encouraged and supported to continue reading and writing in Spanish during the Transition II year. In contrast, under district guidelines Spanish maintenance is confined solely to the short and ambiguous 3-6 month period prescribed for transition.

Transition 5 students

Project Transition 5 students made substantial Spanish literacy gains across grades 1-4. By grade 4, project students were scoring significantly higher than nonproject students on standardized and performance-based assessments of Spanish reading, language, and writing. As shown in Table 10, however, these gains were not enough to make it possible for most students to meet any of the successive criteria that characterize a successful transition: on grade level in Spanish reading and language at grade 1 - 7% and 7%; on grade level in Spanish reading and language at grade 3 - 0% and 0%, passing CARE by third - 0% and 0%; passing CARE during grade 4 - 29% and 0%; reclassifying by fifth - 0% and 0%; scoring 3.00 or better on the grade 5 English assessment - 0% and 0%.

It seems clear that the program does not have the capacity to fully address the needs of very low achieving students. During grade 4, project Transition 5 students continued in a Spanish (Pre-Transition) program. In fact, the additional year of Spanish proved beneficial for most students, as reflected in the Spanish achievement gains at the end of grade 4 (see Table 5, shown earlier). Students then received 1 year of transition instruction. At the end of grade 5, however, although they averaged significantly higher than nonproject students on English performance assessments, project students evidenced very low levels of achievement. As such, by the end of their elementary years, project Transition 5 students had acquired only modest levels of Spanish literacy and minimal levels of English literacy.

Moreover, project Transition 5 students apparently did not acquire the same kind of literacy practices evident among Transition 4 project students. For example, in comparison to project Transition 4 students, project Transition 5 students were far less likely to independently select and read age appropriate stories (respectively, 43% vs. 7%), visit and check out books from the library (68% vs. 29%), or have favorite age appropriate stories to write about (82% vs. 36%).

There might be modifications that can be made in the program to better address the needs of very low achieving students during the pretransition years. However, most likely the problem has to be addressed earlier than grades 2 or 3. Most Transition 5 students showed little evidence of literacy achievement by the end of grade 1. As other research projects have shown (Slavin, Madden, Dolan, & Wasik, 1996), literacy difficulties must be addressed in the earliest grades in order for students to achieve success throughout their elementary years. There were gains among project Transition 5 students, and those should not go unrecognized. But more has to be done to make it possible for these students to succeed, especially in a transitional bilingual program where grade by grade progress is so critical.

DISCUSSION

Importance of the Study

A promising program and the potential of transitional bilingual programs
Results indicate the multi-year transition program is demonstrably more effective than the program students typically receive, producing higher levels of Spanish literacy, significantly higher levels of English literacy, and important literacy-related practices and attitudes for significantly larger numbers of students. In fact, results reported here likely provide a conservative estimate of program effects because students participated in the program as it was being developed. Similar to Calderón et al. (1998), this study demonstrates that with careful program design and evaluation, transitional bilingual programs can be improved. There seems to be more potential in these programs than many schools achieve.

Identification of implementation problems that limit transitional programs
Transitional bilingual programs depend upon successive grade by grade achievement. Careful program oversight, high quality primary language literacy and oral English instruction in grades K-3, and a transitional language arts program of serious substance and duration are important and

interdependent. These are the needs we identified and tried to address. Our experiences at other sites suggest these same needs are widespread but often go unrecognized (see also Berman et al., 1992). Educators and parents tend to assume that low English achievement at the upper grades is evidence that bilingual education, per se, does not work. But they often fail to scrutinize the quality of primary language and ELD instruction, and they have little information and few models to develop informed expectations about transition itself.

Implications for improving transitional bilingual programs

Results reported here have direct implications for educators seeking to improve transitional programs. Without adopting our specific program, results suggest significant payoffs might be had by (a) focusing attention on the *quality* of L1 language arts and oral English language development in the early grades, (b) adopting a longer-term approach to transition, (c) establishing an actual curriculum for the transition period, and (d) maintaining L1 language arts instruction during at least the 1st year when English literacy is introduced. (See Appendix 2: Questions to Guide Schools Seeking to Improve Transitional Bilingual Programs.)

Evidence for theoretical principles

Although we have not yet established empirically the individual merit and manifestation of our theoretical principles, the results support them, overall. Challenge, Comprehensiveness, Continuity, and Connections have had a certain utility in our project because, as several studies have documented (cited earlier) and we observed, they are often lacking in transitional programs for English learners. But we suspect the principles will have similar utility for other educators seeking to improve transitional bilingual and other kinds of programs. All four principles resonate strongly with project teachers (Saunders & Goldenberg, 1997). In addition, we are identifying and in some cases confirming the merit of specific principals in the research and development of other teams (see Calderón et al., 1998, specifically for continuity; Jiménez et al., 1996, for comprehensiveness; Thomas & Collier, 1997, for challenge).

Continuing Questions

To what extent are program effects teacher/project effects?

The teachers who helped develop, implement and test the program are all very dedicated practitioners. They became interested in the project early on and remained involved over the entire 5 years. They opened up their

classrooms to project advisors, and consistently tried to learn and implement new strategies and approaches. Some were veterans, some were brand new teachers. Some had traditional programs, others had been experimenting with language arts reforms for quite some time. Some were deeply committed to bilingual education, others were not. As the project evolved, so did each member of the project team. No doubt, at least some portion of program effects are teacher/project effects – effects achieved by conscientious teachers participating in and supported by a long-term research and development project. Replication studies are needed to produce better estimates of program effects (see Saunders & Goldenberg, 1999b, for initial replication efforts).

Can program effects be replicated on a large-scale?

Project teachers learned to study literary selections carefully, identify major themes, divide books into manageable and meaningful portions of reading, develop literature log topics, conduct challenging but nonthreatening instructional conversations, design engaging writing projects, locate and organize related materials for independent centers, and coordinate a classroom system that cultivated high levels of student responsibility and allowed for extensive small group instruction. We would like to assume that all teachers have or can develop these skills, but we have not yet demonstrated it. Some teachers at project schools openly commented that what they saw project teachers doing was impressive, but they could not imagine investing so much time and effort into their program. It is probably a mistake, therefore, to underestimate the challenge involved in implementing the program with large numbers of teachers.

What are the specific effects of individual program components?

The program was developed as the project team analyzed student needs, examined existing classroom practices, and drew upon the research literature. As a total package, the program seems to produce superior literacy results relative to what students in neighboring schools typically receive. However, the language arts program is a fairly complex integration of 12 different components. At this point, it is unclear which components or which combination of program components make the strongest contribution to students' literacy development. Such work is needed. Teachers need reliable information about component effects in order to prioritize, plan and organize instruction (see Saunders & Goldenberg, 1999a).

How should schools address the issue of newcomers and transiency?

Evaluation results are based on students who remained enrolled at their schools across grades 1–5. This sample is representative of about two-

thirds of the students at project and nonproject schools. The program we developed puts a premium on careful monitoring of student progress and placement and continuity of instruction at least across grades 2 through 5. We have not worked out specific strategies for effectively accommodating new students entering the program at grades 3 and up, especially students enrolling at the middle and upper grades with very low levels of achievement in their first language. As Berman et al. (1992) found, the issues of newcomers and transiency are major impediments to the effectiveness of transitional bilingual programs and must be taken very seriously.

Have we reached the limits of transitional bilingual programs?

The program we developed emphasizes the importance of primary language instruction through grade 3 and maintenance of primary language literacy instruction during grade 4. In grade 5, students are encouraged to continue self-selected reading and writing in their primary language, but instruction is delivered exclusively in English. Thomas and Collier's (1997) longitudinal study of academic achievement spanning 1st through 12th grade seems to indicate that transitional bilingual programs – even those bolstered by a great emphasis on primary language instruction, a more gradual approach to transition, and more effective pedagogy – are less successful in the long run than “true” bilingual programs that make English *and* primary language achievement complementary goals throughout the elementary grades. The results we have produced so far are in the same range as those reported by Thomas and Collier for “best case” well-implemented transitional bilingual programs. Since the vast majority of bilingual programs are transitional, one of our goals is to make them as effective as possible. Nevertheless, we have to face the prospect that there may be inherent limitations to transitional designs.

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APPENDIX 1

Language Arts Program Components*Literature Units (experience-text-relationship approach)*

On average, students engage in 4 literature units across the year. Titles are chosen to fit the students' grade level and language proficiency (in particular across Transition I & II). The literature unit is propelled by an ongoing process of reading, writing (literature logs), and discussion (instructional conversations). Discussions are conducted in small groups of 6-10 students and managed through a specifically designed rotation system (teacher-specific). The instructional framework for the literature units is called Experience-Text-Relationship (Mason & Au, 1986): Throughout the course of the unit, the teacher tries to help students understand the relationship between their own experiences, the content of the literary selection, and one or more major themes that apply to the selection (e.g., friendship, sacrifice, perseverance, commitment, justice, cultural identity). In addition to those three critical elements (experience, text, theme), the teacher enriches the unit with lessons, activities, supplementary readings that build background knowledge necessary for developing a deeper understanding of the selection and theme(s). Typically, units culminate with a writing project (see Culminating Writing Projects) through which students elaborate on some aspect of the literature unit.

Literature Logs

Teachers divide the literary selection into "chunks" (manageable portions of reading) and assign a literature log entry for each chunk. Students complete the log entry at an independent center, and typically small group discussions begin with some or all students sharing their logs. Literature log prompts might ask students to (a) write about a personal experience (related to the story), (b) elaborate on something that has happened in the story (e.g., assume the role of the character), or (c) analyze/interpret some aspect of the story or theme. In preparing a literature unit, teachers develop specific log prompts for each chunk, but often times, prompts emerge naturally from small group discussions.

Instructional Conversations (small group discussions)

Throughout the course of the literature unit, teacher and students meet in small groups to discuss the story, log entries, related personal experiences and the theme(s) for the unit. The amount of time allotted to the discussion segment and frequency vary from teacher to teacher, but on average stu-

dents spend at least 45 minutes a week engaged in discussion. The discussion provides the teacher with the opportunity to (a) hear students articulate their understanding of the story, theme(s) and related personal experiences, and (b) in the process of facilitating the discussion, challenge but also help students to enrich and deepen their understandings. Facilitated by the teacher, the small group discussions, also referred to as Instructional Conversations (Goldenberg, 1992/1993), allow students to hear, appreciate, and build on each others' experiences, knowledge, and understandings.

Culminating Writing Projects (writing-as-a-process approach)

On average, students complete 4 major writing projects across the year, taking the pieces through the entire process of writing: prewriting, drafting, sharing, receiving feedback, revising, editing, and preparing a final, polished piece of work (Calkins, 1986, 1991; Graves, 1983, 1991). Typically these projects are directly related to the literature units which conclude with a culminating writing (e.g., fully developing a literature log, or a writing assignment tailored to the themes and content of the literature study). The key to this process is revision. Three things seem to promote meaningful revision: (a) helping students learn to share and receive/provide feedback, (b) discussing examples (student or published) of the kind of writing students are working on, highlighting for students things they might incorporate in their own pieces when they revise, and (c) one-on-one conferences with the teacher.

Comprehension Strategies

Students are taught specific strategies to use while they are reading in order to monitor their own comprehension (McNeil, 1984; Palinscar & Brown, 1985). The two essential strategies are: pausing intermittently during reading to (a) summarize what they've read and (b) formulate and answer test-like questions about the reading material. Strategies are introduced during 2 week training modules provided at the beginning and middle of the year. Students practice the strategies in pairs at the assigned independent reading center.

Assigned Independent Reading

Students are regularly assigned reading selections from available materials (basals, Literature titles, and any other sources) to read independently. Optimally, selections are related to the themes and topics being discussed in the Literature Units. Students complete various accompanying assignments to promote comprehension and hold the students accountable for

what they read (summaries, comprehension questions, graphic organizers, paired and group activities). Readings and assignments are completed in-class as part of an independent center and/or for homework.

Dictation

The most extensive dictation program (Seeds University Elementary School, UCLA, 1992) includes: Students engage in dictation exercises weekly, taking a cold dictation of a grade level appropriate passage (at the beginning of the week), studying the features of that particular passage and practicing the dictation (throughout the week), and then completing a final dictation (at the end of the week). But as we have found, even a less extensive dictation program (2 times per week) is beneficial. Two elements are critical for successful dictation: 1) explanations from the teacher about language and punctuation items featured in the dictation passage, and 2) opportunities for the students to proofread and check their dictation against the actual passage.

Written Conventions Lessons

Students receive directed lessons about the conventions of written language (punctuation, capitalization, grammar, word usage). Lessons include a presentation from the teacher, opportunities for guided and independent practice, and then application to writings the students are working on (e.g., literature logs, writing projects, even Dictation passages). The key is connecting what is studied in the lessons to the actual writing students are doing.

Oral English Language Development...through Literature

Used in grades K-3, the ELD program is based on a natural language approach and children's literature (Beltrán & O'Brien, 1993). Literature provides a meaningful, motivational, and enjoyable context for learning and practicing specifically targeted English oral language skills. It also exposes children to English print well in advance of formal transition to English reading. On average, students receive 45 minutes of ELD per day. Lessons are conducted in small groups organized by English language production level. Organizing groups by production level allows the teacher to focus more successfully on students' specific needs.

Pleasure Reading

A portion of time each day, or at the upper grades as part of a weekly system, is scheduled for students to select and read things on their own for pleasure and interest. Students keep and review with the teacher a record

of their ongoing readings (reading inventory), and often times complete assignments related to their readings: preparing summaries and synopses, oral presentations for book sharing time, drawings, etc. Three things help promote pleasure reading: 1) teachers introduce students to numerous selections (trips to library, a full classroom library, lending read-aloud selections, making recommendations); 2) teachers explicitly teach students how to choose and try-out books (reading the cover synopsis, reading a portion of the book, reading various books from the same author); and 3) students have a chance to share and discuss with each other and the teacher what they are reading.

Teacher Read-Alouds

At least 3 times per week, teachers read to students for approximately 20 minutes. Read-alouds (Trelease, 1985) serve various purposes: promote pleasure reading; expose students to the language of expert writers and the fluency of an expert reader; engage students in reading material they may not yet be able to read themselves; and increase students' familiarity with different genres of writing.

Interactive Journals

Used primarily in grades K-2 and at the beginning of transition, interactive journals provide students with regular, non-threatening opportunities to write about topics of their own choice and participate in a written dialogue with the teacher (Flores et al., 1991). Teacher response occurs as often as possible and provides students with examples of conventional writing. Interactive journals help K and 1 students break the written language code; and later in grades 1 and 2, they help students develop initial writing fluency. Transition teachers use interactive journals during the first semester of transition when students are making their first attempts at English writing. The immediate response from the teacher provides both emotional support for students and a highly contextualized and therefore comprehensible English text for students to read.

APPENDIX 2

Questions to Guide Schools Seeking to Improve Transitional Bilingual Programs

1. Are students achieving L1 literacy in the early grades (1st, 2nd, 3rd)?
Are we emphasizing the fundamental importance of L1 language arts in the early grades?
2. Are students achieving oral English language proficiency in the early grades?
Are we emphasizing the fundamental importance of oral English language development while students are receiving language arts instruction in L1?
3. Do we have criteria and an instrument for identifying students prepared to add transitional language arts (i.e., add English reading & writing instruction)?
Are we emphasizing the importance of teaching to those criteria?
4. Do we have a transitional language arts program (e.g., stated goals, curriculum, reading series, assessments of progress, designated time-frame)?
Are we emphasizing the importance of transitional language arts (e.g., assignment of teachers and teaching assistants, professional development, program materials)?
5. Do we continue to teach and promote L1 literacy during transition?
Are we emphasizing the importance of ongoing L1 literacy achievement as we teach students how to read and write in English?
6. Do we have criteria and an instrument for identifying students prepared for mainstream language arts?
Are we emphasizing the importance of teaching towards those criteria?

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