



2018

## Spanish Guided Reading and Phonics Instruction in Primary Dual Language Classrooms: A Self-Study Examining a Principal's Leadership and Actions to Improve Student Outcomes in a Neighborhood Urban School

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

SPANISH GUIDED READING AND PHONICS INSTRUCTION IN PRIMARY  
DUAL LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS: A SELF-STUDY EXAMINING A  
PRINCIPAL'S LEADERSHIP AND ACTIONS TO IMPROVE STUDENT  
OUTCOMES IN A NEIGHBORHOOD URBAN SCHOOL

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

PROGRAM IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND SUPERVISION

BY

ANTONIO ACEVEDO

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

MAY 2018

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This journey began in the fall 2012 when I joined a cohort of talented leaders from the Chicago Public Schools who were determined to work full time and earn their doctoral degrees in education. Cohort 1, as we were called, became a close group of passionate educators who supported one another along the way. Without this support, completing this journey would not have been possible. In addition to this support from friends and colleagues, I received support and encouragement from the finest professors, including Dr. Janice Fine, and Dr. Marla Israel, who also served as my advisor for most of the journey. In addition, I am grateful for the hands-on support I received from my coaches, Cydney Fields and Dr. Felicia Stewart, who then continued supporting me as my advisor while also serving on my dissertation committee. I am also grateful for Dr. Amy Heineke's feedback during my proposal defense which helped me further refine my study. Finally, without Dra. Aurora Chang's deadlines, feedback, and encouragement to complete this product, I might still be working on it.

In addition to my Loyola family, I could not have completed this journey without the continued support and understanding of my loving wife, Denise, also a passionate educator. I also thank my two children, Elise and Alec, who served as cheerleaders along the way. Additionally, my mother and sister checking in on me along the way helped me get to the finish line. Of course, I would be remiss to not mention, my inspiration to begin this journey, my late father, Dr. José A. Acevedo who passed away during this

journey. As the first Dr. Acevedo of the family, who also earned his Ed.D. from Loyola University Chicago, he has served as an inspiration to many family members.

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine a principal's leadership actions while attempting to improve primary student outcomes in reading in a Dual Language (English/Spanish) neighborhood school by supporting teachers in implementing a balanced literacy approach to teaching reading in Spanish. The principal as researcher noticed at the end of the 2014-15 year that primary reading assessment data in Spanish revealed low percentages of Spanish-speaking English Language Learner (ELL) students reading at grade level in Spanish with kindergarten, first, and second grade students' results respectively at 24, 34, and 37 percent. Research in the field of Dual Language Education supports teachers using a balanced approach to literacy instruction in Spanish while paying particular attention to differences in teaching foundational skills in Spanish as compared to English. In the 2015-16 school year, the researcher led professional development in this area. For this doctoral study, the researcher engaged in a self-study while reviewing documents, such as professional development exit slips and teacher team meeting minutes, to reflect on his leadership and the impact it had on teacher practice while keeping in mind principles of the Elmore Internal Coherence Framework (Elmore, Forman, Stosich, & Bocala, 2013) as a way to understand and assess his leadership capacity.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Purpose of the Study**

As principal of Lower West Side Elementary School, a predominantly low-income Latino urban neighborhood elementary school with a school-wide English/Spanish Dual Language program, I sought to improve student outcomes, as the school had been on probation for several years. Primary literacy data for Spanish-speaking English Language Learners (ELLs) (approximately 90% of the students in grades Kindergarten through second) using the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System (BAS) in Spanish (Heineman, 2015), known as the *Sistema de evaluación de la lectura*, demonstrated at the end of the year what percentage of students were at or above the reading level expectations. In 2014 kindergarten, first and second grade Spanish-speaking ELLs scored as follows respectively: 24%, 34% and 37%. My concern was that 63% of those second grade students were moving to third grade while reading below grade level in Spanish. This low achievement prompted this study.

As self-study, my purpose was to examine my leadership actions while attempting to improve primary student outcomes in reading in a dual language (English/Spanish) neighborhood school by supporting teachers in implementing a balanced literacy approach to teaching reading in Spanish. The study was exploratory in nature as it addressed the research questions and also descriptive as it described my actions and

teachers' responses to such actions. Finally, analyses of end of year ELLs' Spanish literacy results in both growth and attainment could provide readers an insight into which strategies were most effective in supporting teachers of Spanish-speaking ELLs to improved Spanish literacy outcome in Dual Language programs.

As the leader of the school, I am charged with improving outcomes, while staying true to the mission of school and faithful to its unique Dual Language program. Research has shown that all students, especially ELLs, benefit from dual language classes (Thomas & Collier, 2012), yet the primary literacy outcomes for Spanish-speaking ELLs in my school's program, in which 80% of their instruction is in Spanish, demonstrated that students were in need of greater support and targeted instruction in order to ensure that a greater percentage leave second grade reading at grade level. While the school uses a balanced literacy approach to teaching reading, an approach that researchers in the field of Dual Language education support, these same researchers also note that educators must pay particular attention to differences in teaching foundational skills in Spanish as compared to English (Beeman & Urow, 2013; Culatta, Reese, & Setzer, 2006; Escamilla, 1999; Escamilla, Hopewell, Butvilofsky, Sparrow, Soltero-Gonzales, Ruiz-Figueroa, & Escamilla, 2014).

It is the hope that just as the students benefit from targeted instruction, teachers also benefit from targeted professional development in areas to support them in providing better literacy instruction within a balanced literacy approach to teaching Spanish reading. In order to ensure the success of bilingual teachers, school-based administrators and leadership teams must provide job-embedded learning opportunities on current best

practices in the instruction of ELLs to bilingual teachers on a regular basis. To achieve this, I designed professional development activities to increase teachers' expertise in explicit Spanish phonics instruction, an area of literacy instruction currently not part of the balanced literacy block, while also building upon teachers' strength in providing guided reading instruction. As I designed these professional development activities, I kept in mind the Internal Coherence (IC) Framework from Elmore, Forman, Stosich, and Bocala (2014) as a way to understand and assess the school's capacity in bringing about improvement in both instructional practice and student outcomes during the cycles of professional learning I designed and employed as part of the study's design. Elmore et al. describe how the IC brings together research from various sources that "propose a pathway from 1) leadership behaviors, to 2) whole-school and team organizational processes for collaboration, to 3) the individual and collective efficacy beliefs of teachers, and, ultimately, to 4) improved student achievement" (p. 6). In addition, the authors also argue that in order for a school leader to enact these four principles that promote both excellence and equity in student learning, five conditions must be present. These conditions include:

1) leadership that is distributed and focused on instruction; 2) coherence in the instructional program; 3) ongoing, embedded professional development; 4) professional learning communities anchored in data on instruction and student learning; and 5) teachers' confidence in and responsibility for their efforts to obtain desired student outcomes. (Elmore et al., 2014, p. 3)

### **Research Questions**

The main research questions that this self-study attempts to answer are as follows:

1. What has been my experience with providing teachers professional development on Spanish literacy development at the primary grades?
  - a. What am I learning from my teachers?
  - b. What am I learning from the students?
2. How has my leadership, as understood using Elmore's instructional coherence framework (2014), changed over the course of the year in leading professional development on Spanish literacy development at the primary level?

### **Significance of the Study**

Morales and Aldana (2010) note that there has been an increase in popularity of Dual Language programs and cite the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) data that show the increase of Dual Language programs from a few programs in 1962 to 335 programs in 2007. The current directory at the CAL site lists 458 schools with Dual Language programs (2015). This increase may be due in part to educational leaders who have become familiar with studies that have shown that ELLs who participate in dual language or late exit bilingual education programs outperform ELLs who participate in early exit bilingual programs or programs that only provide English as a second Language (ESL) instruction (Collier & Thomas, 2004; Ramirez, Yuen & Ramey, 1991; Thomas & Collier, 2012) and want to improve outcomes for ELLs in their schools or districts. Because literacy development in an ELL's home language is an essential component of Dual Language education, this helps contribute to the field by

demonstrating how leaders can provide professional development to teachers who teach Spanish literacy development in the primary grades. This is especially useful for schools and districts starting Dual Language programs.

Furthermore, because Escamilla (1999) has found that bilingual teachers generally have not had coursework on appropriate methodology for teaching foundational skills of Spanish literacy, and Beeman and Urow (2013) have noted that “teacher preparation programs do a good job of covering the foundations of second-language acquisition and methods for teaching English as a second language, but bilingual teachers are rarely taught how to teach in Spanish” (p. 7), this study shows how using an approach that is based on the Spanish phonetic system coupled with a professional development model that focused on the improvement of instructional practice and continuous learning addressed this gap and ultimately led to greater student outcomes in Spanish literacy.

Finally, this study contributes to the field by identifying practices that Dual Language teachers employed during guided reading to move students closer to grade level. Gutierrez, Zepeda, and Castro (2010) assert that there is a lack of research in the area of literacy instruction for simultaneous bilinguals, while Vaughn, Linan-Thompson, Mathes, Cirino, Carlson, Pollard-Durodola, Cardenas-Hagan, & Francis (2006) note that there is little research in the area of effective interventions for ELLs with reading difficulties in Spanish. This study has the potential to provide insight in these areas for schools with demographics similar to that of the study.



## Overview of Methodology

How does a well-established dual language program in an urban neighborhood school improve its Spanish literacy outcomes for its ELLs at the primary level in order to ensure student success? In this study I enacted a professional development plan within an self-study design to address two important components of Spanish literacy development within a balanced literacy approach in my role as principal, as a bilingual (Spanish/English) administrator, to improve Spanish primary literacy outcomes for ELLs. The first of the two components I addressed, Spanish phonics development, occurred as a professional learning cycle within the first quarter of the 2015-16 academic year. I addressed this area first since teachers at the school, as a general rule, did not employ a consistent explicit and systematic approach to teaching Spanish phonics. Researchers in the field (Beeman & Urow, 2013; Culatta et al., 2006; Escamilla et al., 2014) have noted that teachers in the field of dual language education must pay particular attention to differences in teaching foundational skills in Spanish as compared to English and consider the internal structure of the language when utilizing strategies that emphasize part to whole instruction. To support teachers with the incorporation of this approach, I provided teachers with a Spanish phonics program, *Estrellita Accelerated Beginning Spanish Reading* program (Myer, 1990), and professional learning activities to help them be successful in implementing it. I selected this program because when the second largest district in Illinois converted its Spanish transitional bilingual education programs to dual language programs in the 2011-12 school year, they incorporated this program into their Spanish balanced literacy block (School District U-46, n.d.).

The second professional learning cycle focused on building upon teachers' strengths in providing guided reading instruction, an area in which teachers in 2012-13 school year had professional development. To support teachers in guided reading I developed professional learning activities during the second quarter of the 2015-16 academic year while using Pinnell and Fountas' (2014) guide for teachers implementing guided reading in Spanish, *Continuo*. As the school selected to use the *Benchmark Assessment System* (BAS), *grades K-2* (Fountas & Pinnell, 2010), and the Spanish version known as *Sistema de evaluacion de la lectura, grados K-2* (Fountas & Pinnell, 2011) also from Heinemann to assess students in its primary grades in both English and Spanish, I used this resource from the same authors as well to ensure instructional and assessment alignment.

As a self-study my purpose was to examine how my leadership actions improved primary student outcomes in Spanish reading in a Dual Language neighborhood school. As noted, the study was exploratory in nature as it addresses the research questions, which challenged me to reflect on my actions and my teachers' responses to such actions. Lagemann and Shulman (1999) have noted the increase in the use of self-study in many fields, especially among principals and teachers and that the "keeping of journals in written or video formats, the writing of autobiographies, and the presentation of research in other narrative forms is now more and more commonplace" (p. xvi). Finally, analyses of end of year ELLs' Spanish literacy results in both growth and attainment and reflecting on these results provided me with insight into which strategies might have been most effective in supporting teachers of Spanish-speaking ELLs to improve Spanish literacy

outcomes in Dual Language programs. For Pine (2009) notes that engaging in self-study is a form of action research that “focuses inwardly on teacher education and, in some instances, professional development” (p. 58). As a principal and leader of teacher professional development at the school, my hope was that employing this research method helped me to improve in this practice as I reflected on my actions.

In designing the professional development activities during the first cycle of the study, I used a template that the school had used previously to implement six to eight-week cycles of learning under the school’s Instructional Leadership Team’s (ILT) direction since the 2011-12 school year. As stated, the first cycle of learning in quarter one was dedicated to Spanish phonics instruction and the second to Spanish guided reading. Table 1 illustrates the template which I used and described in Chapter III to explain the two cycles of learning in greater detail.

The template the ILT used to design the cycles of learning begins by defining the start and end dates of the cycle. It also included the school’s yearlong strategic level to which the cycle is aligned, as well as a definition of the powerful practice. Next, the template is divided into two general categories, “input,” which describes the types of activities designed to give teachers opportunity to grow through experience in which they participate in a form of more traditional, but in this context, job-embedded professional development. The second general category is “feedback loops” during which the teachers receive feedback in the form of student data or peer feedback on what to reflect upon and grow professionally and/or adjust instruction and teaching practices. Within the “input” category, “teacher teams” refers to the weekly grade level or team meetings

that occurred once a week during the principal-directed teacher preparation period.

Generally the Dual Language Coordinator (DLC), who supported teachers with coaching and ensured all components of Dual Language were present within instruction, the assistant principal, and I as principal attended these meetings most of the time; at least one of these leaders was there for all the meetings if the three were not able to attend every meeting that week. Another aspect to note of the teacher team meetings, was that they cycled through four topics every month: reading/literacy, math, Dual Language, and writing process. The next element describes the activities of the ILT, comprised of the principal, assistant principal, DLC and a representative from the primary, intermediate, middle school, and “specials” teachers, who met approximately biweekly after school for about an hour. The following element “PD day” refers to professional development that occurred either on a full professional development day or on one of the 12 after school one-hour Flex Day PDs that the staff voted on having approximately every three weeks throughout the year. The final section in that category described the type of professional readings, or even viewing of videos that occurred either during a professional development session, teacher team meetings, or on the teacher’s own time.

Table 1

*Cycle of Learning Template*

2015-16 Cycle of Learning							
School:		Begin Date:				End Date:	
Yearlong Strategic Lever:					Powerful Practice:		
Date	Input				Feedback Loops		
	<i>Teacher Teams</i>	<i>ILT</i>	<i>PD Day</i>	<i>Prof. Rdg.</i>	<i>Learning walks</i>	<i>Peer visits</i>	<i>Data Work (LASW, PAs, formative, BAS, NWEA)</i>
Week 1							
Week 2							
Week 3							
Week 4							
Week 5							
Week 6							
Week 7							
Week 8							
Safe Practice Period: Approximately 3 weeks after the initial training session, teachers will benefit from a time for safe practice where they cannot be observed for the powerful practice.				Goals			
					Teacher Implementation:		
					Student performance:		

The “feedback loops” category indicates the two times that the learning walks occurred; one as a pre-cycle and the second as a post-cycle opportunity to collect data and quantify improvements in teacher implementation of the powerful practice over the course of the cycle. As members of the ILT conducted learning walks they collected data in three areas: the classroom learning environment; what the teacher was saying and doing; and what the students were saying and doing. During peer visits, teachers elected to have two teachers co-teach a lesson using the powerful practice, while a third teacher observed them to provide them feedback. It is important to note that administrators did not participate in peer visits in order to ensure that teachers felt like they had a safe environment in which to try out the powerful practice. Finally, the “data work” column in that category refers to the times throughout the cycle when teachers reviewed summative, formative, benchmark, or progress monitoring data to inform their instruction. At the bottom of the cycle, there is an important disclaimer about the safe practice period, during which administrators cannot observe for evaluative purpose the teacher employing the powerful practice. In addition there is a section for both teacher implementation and student performance goals where the ILT set both of these teacher implementation and student performance goals.

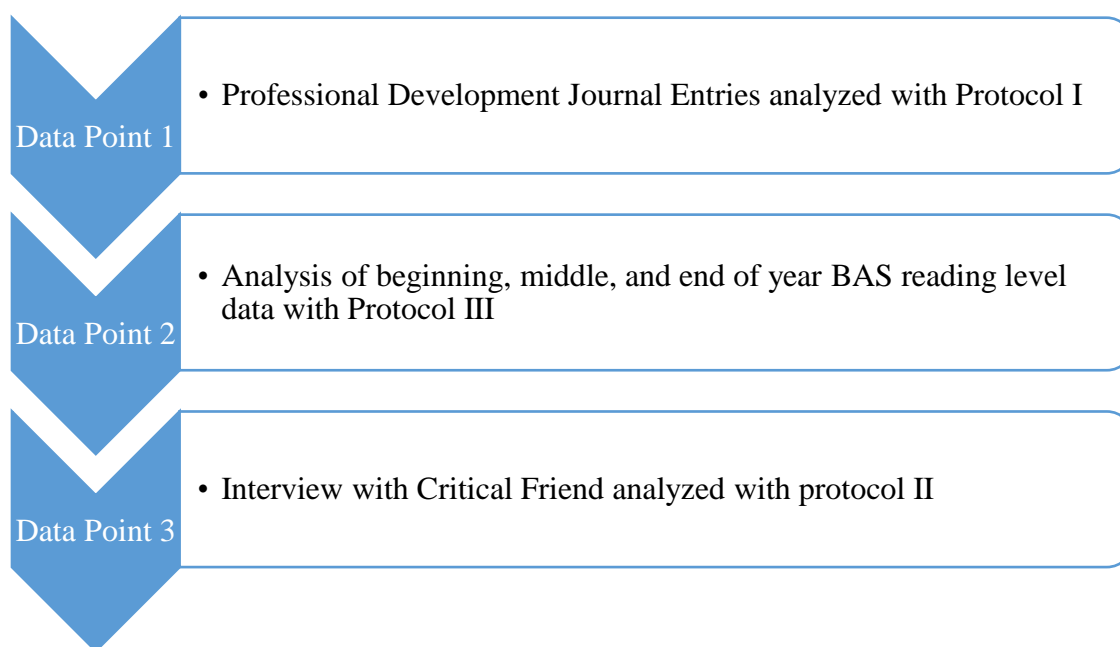
During both of the professional learning cycles, I provided professional development exit slips after professional development activities to gauge the teachers’ level of knowledge gained, how they used this knowledge and what they believed were the next steps to support the initiatives. In addition, I also analyzed grade level meeting agendas and minutes focused on reading and reading comprehension that occurred once a

month during both the Spanish phonics and guided reading cycles. Additionally, I along with the Dual Language Coordinator (DLC) collected data using classroom observation checklists at the start and end of the two cycles. After each activity associated with the cycles of professional learning, I summarized those data and reflected on their significance with respect to my leadership actions in a written journal that I maintained throughout the study. Finally I used a protocol based on Elmore et al.'s (2014) IC framework to analyze my journal reflections.

An additional source of data I used and analyzed with a protocol was students' beginning, middle, and end of year Fountas and Pinnell (Heineman, 2015) Benchmark Assessment System (BAS) instructional level expectations. I used these data to monitor Spanish literacy development in the school's three primary classrooms. I analyzed BAS data to track both student growth and grade level attainment in Spanish literacy.

A final source of data that I analyzed was an interview which took place with a critical friend. This colleague did not work at Lower West Side Elementary School and did not have any personal knowledge of the teachers and students that I discussed during the interview.

Figure 1 illustrates the data collection and analysis procedures that I used during this study.



*Figure 1.* Data Collection and Analysis Overview

### **Context for the Study**

Programs to instruct ELLs in the United States range from those in which the ELLs receive instruction entirely in English either with or without specialized English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction to those in which the native language is used as a support or as a vehicle for a few years to learn until students are able to receive instruction entirely in English with some support. Some of these programs include structured immersion programs and ESL pull-out programs to transitional bilingual programs of instruction in which the native language is used for three to four years. All of these previously mentioned programs are subtractive in nature as the goal of these programs is monolingualism in English or limited bilingualism (Baker, 2006).

At the other end of the spectrum are programs for ELLs that help students develop their native language while they learn English. ELLs in these programs learn in both the



native language and English and have as goals bilingualism and biliteracy. Examples of these programs include Dual Language or two-way immersion programs and maintenance or late-exit bilingual education programs. Various studies have shown that ELLs who participate in Dual Language or late exit bilingual education programs outperform ELLs who participate in early exit bilingual programs or programs that only provide English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction (Collier & Thomas, 2004; Ramirez et al., 1991; Thomas & Collier, 2012). Because my school has had a Dual Language program in place for over 15 years, this study will take place within this school's context of Dual Language instruction.

The Dual Language program model at Lower West Side Elementary School is a one-way 80/20 program model. The one-way component indicates that the vast majority of the students are Spanish-speaking English Language Learners (ELLs) in contrast to a two-way model in which the population is more equally split between ELLs and native English speakers. The 80/20 component denotes that instruction begins at the Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten levels with 80% of it in Spanish and 20% in English. The percentage of instruction in Spanish decreases gradually at each grade level until it becomes 50/50 at fourth grade and continues as such through eighth grade. As the students graduate from eighth grade the expectation is that they graduate from eighth grade not only bilingual in English and Spanish, but also biliterate, meaning that these students can also read and write at grade level in both English and Spanish.

Within the 80-20 Dual Language program model, primary teachers provide the majority of literacy instruction in the non-English language, or Spanish, as is the case at

the researcher's school. And although 90% of the students in the primary classrooms were Spanish speaking ELLs receiving the majority of their literacy instruction in Spanish, 2014-15 outcomes demonstrated the following percentage of these students tested were at or above the reading level expected in Kindergarten, first and second grades respectively: 24%, 34% and 37%. Table 2 illustrates these data for all three benchmark periods.

Table 2

*2014-15 Spanish Primary Literacy Outcomes at Beginning of Year (BOY), Middle of Year (MOY) and End of Year (EOY) on the Benchmark Assessment System (BAS)*

<b>Grade Level</b>	<b>% at/above on BAS BOY</b>	<b>% at/above on BAS MOY</b>	<b>% at/above on BAS EOY</b>
K	N/A	0	24
1 <sup>st</sup>	34	28	34
2 <sup>nd</sup>	32	32	37

These data indicate that in each grade level, less than half of the students achieved or surpassed grade level expectations in Spanish. This is not acceptable within an 80-20 model.

Table 3 illustrates the beginning of year data for primary Spanish speaking ELLs in the 2015-16 school year. These data provided the benchmark which was used to help inform the impact of this study on student outcomes.

Table 3

*2015-16 Spanish Primary Literacy Outcomes at Beginning of Year (BOY)*

<b>Grade Level (N)</b>	<b>% at/above on BAS BOY (n)</b>
K (27)	N/A (0)
1 <sup>st</sup> (24)	21 (5)
2 <sup>nd</sup> (27)	37 (10)

Because Chicago Public Schools (CPS) has recommended a balanced literacy block of 120 minutes in grades kindergarten through second (CPS, 2014) and the school has employed this model, I focused on two areas within the balanced literacy block in an attempt to improve primary literacy outcomes for Spanish-speaking ELLs during this study. Mestala, Wharton-McDonald, Pressley, Rankin, Mistretta, Yokoi, and Ettenberger (1997) identified nine characteristics and instructional practices often reported by effective primary-level literacy teachers as components of balanced literacy instruction. These characteristics and instructional practices are summarized as follows: 1) a literate classroom environment; 2) explicit teaching; 3) teaching of reading, both in context of other reading and writing activities and in isolation; 4) various types of reading; 5) various types of materials read; 6) teaching of writing; 7) explicitness/extensiveness of instruction varying as a function of reader ability; 8) making literacy and literacy instruction motivating; and 9) accountability. In a more recent study on balanced literacy instruction, the researchers (Pressley, Roehrig, Bogner, Raphael, & Dolezal, 2002) have identified what they coin as “well validated components of balanced elementary literacy

instruction” (p. 7). These researchers also include nine components as part of an effective balanced literacy approach to teaching: 1) phonemic awareness and the alphabetic principle; 2) word recognition instruction; 3) vocabulary teaching; 4) comprehension strategies; 5) self-monitoring; 6) extensive reading; 7) teaching students to relate prior knowledge while they read; 8) process writing instruction; and 9) motivating reading and writing.

In my assessment as principal, focusing on the Spanish phonics component was appropriate as per my observations, because as a general rule the teachers did not employ an explicit and systematic approach to teaching Spanish phonics. Several researchers (Beeman & Urow, 2013; Culatta et al., 2006; Escamilla, 1999; Escamilla et al., 2014) have noted that teachers in the field of Dual Language Education must pay particular attention to differences in teaching foundational skills in Spanish as compared to English and consider the internal structure of the language when utilizing strategies that emphasize part to whole instruction. I selected the *Estrellita Accelerated Beginning Spanish Reading program* (Myers, 1990) to incorporate into the balanced literacy block as the program is based on the core structure of the Spanish language and uses the syllabic approach to teaching students initial reading in Spanish. In addition, as noted above, when the second largest district in Illinois converted its Spanish transitional bilingual education programs to Dual Language programs in the 2011-12 school year, they incorporated this program into their Spanish balanced literacy block (School District U-46, n.d.).

Fountas and Pinnell (2012) have noted that “guided reading has shifted the lens in the teaching of reading to focus a deeper understanding of how readers build effective processing systems over time” (p. 268) and describe how the structure of a guided reading lesson leads to improving students’ comprehension abilities. The authors describe the structure of a guided reading lesson as containing the following seven components: 1) selection of a text at the group’s (homogenous student grouping) instructional level; 2) introduction to the text during which the teacher does some scaffolding but also allows for some problem-solving for the reader; 3) reading the text during which the teacher may interact with students strategically; 4) discussion of the text at which point the teacher guides the discussion to improve students’ comprehension; 5) teaching points during which the teacher makes explicit teaching points; 6) word work during which the teacher provides explicit teaching to help students with word attack strategies; and 7) extending understanding which is an optional component that helps extend students’ understanding through writing and/or drawing. During the second quarter, this framework served as the basis for professional learning activities to further develop teacher capacity around guided reading in Spanish.

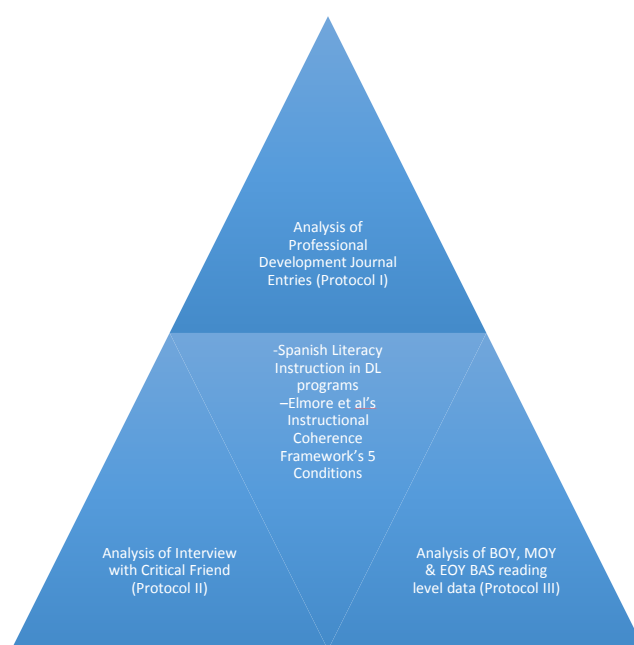
With respect to leadership, Elmore et al.’s (2014) IC framework will serve as the basis for analyzing my leadership actions as principal. I see this as an appropriate framework for such analysis as there appears to be strong alignment between the professional cycles of learning and the four principles that move from: “1) leadership behaviors, to; 2) whole-school and team organizational processes for collaboration, to; 3) individual and collective efficacy beliefs of teachers, an ultimately, to; 4) improved

student achievement” (p. 6). For example, in embedding professional learning activities into time set aside for school-based professional development and during teaching team meetings, I hoped to create the school-wide processes for collaboration. In addition, in creating opportunities for peer observation during the school day, and by also engaging the ILT in leading some of the professional learning activities that are part of the cycles of learning, I aimed to develop individual and collective efficacy beliefs among teachers as they relate to effective pedagogical practices. Finally, in creating student performance goals as part of the cycles of learning, I made clear that the purpose of building professional capacity at the school level was ultimately improved student achievement.

### **Limitations and Biases**

The main limitation of the study is generalizing the results of this study to other contexts. Because the school is unique in that it offers a school-wide dual language program in a neighborhood school setting that is predominantly low income, Latino, and on probation for several years, findings may not be transferrable outside of this context. In addition, I am aware that my assignment as principal two years to the school two years prior to the study in a context of great controversy might have had an effect on how staff members viewed my role. While I have made every attempt to maintain certain processes and best practices with respect to professional development in place since my arrival, I have made some changes in attempt to increase student outcomes in certain areas. In some cases, staff members have been resistant to these changes, which is why I have included the school’s ILT in all curricular and pedagogical aspects of school improvement.

To control for issues of the validity, I triangulated data from various sources to better reflect on how my leadership actions might have impacted student outcomes within the context of a neighborhood dual language school in a large urban setting. My use of a written reflective journal to record observations, thoughts, and reactions on an on-going basis was an attempt to increase validity of the study (Ortlipp, 2008). See Figure 2 for a representation of how I triangulated data.



*Figure 2.* Triangulation of Data

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

#### **Introduction**

This research explores aspects of successful primary literacy programs within the context of Dual Language Education for Spanish-speaking ELLs in an urban setting while focusing on two components of a balanced literacy program, Spanish phonics development and Spanish guided reading. In addition, the research examines the leadership actions of a principal in improving student outcomes in the context of a self-study. Finally, this research provides the conceptual framework the researcher will use a foundation to answer the following research questions:

1. What has been my experience with providing teachers professional development on Spanish literacy development at the primary grades?
  - a. What am I learning from my teachers?
  - b. What am I learning from the students?
2. How has my leadership, as understood using Elmore's instructional coherence framework (2014), changed over the course of the year in leading professional development on Spanish literacy development at the primary level?

#### **Bilingual Education and the Education of ELLs**

While it may appear that bilingual education within the United States is a recent phenomenon from the latter part of the last century, the practice of teaching in a student's



home language (other than English) has occurred since before the founding of the nation. Ovando (2003) suggests that attitudes about bilingual education in this nation have changed during various periods since the 1700s. The author has designated these periods as follows: the Permissive Period (1700s-1880s); the Restrictive Period (1880s-1960s); the Opportunist Period (1960s-1980s); and the Dismissive Period (1980s-present). Ovando designates the first period as such due to how new immigrant groups maintained their ties to their motherland by using their native language in religious services, community newspapers and in private and public schools. During that period bilingual or non-English language instruction occurred in several languages such as German, Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, Dutch, Polish, Czech, French, and Spanish in several states across the United States. During this time missionaries also taught Native Americans using English, Spanish, and through native indigenous languages (Baker, 2006).

During the restrictive period (1880s-1960s) policies limiting the use non-English language instruction emerged with the Bureau of Indian Affairs suppressing the use of Native American languages in the 1880s to the passage of the Naturalization Act of 1906 which required immigrants to be able to speak English in order to become naturalized citizens (Baker, 2006; Ovando, 2003). In addition, anti-German sentiment as a result of the United States declaring war on Germany led to a push for monolingualism (Baker, 2006; Ovando, 2003). Finally, by 1923, 34 states had decreed that English be the sole language of instruction in all elementary schools, public and private (Baker, 2006).

In the opportunist period (1960s-1980s) several acts and rulings laid the foundation for bilingual education in United States, as we know it today. The Bilingual

Education Act of 1968, Title VII amendment of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 provided funding to establish bilingual programs for language minority and poor students. *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) established that limited English proficient students had to have access to the curriculum through language programs that provided equal educational opportunities. The Title VII reauthorization of 1974 specifically noted that providing students, native language instruction was a requirement for receiving bilingual education grant funding and defined bilingual education as transitional in nature, or Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE). A second important court decision during this period, *Casteñeda v. Pickard* (1981), established a test to determine if programs for ELLs were adequately serving them by requiring that the programs are implemented as follows: based on sound educational theory; implemented with adequate resources; and results show the program is effective (Baker, 2006; Ovando, 2003; Wiese & Garcia, 1998). It was during this period that Illinois established programs for ELLs. In 1973 the state of Illinois required school districts to offer TBE programs when 20 or more ELL students of the same language background were enrolled in a school and to offer Transitional Programs of Instruction (TPI) when a school had 19 or fewer ELLs of the same language background. ELLs in TBE programs are required to receive instruction in the students' home language and in English in all required content areas as well as English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction. ELLs in TPI programs receive native language instruction or other assistance in a student's language as well as ESL instruction (Ruiz & Koch, 2011).

During the dismissive period (1980s-present) policies toward bilingual education led to less of an emphasis on native language instruction and maintenance bilingual education programs. The 1984 reauthorization of Bilingual Education Act of Title VII of ESEA reserved most funding for TBE programs, maintained some funding for maintenance programs, but also provided funding for special alternative English-only programs (Baker, 2006; Ovando, 2003). During this time period Proposition 227 passed in 1998 in California and severely restricted the use of the native language for the instruction of ELLs in California schools with similar measures occurring in Arizona in 2000 and Massachusetts in 2002 (Baker, 2006; Ovando, 2003). Finally, the passage of No Child Left Behind legislation as authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and a repeal of the Bilingual Education Act (2002) placed an emphasis on English-only education through mandatory high-stakes testing in English. Crawford (2008) writes that the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 “expired quietly on January 8 [2002].” Crawford (2008) further notes that NCLB marked a “180-degree reversal in language policy” by stressing skills in English only.

It is within this context that programs to instruct ELLs in the United States range from those in which the ELLs receive instruction entirely in English either with or without specialized English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction to those in which the native language is used as a support or as a vehicle for a few years to learn until students are able to receive instruction entirely in English with some support. Some of these programs include structured immersion programs and ESL pull-out programs, to transitional bilingual programs of instruction in which the native language is used for

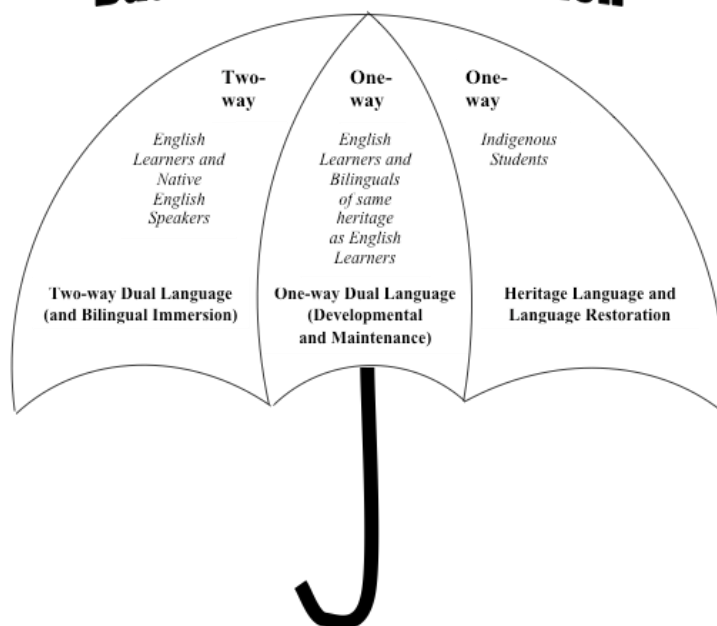
three to four years. All of these previously mentioned programs are subtractive in nature as the goal of these programs is monolingualism in English or limited bilingualism (Baker, 2006).

At the other end of the spectrum are additive programs for ELLs that help students develop their native language while they learn English. ELLs in these programs learn in both the native language and English and have as goals bilingualism. Examples of these programs include Dual Language or two-way immersion programs and maintenance or developmental bilingual education programs. Thomas and Collier (2012) include these programs under the Dual Language umbrella. Figure 3 from Thomas and Collier illustrates these programs (p. 24).

Various studies have shown that ELLs who participate in Dual Language or late exit bilingual education programs outperform ELLs who participate in early exit bilingual programs or programs that only provide English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction (Collier & Thomas, 2004; Ramirez et al., 1991; Thomas & Collier, 2012). Thomas and Collier have conducted many longitudinal evaluations of programs for ELLs across various states. The researchers' latest report includes over 6.2 million student records. Thomas and Collier have developed a graph to visually represent these data. Figure 4 demonstrates the long term of effect of dual language schooling with ELLs (p. 93).

**\* Additive Models of Bilingual Schooling  
for English Learners**

# Dual Language Education



Two-way: Two language groups schooled through their two languages

One-way: One language group schooled through their two languages

\*Additive bilingualism refers to students continuing to develop cognitively in their first language as they acquire their second language.

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*Figure 3. Additive Models of Bilingual Schooling for English Learners*

## English Learners' Long-Term K-12 Achievement in Normal Curve Equivalents (NCEs) on Standardized Tests in English Reading Compared across Seven Program Models

(Results aggregated from longitudinal studies of well-implemented,  
mature programs in five school districts and in California)

Program 1: Two-way Dual Language Education (DLE), including Content ESL

Program 2: One-way DLE, including ESL taught through academic content

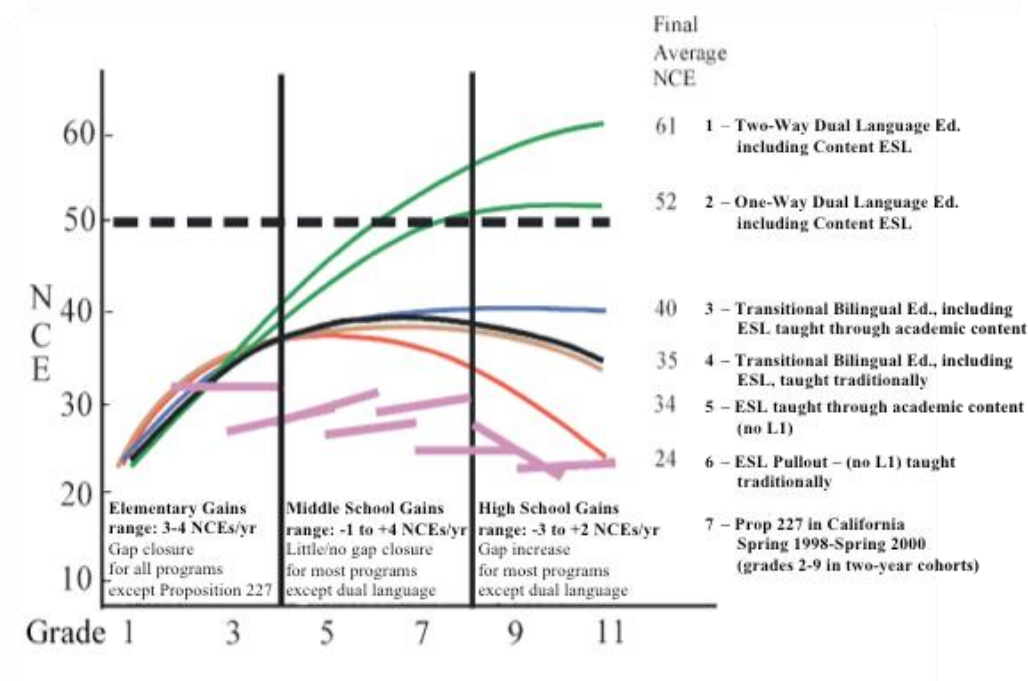
Program 3: Transitional BE, including ESL taught through academic content

Program 4: Transitional BE, including ESL, both taught traditionally

Program 5: ESL taught through academic content using current approaches with no L1 use

Program 6: ESL pullout - taught by pullout from mainstream classroom with no L1 use

Program 7: Proposition 227 in California (successive 2-year quasi-longitudinal cohorts)



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*Figure 4.* English Learners' Long-Term Achievement in Normal Curve Equivalents (NCEs) on Standardized Tests in English Reading Compared across Seven Program Models

In the graph the researchers represent the outcomes that ELLs have had with respect to achievement in English when followed over time based on the type of English Learner program in which they are enrolled. The dotted line at the 50<sup>th</sup> Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE) represents the average performance of native English speakers across the United States on the English reading test at each grade level. The two curved green lines that surpass the dotted line demonstrate that ELLs in both one-way and two-way Dual Language programs not only outperform ELLs in other English Learner programs, but also their native English-speaking peers. Dual Language programs are the only programs that have been shown to close the achievement gap at approximately sixth through eighth grades and demonstrate that these students continue to grow and surpass their native English-speaking peers' English reading achievement. It is important to note that the effects of Dual Language programs are not visible in the early elementary grades as ELLs in all programs, except for those in programs that came as a result of proposition 227 in California, appear to be achieving at the same level; it is not until the middle grades that the positive effect that a Dual Language program has on achievement in reading in English becomes apparent (Thomas & Collier, 2012).

Another researcher in the field of Dual Language, Lindholm-Leary, has noted that almost all evaluations of bilingually educated students at the end of elementary and high school, especially those who participated in late-exit and two-way (or Dual Language) programs “were at least comparable to, and usually higher than, their comparison peers” (as cited in Hamayan & Freeman, 2006, p. 84). Lindholm-Leary concludes “the best models for ELL students are those that are specially designed to provide students with

sustained and consistent instruction through first language (at least through sixth grade), with the goals of full oral and literate bilingual proficiencies” (p. 85).

In addition to the academic benefits that ELLs in Dual Language programs receive under this program model, Freeman, Freeman and Mercuri (2005) also note the social-emotional benefits these programs have for ELLs. Freeman et al. argue: “For English language learners, the positive view of their native language and culture demonstrated when other students are learning their language and valuing their culture is especially important” (p. 11). Keeping this benefit in mind is especially important when considering that ELLs have been marginalized in schools, most notably in areas of this country that have called for English only programs.

### **Primary Literacy Instruction**

Researchers and practitioners in the field of literacy have seen balanced literacy instruction as an approach to improve literacy outcomes for students. Fountas and Pinnell in 1996 published a resource for educators on guided reading that has served as a foundation for many schools incorporating guided reading into their literacy block. Fountas and Pinnell note, “a balanced literacy program regularly provides several kinds of reading and writing...It is through guided reading, however, that teachers can show children how to read and can support children as they read” (p.1). The authors provide six reasons how guided reading can lead to independent reading and how guided reading is the heart of a balanced literacy program:

- It gives children the opportunity to develop as individual readers while participating in a socially supported activity.



- It gives teachers the opportunity to observe individuals as they process new texts.
- It gives individual readers the opportunity to develop reading strategies so that they can read increasing difficult texts independently.
- It gives children enjoyable, successful experiences in reading for meaning.
- It develops the abilities needed for independent reading.
- It helps children learn how to introduce text to themselves. (pp. 1-2)

Similarly, Cooper in 1997 described a balanced literary program as having three interrelated components: 1) motivation; 2) instruction in reading and writing; and 3) independent reading and writing. Within instruction in reading and writing, Cooper describes guided reading as follows:

The teacher carefully guides, directs, or coaches students through the silent reading of a piece of literature by asking them a question, giving prompts, or helping them formulate a question that they then try to answer as they read the designated section of a text. (p. 36)

Mestala et al. (1997) identified nine characteristics and instructional practices often reported by effective primary-level literacy teachers as components of balanced literacy instruction. These characteristics and instructional practices are summarized as follows: 1) a literate classroom environment; 2) explicit teaching; 3) teaching of reading, both in context of other reading and writing activities and in isolation; 4) various types of reading; 5) various types of materials read; 6) teaching of writing; 7) explicitness/ extensiveness of instruction varying as a function of reader ability; 8) making literacy and

literacy instruction motivating; and 9) accountability. The authors further report they found eight characteristics of highly effective first grade literacy teachers: instructional balance; instructional density; extensive use of scaffolding; encouragement of self-regulation; thorough integration of reading and writing activities; masterful classroom management; high expectations for all students; and awareness of purpose. Many of these characteristics are evident in classrooms that include guided reading as part of a balanced literacy program.

In another study on balanced literacy instruction, the researchers (Pressley et al., 2002) have identified what they coin as “well validated components of balanced elementary literacy instruction” (p. 7). These researchers also include nine components as part of a an effective balanced literacy approach to teaching: 1) phonemic awareness and the alphabetic principle; 2) word recognition instruction; 3) vocabulary teaching; 4) comprehension strategies; 5) self-monitoring; 6) extensive reading; 7) teaching students to relate prior knowledge while they read; 8) process writing instruction; and 9) motivating reading and writing. In contrast to previous studies, Pressley et al. include part-to-whole approaches, such as those that emphasize the phonemic awareness, the alphabetic principle, and word recognition instruction, as components of a balanced literacy program.

Similarly, Rog (2003) remarks how teachers attempt to balance a wide range of instructional strategies and notes that a balanced literacy program “requires opportunities for reading and writing *to* [sic] students, reading and writing *with* [sic] students, and reading and writing *by* [sic] students” (p. 8). While the author proposes that a balanced

program include reading workshop, writing workshop, and word study, she concludes that guided reading is only one component of a total balanced literacy program, “but it is a very important one” (p. 8).

More recently, Pinnell and Fountas (2011) published a resource, *The Continuum*, as a tool to support teachers and administrators in implementing best practices in literacy instruction. The authors note that they made changes to their prior publication based on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) framework and as a response to current research and assessments given in schools. In *The Continuum*, the authors provide teachers guidance on the delivery of literacy instruction by grade level, as appropriate, in several areas and in doing so, also support the notion of a balanced literacy program. The areas included in this resource are as follows: 1) interactive read-aloud and literature discussion; 2) shared and performance reading; 3) writing about reading; 4) writing; 5) oral, visual, and technological communication; 6) phonics, spelling, and word study; and 7) guided reading.

In focusing on guided reading the same authors (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012) in a journal note, “guided reading has shifted the lens in the teaching of reading to focus a deeper understanding of how readers build effective processing systems over time” (p. 268) and describe how the structure of a guided reading lesson leads to improving students’ comprehension abilities. The authors describe the structure of a guided reading lesson as containing the following seven components: 1) selection of a text at the group’s (homogenous student grouping) instructional level; 2) introduction to the text during which the teacher does some scaffolding but also allows for some problem-solving for

the reader; 3) reading the text during which the teacher may interact with students strategically; 4) discussion of the text at which point the teacher guides the discussion to improve students' comprehension; 5) teaching points during which the teacher makes explicit teaching points; 6) word work during which the teacher provides explicit teaching to help students with word attack strategies; and 7) extending understanding which is an optional component that helps extend students' understanding through writing and/or drawing.

### **Primary Literacy Instruction within a Dual Language Context**

In writing about literacy instruction in Spanish, Escamilla (1999) notes how “balanced literacy instruction is thought to combine the most powerful elements of the other major approaches to literacy instruction” (p. 129). While the author generally agrees with this assertion, she goes on to ask what would need to be changed or adapted if teachers were to implement a balanced literacy program in Spanish. She concludes that a balanced literacy program cannot be implemented in the same way because of a fundamental difference in the structures of the Spanish and English languages. The main difference being that in Spanish, “the basic building block of reading is the syllable, in contrast to the letter or phoneme in English” (p. 130). Furthermore, other researchers (Beeman & Urow, 2013; Culatta et al., 2006; Escamilla et al., 2014) have noted that teachers in the field of Dual Language Education must pay particular attention to differences in teaching foundational skills in Spanish as compared to English and consider the internal structure of the language when utilizing strategies that emphasize part to whole instruction.

In a study by Culatta et al. (2006) the authors described a quasi-experimental crossover design that included an early literacy program based on integrating explicit instruction into a variety of meaningful and engaging contexts to teach phonological awareness and early reading skills to both English- and Spanish-speaking children enrolled in a Dual Language Spanish-English kindergarten classroom. In the study over a twelve week period of time small groups of children in two Dual Language classrooms received 55 minutes of additional large and small group instruction weekly by targeting specific skills, using hands-on activities, and accompanying it with explicit instruction in both Spanish and English. This intervention occurred in conjunction with the balanced literacy approach that the classroom teachers already employed. The results revealed that the instructional program was effective in enhancing some of the literacy skills measured in Spanish- and English-speaking children as they related to the skills targeted. This helped to support the authors' claim that "phonological awareness is also important in dual-language and second-language learning" and that Spanish-speaking ELLs "with strong phonological awareness generally perform successfully as readers and spellers" (p. 68). Additionally, it is important to note that the authors of this study stated, "teachers should be aware of similarities and differences between English and Spanish phonological systems and in the development of phonological awareness" (p. 68).

Vaughn et al. (2006) describe a quantitative study in which researchers conducted a Spanish intervention program at three sites in Texas where first grade Spanish-speaking ELLs, who based on reading instruments, were reading below grade level in Spanish, although the majority of their literacy instruction was in Spanish. Although the sites

selected for the study employed a transitional bilingual education model and not a Dual Language model, the context of this study closely resembles that of the researcher's school in many other aspects such as with respect to student demographics and the focus on Spanish literacy development. The authors reported that the treatment group in the study "performed significantly higher than the comparison students on critical outcome measures in Spanish, including phonemic awareness, word attack, word reading, reading comprehension, fluency, and overall language ability in Spanish" (p. 68). Furthermore, the authors explained the effect by stating that although Spanish orthography is more transparent than English and students learn to decode it easily with explicit instruction, their intervention's incorporation of oral language and vocabulary instruction in addition to the decoding, fluency and comprehension strategy instruction helped to explain the growth they observed in these students (Vaughn et al., 2006). It is also interesting to note that the schools selected for the study, relatively high performing schools, used the *Estrellita* (Myer, 1990) program to supplement their reading basal series. The author of this program asserts that the program is effective because it is "built upon the linguistic backbone of the Spanish language" (Myer, 2010). The author notes the following features of the *Estrellita* program are in contrast to English phonics programs because they are based on upon the structure of the Spanish language: 1) phonemic awareness is taught concurrently with reading and writing; 2) Spanish has a direct sound to symbol correspondence; 3) vowels are taught before consonants; 4) letter names are taught after students learn initial sounds; 5) students are taught the five vowel sounds; 6) the syllabic unit is the key phonological structure; 7) students begin learning two and three-syllable

words in beginning reading instruction; 8) words are sounded out by syllables (Myer, 2010).

Gutierrez et al. (2010) present a response to the National Early Literacy Panel's (NELP) report that did not specifically focus on ELLs when the panel gave their recommendations. The authors are concerned with the report's overemphasis of decoding skills and the minimizing of the role of oral language in ELLs' literacy development. Instead, the authors "advocate studies that push for more nuanced understandings of DLLs [Dual Language Learners], studies that capture the cognitive and sociocultural complexities of becoming biliterate, and policies that promote more robust language and literacy learning, rather than seeking silver-bullet solutions" (p. 338). This claim highlights that a gap exists in this area of research and provides a foundation for the researcher to implement a self-study that provides students with a quality balanced literacy program leading to their attaining grade level equivalence in Spanish in the primary grades in order to become fully bilingual and biliterate.

Like Gutierrez et al. (2010), Freeman and Freeman (2005) also assert that "little research has been carried out in Dual Language programs to determine which approach to reading instruction best supports the development of high levels of literacy in two languages" (p. 131). However the authors do highlight what they consider successful a Dual Language program in Tucson, AZ and note that the following features were present in the balanced literacy program: read-alouds; shared reading; guided reading; and independent reading. They also state that the word recognition model of reading "fits best when initial literacy instruction is provided in a student's first language" (p. 146).

This supports the use of the *Estrellita* (Myer, 1990) with Spanish-speaking ELLs within a balanced literacy approach to teaching in a dual language program.

Most recently, in 2012, Pinnell and Fountas published a Spanish adaption of the *Continuum* (2011) as a resource for teachers and administrators that have students in programs in which Spanish literacy instruction occurs called the *Continuo* (2012). In 2014, these same authors published a version of the *Continuo* completely in the Spanish language (Pinnell & Fountas, 2014). In both versions, the authors note in sections dealing with phonics, word study, and writing, the differences that are unique to the Spanish language based on structure of the language while maintaining how other components such as developing students' comprehension strategies remain unchanged.

### **Bilingual Teacher Training**

Escamilla (1999) asserted over a decade ago that few universities offered specific course work in methods of teaching reading in Spanish and that the teachers have been taught to apply best-practice strategies for teaching literacy in English to Spanish literacy instruction. Gonzalez and Darling-Hammond (2000) speak to several principles of professional development for teachers of ELLs and highlight the importance that school learning communities can have in connecting theory and practice, especially as it relates to building on students' language, culture, and experiences in creating learning opportunities for students. More recently, Kibler and Roman (2013) point out the importance of providing practicing teachers of ELLs professional development and that this is an understudied area of teacher education (as cited in Borko, 2004). In addition, Cadiero-Kaplan and Rodriguez (2008) also make note of the fact that practicing teachers



of ELLs need ongoing professional development in order to appropriately respond to the needs of ELLs. In their study the authors provide recommendations on the credentialing of bilingual teachers that came as a result of the bilingual workgroup. These recommendations serve to ensure that bilingual teacher preparation programs include the development of teachers' knowledge, skills, and abilities. Three of the six recommendations are pertinent to this study and are as follows: current research and best practices related to pedagogy, first and second language development, linguistics, and biliteracy; bilingual program models, (e.g., transitional, two-way/Dual Language immersion, foreign language, maintenance, etc.); and the social, economic, and cultural contexts of the target community.

In summation, ensuring the success of Spanish bilingual teachers requires the redesign of pre-service programs that prepare teachers to teach Spanish foundational reading skills with strategies that are appropriate to the structure of the Spanish language instead of having them apply what they learned in teaching reading in English to teaching reading in Spanish to Spanish-speaking ELLs. Additionally, school-based administrators and leadership teams need to provide job-embedded learning opportunities on current best practices in the instruction of Spanish-speaking ELLs to bilingual teachers on a regular basis to compensate for this lack training in the teaching of Spanish foundational skills and to help teachers implement the latest strategies in a manner that is appropriate to the structure of the Spanish language.

### **Conceptual Framework: Leading Change**

Fullan (2006) includes capacity building as one out of eight strategies to turn around a system. Within this strategy and related to the present action research study are three areas within the scope of the researcher's role as principal that can have an effect on leading instructional improvement at the school level: ongoing professional development; identifying and sharing effective practices in relation to both content and strategy; and developing resource materials for targeted issues, in this case Spanish literacy development for Spanish-speaking ELLs;

Fullan (2010) also highlights the role that incentives play within the field of teaching to bring about change at the school level and how staff can accomplish impressive results in situations of high moral value. Incentives that are in the researcher's purview include the following: positive climate; strong induction; extensive professional learning; opportunity to work with and learn from others (job embedded and otherwise); supportive, and even assertive, leadership about the agenda; getting helpful feedback; and realizable moral purpose (p. 89).

Elmore (2000) also has written about leadership practices that bring about change. In the area of distributed leadership as it relates to capacity building, he notes, the job of administrative leaders is primarily about enhancing skills and knowledge of people in the organization, creating a common culture of expectations around the use of those skills and knowledge, holding the various pieces of the organization together in a productive relationship with each other,

and holding individual accountable for their contributions to the collective results.

(p. 15)

In addition, Israel and Kasper (2004) also note the importance of ensuring that the necessary linkages are established across an organization in order to build capacity and establish the will among stakeholders through their inclusion in the process.

In another journal, Elmore (2002) argues, “Professional development is at the center of the practice of improvement. It is the process by which we organize the development and use of new knowledge in the service of improvement” (p. 32). To achieve this the author notes four domains in the practice of large-scale improvement: 1) students’ knowledge and skill and the understanding of what students need to know and be able to do under certain conditions; 2) educators’ knowledge and skill and the understanding of what they need to know and do to help students succeed under certain conditions; 3) incentives and the rewards and penalties that encourage large-scale improvement and the notion of who receives these incentives and who decides using what criteria; 4) resources and capacity and the materials supports needed to lead large-scale improvements.

Finally with respect to leadership, the researcher has noted the alignment of Elmore et al.’s (2014) IC framework with the proposed leadership actions of the researcher as principal. The researcher sees this as an appropriate framework for such analysis as there appears to be strong alignment between job-embedded professional cycles of learning and the four principles that move from: “1) leadership behaviors, to; 2) whole-school and team organizational processes for collaboration, to; 3) individual and

collective efficacy beliefs of teachers, an ultimately, to; 4) improved student achievement” (p. 6). Elmore et al. also argue that in order for a school leader to enact these four principles that promote both excellence and equity in student learning, five conditions must be present. These conditions include:

- 1) leadership that is distributed and focused on instruction; 2) coherence in the instructional program; 3) ongoing, embedded professional development; 4) professional learning communities anchored in data on instruction and student learning; and 5) teachers’ confidence in and responsibility for their efforts to obtain desired student outcomes. (p. 3)

In addition, these principles also align well with the previously mentioned aspects of successful capacity building in Fullan’s and Elmore’s prior body of work cited above.

### **School Leader in Dual Language Education**

For school leaders in a Dual Language Education setting, the *Guiding Principles for Dual Language Education* (Howard, Lindholm-Leary, Rogers, Olague, Medina, Kennedy, Sugarman & Christian 2018) serves as a resource to analyze a school’s Dual Language program and as a framework to which programmatic improvements can be aligned. The resource provides guidance aligned to seven strands and two of which, Staff Quality and Professional Development (strand 5) and Support and Resources (strand 7), are most salient to this study’s context. The authors call attention to the role that school leaders play in leading professional development by noting that, “It is the role of onsite leadership to make professional development manageable and to support both new and experienced teachers. This must be done with a dual language education focus” (p. 94).

With respect to support and resources, the authors note how a principal or leadership team is critical in the area of professional development in that “they endeavor to provide appropriate professional development for teachers; they provide time for teachers to plan, develop materials and assessments...” (p. 123).

Two leaders in the field of Dual Language Education, Collier and Thomas (2014) in their publication in which administrators share their experiences in leading schools or districts with Dual Language Education programs conclude that the greatest challenge for dual language administrators is in the U.S. is “recruiting and retaining highly qualified bilingual staff” (p. 62). As a response to this the authors recommend that school districts “take major responsibility for ongoing professional development” (p. 63) and do this by partnering with local universities and organizations that provide professional development in Dual Language Education by experts in the field. Soltero (2016) highlights the importance of principals participating with their teachers in professional development activities. The author notes, “[principals’] participation in dual language professional development ensures that everyone receives the same information so that there is common ground and shared knowledge for decision making” (p. 114).

### **Summary**

While the body of research in the field of Spanish literacy development in the context of Dual Language Education is not extensive, best practices in literacy development converge on a balanced literacy approach to teaching literacy. As the studies underscore what components should remain unchanged in the context of a balanced Spanish literacy program, it is clear what aspects must be modified as response

to the structure of the Spanish language in contrast to that of the English language. To ensure that Spanish-speaking ELLs in Dual Language programs are successful, it is the school leader's responsibility to be cognizant of these aspects and enact a job-embedded professional development plan that provides support to teachers as they improve their practice towards the goal of higher student achievement in the area of first language literacy that will later translate into students attaining high levels of bilingual and biliterate competence in Spanish and English. Such is the goal of Dual Language programs and perhaps should be the goal of all programs serving ELLs.

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### **Introduction**

How does a well-established Dual Language program in an urban neighborhood school improve its Spanish literacy outcomes for its ELLs at the primary level in order to ensure student success? In this study I enacted a professional development plan as a self-study within an action research design to address two important components of Spanish literacy development within a balanced literacy approach. In my role as principal of Lower West Side Elementary School, I led this professional development plan in the hopes of improving Spanish primary literacy outcomes for ELLs. In the 2014-2015 school year, 90% of the primary students classified as Spanish-speaking ELLs, who received the majority of their literacy instruction in Spanish, met or exceeded reading level expectations in Kindergarten, first and second grades at the following rates respectively using the *Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System* (BAS) in Spanish (Heineman, 2015), known as the *Sistema de evaluación de la lectura*: 24%, 34% and 37%. Table 4 illustrates these data. Table 5 illustrates the beginning of the year benchmark data for the 2015-16 that I used to reflect on the impact of this study on student achievement and growth in reading.

Table 4

*2014-15 Spanish Primary Literacy Outcomes at the End of Year (EOY) on the Benchmark Assessment System (BAS)*

<b>Grade Level</b>	<b>% at/above on BAS EOY</b>
K	24
1 <sup>st</sup>	34
2 <sup>nd</sup>	37

Table 5

*2015-16 Spanish Primary Literacy Beginning of Year (BOY) Benchmark Data on the Benchmark Assessment System (BAS)*

<b>Grade Level (N)</b>	<b>% at/above on BAS BOY</b>
K (27)	N/A
1 <sup>st</sup> (24)	21
2 <sup>nd</sup> (27)	37

In response to these outcomes, I led a professional learning cycle on Spanish phonics development within the first quarter of the 2015-16 academic year. I addressed a second component, Spanish guided reading during the second and third quarters. I addressed Spanish phonics development first since teachers at the school, as a general rule, did not employ an explicit and systematic approach to teaching Spanish phonics. Several studies (Beeman & Urow, 2013; Escamilla, 1999; Escamilla et al., 2014) have noted that teachers in the field of Dual Language Education must pay particular attention



to differences in teaching foundational skills in Spanish as compared to English, and consider the internal structure of the language when utilizing strategies that emphasize part to whole instruction. In Spanish the syllable is the building block of reading, while in English it is the letter or phoneme. To support teachers with the incorporation of this approach, I provided teachers with a Spanish phonics program, *Estrellita Accelerated Beginning Spanish Reading* program (Myers, 1990), and professional learning activities to help them be successful in implementing it. The second professional learning cycle focused on building upon teachers' strengths in providing guided reading instruction, an area in which teachers in 2012 previously had had professional development. To support teachers in guided reading I developed professional learning activities during the second quarter of the 2015-16 academic year while using Pinnell and Fountas' (2014) guide for teachers implementing guided reading in Spanish, *Continuo*. The original plan did not include receiving additional support from outside the school. However, in the second quarter, the network office announced that they would provide professional development in Spanish guided reading to the primary teachers throughout the end of the second quarter and into third quarter of the school year. The network office is like a sub-district office that supported this school and more than 20 other schools directly with professional development and other instructional improvement efforts throughout the year. In order to capitalize on this outside support, I extended the cycle to until the end of the third quarter.

In designing the professional development activities to increase teachers' expertise in explicit Spanish phonics instruction while also building upon their strengths

in providing guided reading instruction in Spanish, I as the principal and instructional leader who is bilingual in English and Spanish, kept in mind the Internal Coherence (IC) Framework from Elmore et al. (2014) as a way to understand and reflect on my leadership actions in bringing about improvement in both instructional practice and student outcomes. For this study I organized the learning experiences for the teachers as cycles of professional learning. Elmore et al. describe how the IC brings together research from various sources that “propose a pathway from 1) leadership behaviors, to 2) whole-school and team organizational processes for collaboration, to 3) the individual and collective efficacy beliefs of teachers, and, ultimately, to 4) to improved student achievement” (p. 6). I used these principles, along with the organizational conditions that the authors argue must be present to improve outcomes for students to analyze my leadership practices as principal. Elmore et al. cite these as the conditions that form the basis of the Instructional Coherence (IC) framework: 1) leadership that is distributed and focused on instruction; 2) coherence in the instructional program; 3) ongoing, embedded professional development; 4) professional learning communities anchored in data on instruction and student learning; 5) and teachers’ confidence in and responsibility for their efforts to obtain desired student outcomes (p. 3).

### **Research Questions**

The research questions that this self-study will aim to answer are:

1. What has been my experience with providing teachers professional development on Spanish literacy development at the primary grades?
  - a. What am I learning from my teachers?

- b. What am I learning from the students?
- 2. How has my leadership, as understood using Elmore's instructional coherence framework (2014), changed over the course of the year in leading professional development on Spanish literacy development at the primary level?

### **Research Design and Methodology**

This self-study was exploratory in nature as it addressed the research questions, which challenged me to reflect on my actions and my teachers' responses to such actions. Lagemann and Shulman (1999) have noted the increase in the use of self-study in many fields, especially among principals and teachers and that the "keeping of journals in written or video formats, the writing of autobiographies, and the presentation of research in other narrative forms is now more and more commonplace" (p. xvi). In addition, by analyzing of end of year ELLs' Spanish literacy results in both growth and attainment and reflecting on these results my hope is that they would provide me insight into which strategies might have been most effective in supporting teachers of Spanish-speaking ELLs to improve Spanish literacy outcomes in Dual Language programs. For Pine (2008) notes that engaging in self-study is a form of action research that "focuses inwardly on teacher education and, in some instances, professional development" (p. 58).

As a principal and leader of teacher professional development at the school, my goal was to employ this research method to help me improve my practice as I reflected on my actions. As I designed the study, I kept in mind LaBoskey's (2004) five elements of self-study: it is self-initiated and focused; it is improvement aimed; it is interactive;

includes multiple mainly qualitative methods; and it defines validity as a process based on trustworthiness.

Throughout both of the professional learning cycles, I provided professional development exit slips after professional development activities to gauge the teachers' level of knowledge gained, understand how they planned to use this knowledge and identify what they believed were the next steps to support the initiatives. I used the content from these exit slips, notes taken at professional development activities, and also other occurrences pertinent to the professional learning cycles, such as my response to unexpected staffing issues, to make written reflections about my leadership actions. Appendix A illustrates the exit slips that I sent electronically after professional development activities during the Spanish phonics cycle of learning. Appendix B illustrates the Spanish guided reading instruction professional development exit slips that I sent electronically after activities to build professional capacity during that cycle of learning.

I also analyzed grade level meeting agendas and minutes focused on reading and reading comprehension which occurred once a month during both the Spanish phonics and guided reading cycles. Appendix C includes the teacher team meeting agenda and minutes template. In addition, I, along with the Dual Language Coordinator (DLC) collected data using classroom observation checklists at the start and end of the two cycles. Appendices D and E include the observation checklists for Spanish phonics and guided reading instruction respectively.

I used students' beginning, middle, and end of year Fountas and Pinnell (Heineman, 2015) Benchmark Assessment System (BAS) instructional level expectations data to monitor Spanish literacy development in the school's three primary classrooms. I then analyzed BAS data to track both student growth and grade level attainment in Spanish literacy. Appendix F illustrates the Fountas and Pinnell instructional level expectations for reading chart that I used to assess students' reading attainment and growth.

The first cycle of the study consisted of the first activity of implementing one eight week cycle of learning focused on developing students' Spanish language phonics skills using the *Estrellita* (1990) program at the primary cycle (kindergarten through second grade) while aligning professional learning activities to aspects of Elmore et al.'s (2014) four principles that the authors argue guide school leaders in the "creation of the structures and conditions for adult learning, and to build teachers' collective confidence and resolve in their pursuit of improvements to teaching and learning" (p. 7). The school's instructional leadership team (ILT) has used this professional development process to map out professional development learning activities for teachers for several years now. Table 6 illustrates the first activity focused on Spanish phonics instruction.

Table 6

*Cycle of Learning #1 on Spanish Phonics Development*

2015-16 Cycle of Learning #1 for primary teachers							
School:	Begin Date:				End Date:		
Yearlong Strategic Lever: 3 - Engage students in a balanced, rigorous literacy program informed by data gathered from performance tasks and formative assessment.					Powerful Practice: Incorporate daily Spanish phonics development during the balanced literacy block using the <i>Estrellita</i> program.		
Date	Input				Feedback Loops		
	Teacher Teams	ILT	PD Day	Prof. Rdg.	Learning walks	Peer visits	Data Work (LASW, PAs, formative, BAS, NWEA)
Week 1		ILT will finalize cycle and develop learning walk protocol for collecting data during learning walk.	Teachers who have not received the one-day <i>Estrellita</i> PD will receive it. Teacher will discuss professional reading on balanced literacy and begin planning their literacy block.	Teachers will read the CPS <i>K-2 Balanced Literacy Block</i> documents and reflect on their own literacy block.			1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> grade teachers will review prior year's data to form instructional groups on PD day.
Week 2	Grade level meeting focus: teachers share their literacy block structure, how it compares to the CPS recommendations and	.			ILT conducts a start of cycle learning walk to collect evidence on the powerful practice based on the classroom environment and what teachers and		

	decide how they will include the <i>Estrellita</i> program within phonics development				students are saying and doing		
Week 3		ILT will analyze results from ILT and present it, wonderings and next steps to staff at after school Flex day PD.	Flex Day PD: Teachers use results of learning walk to plan next steps.	Teachers will read chapter 9 of Beeman & Urow (2013) and determine which Spanish phonics components are present and which word walls they will incorporate into instruction.		DLC schedules peer visits to occur in weeks 4, 5 & 6 (if needed)	
Week 4						Peer observations with pre- and post-conferences within grade cycle teams using co-teaching model	
Week 5		ILT prepares Flex day PD presentation on Spanish phonics instruction within a balanced literacy approach		Teachers will view a PD from the <i>Estrellita</i> Teacher's Portal titled "K-1": Whole to Part to Whole to discuss how they will implement those components into their balanced literacy program.		Peer observations with pre- and post-conferences within grade cycle teams using co-teaching model	
Week 6			Flex day: ILT leads presentation			Peer observations with pre- and	

			on Spanish phonics instruction within a balanced literacy approach			post-conferences within grade cycle teams using co-teaching model	
Week 7	Grade level meeting focus: Teachers review data as noted in “data work” column				ILT conducts an end of cycle learning walk to collect evidence on the powerful practice based on the classroom environment and what teachers and students are saying and doing		Teachers analyze BOY benchmark data and <i>Estrellita</i> formative assessment data to inform instructional groupings, and progress monitoring frequency for students based on reading levels.
Week 8		ILT analyzes results of end of cycle learning walk and prepares report for staff with next steps and continued support.		Teachers read ILT report and share wonderings on the google doc.			
Safe Practice Period: Approximately 3 weeks after the initial training session, teachers will benefit from a time for safe practice where they cannot be observed for the powerful practice.			Goals	Teacher Implementation: By the end of the first cycle 100% of primary teachers will include Spanish phonics development in their literacy block.			
				Student performance: By the end of the first cycle, 33% of students who do not demonstrate Spanish decoding ability at the start of the cycle will demonstrate decoding ability at the end of cycle.			



During this first activity, the professional readings consisted of the primary teachers reviewing the *K-2 Recommended Balanced Literacy Block: 120 Minutes* and the *Literacy Block Glossary* provided by the Chicago Public Schools (2014) on which they reflected and used to compare to the current structure of their own balanced literacy block. Appendices G and H illustrate these two documents. In addition, I provided the teachers with two sample literacy block schedules provided by the Chicago Public Schools (2014) as models for creating their own schedules. Appendix I illustrates these sample schedules. As principal supported the teachers and provided them feedback during the creation of their schedules. During the teacher team meeting of the second week, I led a discussion around the teachers' reflections on the documents and how the *Estrellita* program (Myers 1990) fits into their balanced literacy block. For the second professional reading, teachers read chapter 9 of Beeman and Urow (2013) on word study and fluency to decide on the types of word walls they will incorporate into their teaching. The third professional reading involved the viewing of a professional development video available on the *Estrellita* Teacher's portal titled "K-1: Whole to Part to Whole" in order to discuss how to incorporate these components into their balanced literacy program (Myers, 2014).

The second eight week cycle of learning focused on refining teachers' guided reading practice while using Pinnell and Fountas' (2014) guide for teachers implementing guided reading in Spanish, *Continuo*. However, due to the network office providing professional development on Spanish guided reading, I extended the original eight week plan to run the length of the time that the primary teachers received this additional

support. During both cycles of learning, student reading level data was collected and analyzed with teachers during teacher team meetings in order to provide the teachers with current data on which to make adjustments to instruction. Table 7 illustrates the second activity focused on Spanish guided reading.

Table 7

*Cycle of Learning #2 on Spanish Guided Reading*

2015-16 Cycle of Learning #2 for primary and intermediate teachers							
School:	Begin Date:				End Date:	1	
Yearlong Strategic Lever: 3 - Engage students in a balanced, rigorous literacy program informed by data gathered from performance tasks and formative assessment.					Powerful Practice: Implement guided reading instruction that helps develop students' comprehension skills.		
Date	Input				Feedback Loops		
	Teacher Teams	ILT	PD Day	Prof. Rdg.	Learning walks	Peer visits	Data Work (LASW, PAs, formative, BAS, NWEA)
Week 1		ILT will finalize cycle to present to staff on PD day and develop learning walk protocol for collecting data during learning walk.	The DLC will lead a guided reading professional development. Teacher will use their recently acquired BOY data to group students and select materials to implement guided reading.	Teachers will read the section in the Pinnell & Fountas (2014) <i>Continuo</i> book appropriate for their grade level as part of the full day PD.			Teachers analyze BOY benchmark data and <i>Estrellita</i> formative assessment data to inform instructional groupings, and progress monitoring frequency for students based on reading levels.
Week 2	Grade level meeting focus:				ILT conducts a start of cycle		

	teachers use results of start of cycle learning walk and resources from the Flex day PD to design their guided reading program				learning walk to collect evidence on the powerful practice based on the classroom environment and what teachers and students are saying and doing		
Week 3		ILT will propose a plan on how often progress monitoring should occur for students not at grade level and discuss support the administration can provide teachers to complete this task regularly.	Flex Day PD: Administration and ILT make clear the expectations around progress monitoring and the support teachers will receive.	Teachers will read on article on progress monitoring and using results to adjust instruction.		DLC schedules peer visits to occur in weeks 4, 5 & 6 (if needed)	
Week 4						Peer observations with pre- and post-conferences within grade cycle teams using co-teaching model	
Week 5		ILT prepares Flex day PD presentation on guided reading and the benefits of using progress monitoring data to		Teachers will view a PD video on Guided Reading in Spanish reflect on their own practice.		Peer observations with pre- and post-conferences within grade cycle teams using co-teaching model	

		inform instruction					
Week 6			Flex day: DLC leads a follow up PD on guided reading using the Pinnell & Fountas <i>Continuo</i> book.			Peer observations with pre- and post-conferences within grade cycle teams using co-teaching model	
Week 7	Grade level meeting focus: Teachers review data as noted in “data work” column				ILT conducts an end of cycle learning walk to collect evidence on the powerful practice based on the classroom environment and what teachers and students are saying and doing		Teachers use <i>Estrellita</i> formative assessment data and progress monitoring data to inform instructional groupings and make adjustments to improve student outcomes
Week 8		ILT analyzes results of end of cycle learning walk and prepares report for staff with next steps and continued support.		Teachers read ILT report and share wonderings on the google doc.			
Safe Practice Period: Approximately 3 weeks after the initial training session, teachers will benefit from a time for safe practice where they cannot be observed for the powerful practice.			Goals	Teacher Implementation: By the end of the second cycle 100% of primary and intermediate teachers will incorporate practices learned at PD sessions in their guided reading practice.			
				Student performance: By the end of the second cycle, 33% of students who are significantly below grade level at the start of the cycle will increase at least one reading level.			

During the second cycle of professional learning activity, the professional readings consisted of sections in the Pinnell and Fountas *Continuo* (2014) book pertinent to guided reading during teacher team meetings and/or professional development sessions. As noted, I wrote reflections in my written journal after the activities to reflect on my leadership actions.

The template the ILT used to design the cycles of learning begins by defining the start and end dates of the cycle. It also included to which of the school's yearlong strategic levers the cycle was aligned as well as a definition of the powerful practice. Next, the template is divided into two general categories, "input," which describes the types of activities designed to give teachers opportunity to grow through experience in which they participate in a form of more traditional, but in this context, job-embedded professional development. The second general category is "feedback loops" during which they received feedback in the form of student data or peer feedback on which to reflect and grow professionally and/or adjust instruction and teaching practices. Within the "input" category, "teacher teams" refers to the weekly grade level or team meetings that occurred once a week during the principal-directed teacher preparation period. At the school teams were comprised as follows: the primary team consisted of one kindergarten, one first grade, one second grade and one primary special education teacher; the third grade team had two third grade teachers; the fourth grade team had two fourth grade teachers; the fifth grade team has two fifth grade teachers and an intermediate grades special education teacher; and the middle school team consists of one sixth grade, one seventh grade, one eighth grade, and two special education teachers.

Generally, the Dual Language Coordinator (DLC), the assistant principal, and I as principal attend these meetings most of the time; at least one of these leaders was there for all the meetings if the three were not able to attend every meeting that week. Another aspect to note of the teacher team meetings, was that they cycled through four topics every month: reading/literacy, math, Dual Language, and writing process. It is for that reason that the “teacher team” column is not filled in for every month. The next element describes the activities of the ILT, comprised of the principal, assistant principal, DLC and a representative from the primary, intermediate, middle school, and “specials” teachers, who met approximately biweekly after school for about an hour. The following element “PD day” refers to professional development that occurred either on a full professional development day or on one of the twelve after school one-hour Flex Day PDs that the staff had voted on having approximately every three weeks throughout the year. As mentioned previously, after each professional development activity that occurred during any of the above-mentioned scenarios, I sent the participants a Google form to complete as an exit slip to plan next steps. The final section in that category describes the type of professional readings, or even viewing of videos that occurred either during a professional development session, teacher team meetings, or on the teacher’s own time.

The “feedback loops” category indicates the two times that the learning walks occurred; one as a pre-cycle and the second as a post-cycle opportunity to collect data and quantify improvements in teacher implementation of the powerful practice over the course of the cycle. During peer visits, teachers elected to have two teachers co-teach a

lesson using the powerful practice, while a third teacher observed them to provide them feedback. It is important to note that administrators did not participate in peer visits in order to ensure that teachers felt like they had a safe environment in which to try out the powerful practice. Finally, the “data work” column in that category referred to the times throughout the cycle when teachers reviewed summative, formative, benchmark, or progress monitoring data to inform their instruction. At the bottom of the cycle, there is an important disclaimer about the safe practice period in addition to both teacher implementation and student performance goals. Please note that I set the goals for the purpose of this study when normally those goals would be set and agreed upon by the ILT. This is important because Elmore et al. (2014) have identified that teachers’ involvement in instructional decisions and their role in working collectively to plan professional development activities are components of whole-school processes for instructional improvement.

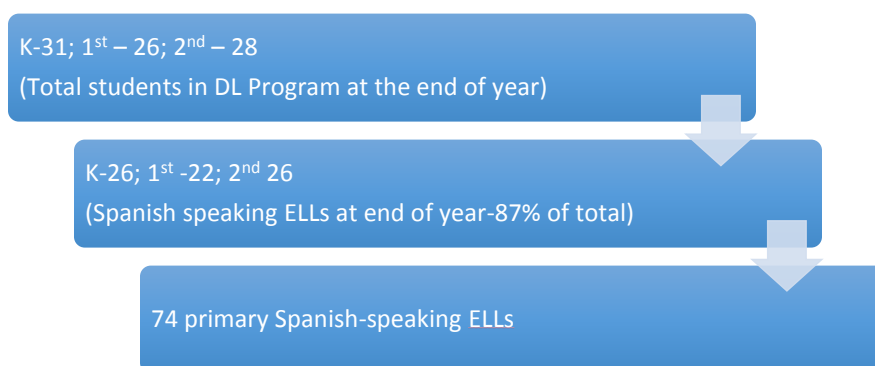
### **Setting**

The study took place at Lower West Side Elementary School (this is a pseudonym). During the year of the study, 2015-16, there were 77 Spanish-speaking ELL primary students in kindergarten, first and second grade at the start of the year and 74 at the end of the school. In the 2014-15 school year, of the 31 kindergarten students, 27 first grade students, and 30 second grade students 26, 22, and 28 were ELLs respectively. These 76 ELLs represented 86% of the total number of primary students. Because Spanish-speaking ELLs represented the vast majority of the students at the primary grades within the school’s Dual Language program in which 70 to 80% of

instruction was in Spanish yet only 33% of these students have met grade level expectations at the end of the year, this population appeared to not be well-served.

The breakdown of Spanish-ELLs in the primary grades in relation to the entire class who remained enrolled at end of the 2015-16 school year was as follows: of the 31 kindergarten students, 26 first grade students, and 28 second grade students 26, 22, and 26 were ELLs respectively. These 74 ELLs represented 87% of the total number of primary students. While the focus of this study involved only analyzing reading level results of the Spanish-speaking ELL population, this is not to say that the non-ELL population did not benefit from a balanced literacy approach. In addition, for the non-ELL population literacy instruction in Spanish was an enrichment experience that helped them as they develop their literacy skills in their primary language, English. Please note that both populations were given beginning of the year, middle of the year and end of the year BAS assessments along with progress monitoring as needed in their primary language in order for teachers to adjust instruction for both groups of students accordingly. Finally, both groups of students were assessed at both the beginning and end of year with the BAS assessment in their non-native language in order to track growth in that area as well. See Figure 5 for a graphic representation of the student context of the study.



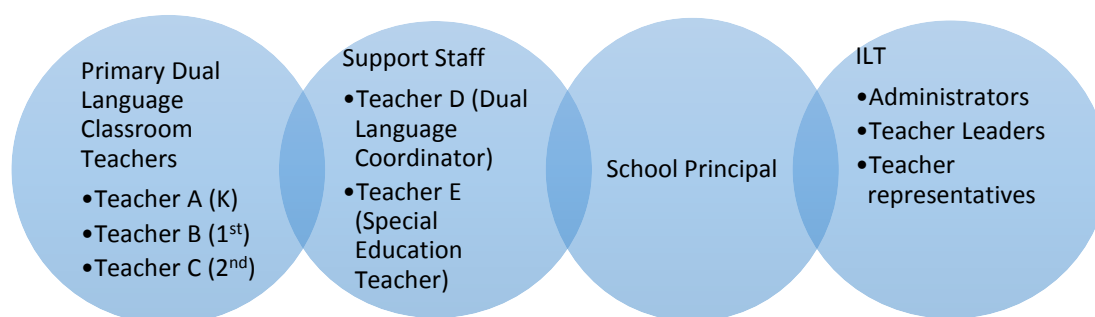


*Figure 5. Student Context of Study*

The context of educators involved in the study included the school's three primary grades Dual Language classroom teachers in kindergarten, first, and second grade, the primary special education teacher, the school's Dual Language Coordinator (DLC), and I as the school's principal were the stakeholders in this study. The ILT which consisted of one of the primary teachers, the DLC, the assistant principal, I as principal, and other teacher representatives of the various grade cycles and programs, also played a role as stakeholders as they led school improvement efforts through professional development and data analysis, although not all of them were focused on the areas of this study. See Figure 6 for a graphic representation of the staff involved in the context of the study.

Another aspect of the context relates to how Lower West Side Elementary School resides in the Chicago Public School's (CPS) network structure. CPS schools are grouped geographically into sub-districts referred to as networks. Lower West Side Elementary School was part of Network G (pseudonym) with 29 elementary and high schools in total. Network G had the highest percentage of ELLs at 41.9% and the highest percentage of Latino student at 94.7%. In Network G only Lower West Side Elementary

School and another elementary school implemented dual language programs; all the other schools provided bilingual education services to ELLs through transitional bilingual education. The networks were led by Network Chief Officers, whose responsibilities included evaluating principals, providing professional development to school leaders and teachers, and providing guidance on school budgeting and school improvement planning matters.



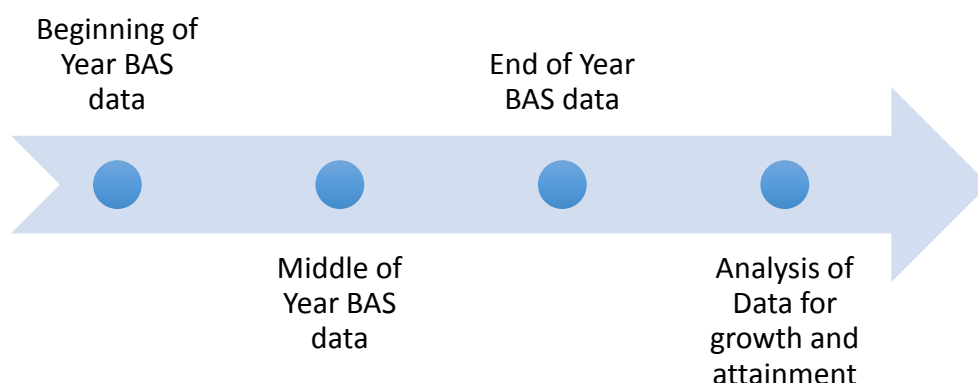
*Figure 6. Staff Context of Study*

### **Procedures for Data Collection**

Throughout each of the cycles of professional learning, I provided professional development exit slips after professional development activities to gauge the teachers' level of knowledge gained, how they would use this knowledge and what they believed were the next steps to support the initiatives. In addition, I conducted a beginning of cycle learning walk using an observation checklist with the DLC to collect data at the start of the walk. The professional development exit slips were administered using a Google forms document (see Appendices A & B). Additionally, I created the Spanish phonics observation checklist based on an article by Escamilla (1999) and the Spanish

guided reading observation checklist on an online resource from the *Busy Teacher Café* (2015) (see Appendices D & E). During the learning walks the DLC and I collected evidence from the classroom environment on the checklist at the start and end of the learning cycles on Spanish phonics in the first quarter and Spanish guided reading in the third quarter. In addition, I collected teacher team meeting agendas and minutes on the two areas of focus, Spanish phonics and Spanish guided reading, during the respective cycles of learning (see Appendix C). Finally, I summarized these data and reflected on their significance with respect to my leadership actions in a written journal that I maintained throughout the study.

With respect to student data, I reviewed Spanish reading level data at the beginning of year, middle of the year, and end of the year using the *Fountas and Pinnell* (Heinemann, 2015) Benchmark Assessment System (BAS). Teachers entered these data into a Google sheets document shared amongst the primary team of teachers, the DLC, the assistant principal and me. The administration of this assessment during the benchmark periods was part of the school's regular cycle of assessing student growth in reading. Figure 7 represents this timeline.



*Figure 7. Data Collection: Students – Spanish Benchmark Assessment System (BAS)*

#### Reading Levels

#### **Data Analysis**

To address the research questions, I used three data sources as analyzed by a protocol for each of the sources. The sources are written journal entries, end of year BAS results for Spanish-speaking ELLs, and an interview with a critical friend. I used predetermined codes based on Elmore et al.'s (2014) five conditions to analyze my responses to the three protocols.

#### **Professional Development Journal Prompts**

As noted, I kept a professional development journal throughout the study. In it I recorded reflections on my leadership activities as they occurred during teacher team meetings, at professional development sessions that occurred outside of the teacher team meeting structure, after collecting learning walk data, and after other leadership activities related to the study. To analyze these data I used this protocol (Protocol I) at the end of the year of the study to reflect on my leadership activities by answering these questions:

1. How have I demonstrated leadership for learning through my actions with respect to psychological safety and professional development?
  - a. How could I have improved in this area?
2. How have my leadership actions demonstrated whole-school processes for instructional improvement with respect to collaboration around an improvement strategy and teachers' involvement in instructional decisions?
  - a. How could I have improved in this area?
3. How have my leadership actions supported teams as levers for instructional improvement by fostering a shared understanding of effective practice and facilitating team processes?
  - a. How could I have improved in this area?
4. How did my leadership actions both drive collective efficacy and positively influence individual teacher efficacy?
  - a. How could have I improved in this area?

After responding to these questions, I used predetermined codes based on Elmore et al.'s (2014) five conditions from the IC, as previously noted, to analyze my responses to my reflections.

### **Data Analysis Journal Prompts**

To reflect on my leadership practices with respect student achievement in reading, I analyzed *Fountas and Pinnell* BAS beginning of year, middle of year, and end of year data on both student growth in reading levels and grade level attainment in Spanish

literacy using a protocol (Protocol III). The protocol consisted of the following questions:

1. With respect to grade level attainment, what does the benchmark data tell me about student achievement?
2. With respect to growth, what does the benchmark data tell me about how students have progressed in Spanish reading?
3. How does end of year Spanish reading level data compare with last year's end of year reading level data?
4. In which areas can I identify student success?
5. What did I learn about my students?
6. What do these areas of success tell me about myself as a leader?
7. In which areas can I identify opportunities for student growth?
8. What do these areas of growth tell me about myself as a leader?
9. Based on the data, what are possible next steps to continue improving student outcomes in Spanish literacy?

### **Critical Friend Interview**

Keeping in mind one of LaBoskey's (2004) elements of a self-study, that it is interactive in nature, I have included a critical friend interview as a way to collaborate on this study with a colleague. At the end of the year of the study, I met with a colleague who did not work at Lower West Side Elementary School, but was a principal at a school with similar student demographics. She had no personal knowledge of the teachers and

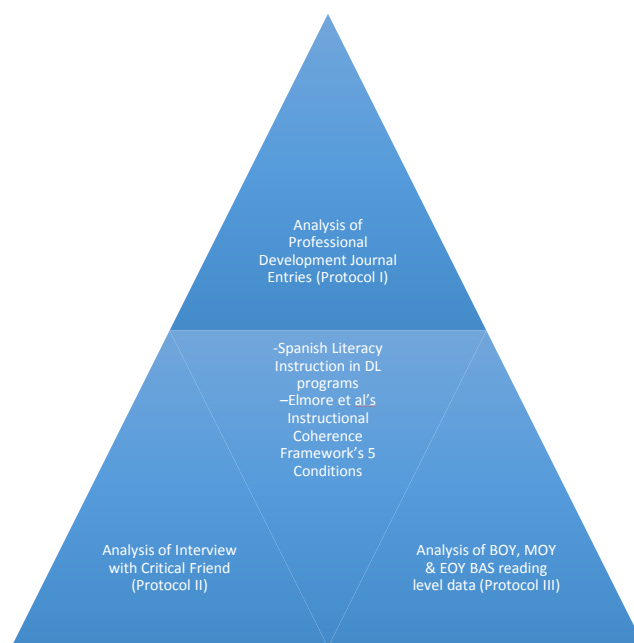
students I discussed during the interview. The protocol (Protocol II) of the interview included the following questions:

1. What were your expectations of the professional development you would lead at the start of the school year?
2. What did you anticipate as potential challenges?
3. What did you view as a strength that you would bring to the professional development activities?
4. What do you feel was successful about this activity?
5. How do you know?
6. If you had a chance to change some aspect of this activity, what you would do?
7. What does this activity tell you about yourself as a leader?
8. What did you struggle with as you led this activity?
9. Why do you think that was the case?
10. What did you learn from your teachers?
11. How do you think you could better support your teachers in developing their practice in the area of Spanish literacy instruction?

### **Triangulation of Data**

To provide a level of trustworthiness of the multiple, qualitative sources of data described above, I triangulated data from the various sources in order to better understand how my leadership actions during the professional development activities for Dual Language teachers that I led might have impacted student outcomes within the context of

a neighborhood dual language school in a large urban setting. As I examined and reflected on the three protocols I used to reflect on my leadership actions during the study, I used Elmore et al.'s (2004) IC framework as a lens by which to analyze my actions. To analyze my leadership actions, I coded my reflections and answers to the three protocols I used to the five organizational conditions that Elmore et al. argue must be present in schools to promote both excellence and equity in student learning. These conditions are as follows: 1) leadership that is distributed and focused on instruction; 2) coherence in the instructional program; 3) ongoing, embedded professional development; 4) professional learning communities anchored in data on instruction and student learning; and 5) teachers' confidence in and responsibility for their efforts to obtain desired student outcomes. See Figure 8 for a representation of how I triangulated the data.



*Figure 8. Triangulation of Data*



### **Limitations and Bias of the Study**

The main limitation of the study is generalizing the results of this study to other contexts. Because the school is unique in that it offers a school-wide Dual Language program in a neighborhood school setting that is predominantly low income, Latino, and on probation for several years, findings may not be transferrable outside of this context. In addition, I am aware that my assignment as principal two years prior to the study in a context of great controversy might have had an effect on how staff members viewed my role. While I made every attempt to maintain certain processes and best practices with respect to professional development in place since my arrival, I made some changes in attempt to increase student outcomes in certain area. In some cases, staff members were resistant to these changes, which is why I included the school's ILT in curricular and pedagogical aspects of school improvement.

Another limitation of the study relates to how I used student data. CPS' Research Review Board (RRB) allows for only the use of aggregate data that already exists as a result of typical activities of the school. In this case of this study, this included the use of the Fountas and Pinnell BAS benchmark data. As the CPS RRB policy does not allow research on subjects known to the researcher, I was limited in what data to use to answer the research question related to what I learned from my students. While I know that a student's results on an assessment do not provide a complete picture of what he or she is capable of, due to the limitations of the study, I focused on analyzing aggregate benchmark reading data in Spanish within the context of my leadership actions.

An additional area of limitation is that the study did not include the role of parents and all support staff within the school. However, it is important to note that a school's success depends on how all stakeholders support the vision and mission of the school. This is particularly true at schools implementing Dual Language programs.

To increase validity I recorded observations, thoughts, and reactions on an on-going basis in my reflective journal in order to consciously acknowledge instances where my biases and personal beliefs might have manifested themselves in my actions with the participants in the study as Ortlipp (2008) has recommended.

### **Summary**

This chapter focused on the self-study's design and methodology to examine my leadership actions as I led professional development activities to increase teacher capacity in two areas, Spanish phonics and guided reading instruction to ELLs at the primary level of a neighborhood dual language school in a large urban setting. In designing cycles of professional aligned to Elmore et al.'s (2014) principles of instructional coherence for instructional improvement in school, I attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. What has been my experience with providing teachers professional development on Spanish literacy development at the primary grades?
  - a. What am I learning from my teachers?
  - b. What am I learning from the students?

2. How has my leadership, as understood using Elmore's instructional coherence framework (2014), changed over the course of the year in leading professional development on Spanish literacy development at the primary level?

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### **Overview of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine my leadership approach while attempting to improve primary student outcomes in reading in a Dual Language (English/Spanish) neighborhood school. At the end of the 2014-15 academic year, my school's primary reading assessment data in Spanish revealed low percentages of Spanish-speaking English Language Learner (ELL) students reading at grade level in Spanish with kindergarten, first, and second grade students' results respectively at 24, 34, and 37 percent. Research in the field of Dual Language Education supports teachers using a balanced approach to literacy instruction in Spanish while paying particular attention to differences in teaching foundational skills in Spanish as compared to English. Therefore, to address this issue, I supported teachers in implementing a balanced literacy approach to teaching reading in Spanish. In the 2015-16 academic year I led professional development in the area. For this study, I engaged in a self-study. To do so, I reviewed documents, such as professional development exit slips and teacher team meeting minutes and afterwards wrote reflections in a journal. The purpose of the journal was to reflect on my leadership and the impact it has had on teacher practice while keeping in mind the principles of the Elmore Internal Coherence Framework (Elmore et al., 2014).

This self-study began in the fall of 2015. The self-study consisted of journal reflections I wrote after professional development sessions or teacher team meetings with the primary grade team of teachers related to primary Spanish literacy instruction. At the end of the 2015-16 academic year I reviewed the primary Spanish literacy data from the *Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System* (BAS) in Spanish (Heineman, 2015), known as the *Sistema de evaluación de la lectura*, for Spanish-speaking ELLs in kindergarten through second grade. I then analyzed the data and reflected on the results using a data analysis journal prompt protocol. As an additional source of data, I participated in an interview with a critical friend to reflect on my work leading professional development in the 2015-16 school year.

I analyzed the data using Elmore et al.'s (2014) organizational conditions that the authors argue must be present in order to improve student outcomes. The Internal Coherence (IC) framework is comprised of the following conditions: 1) leadership that is distributed and focused on instruction; 2) coherence in the instructional program; 3) ongoing, embedded professional development; 4) professional learning communities anchored in data on instruction and student learning; 5) and teachers' confidence in and responsibility for obtaining desired student outcomes (p. 3). As I sought to answer my research questions, I used these five conditions as the lens through which I reflected upon my own leadership.

### **Research Questions**

1. What has been my experience with providing teachers professional development on Spanish literacy development at the primary grades?

- a. What am I learning from my teachers?
  - b. What am I learning from the students?
2. How has my leadership, as understood using Elmore's instructional coherence framework (2014), changed over the course of the year in leading professional development on Spanish literacy development at the primary level?

### **Results**

To address the research questions above, I used three data sources as analyzed by a protocol for each of the sources. The sources are written journal entries, end of year BAS results for Spanish-speaking ELLs, and an interview with a critical friend. I used predetermined codes based on Elmore et al.'s (2014) five conditions to analyze my responses to the three protocols. The findings to each of the research questions follow.

#### **Research Question 1**

What has been my experience with providing teachers professional development on Spanish literacy development at the primary grades?

To investigate this question, I reviewed the written journal and the protocols for both the written journal and the critical friend interview. Most notably, I reflected upon the following: (a) although I serve as the principal of the school and led many of the teacher team meetings or professional development sessions, I actively participated in all professional development sessions and took on the role of a learner along with my teachers; (b) the use of cycles of professional learning to design and plan professional development in the two areas of focus in primary Spanish literacy resulted in active engagement of the teachers and a change in practice; and (c) providing teachers with

resources to help them teach Spanish literacy brought a sense of coherence to the school's dual language program.

***“My active participation in the professional development sessions and teacher team meetings served as a model for them and demonstrated my commitment to the initiatives.”*** This is how I responded to one of the professional development journal prompts I used to reflect on my leadership. Because Elmore (2002) argues that professional development is at the center of the practice of improvement, I made it a point to take on the role of learner along with my teachers. Although I do not have experience as a teacher in a Dual Language setting, for I taught as a bilingual teacher in a transitional bilingual program, I am committed to the program. Professionally, I have had experiences as an administrator at the central office leading work around Dual Language and personally, as a parent of children participating in a Dual Language program. In taking on the role of learner, I demonstrated that even though I am the principal, I am in no way an expert in the field of Dual Language Education and what practices best serve Spanish-speaking ELLs in such programs. My hope was that this disposition also served to create a sense of psychological safety for the teachers and encouraged them to speak more openly about their challenges and pose questions regarding the content of the professional development. Elmore et al. (2014) argue that leaders who foster a sense of psychological safety and provide structures for information collection, transfer, and analysis build the foundation for a culture conducive to learning. I believe that the structures I put in place, such as the cycles of learning for the two areas of focus, Spanish phonics instruction and Spanish guided reading instruction, allowed for

teachers to interact with text and helped them to understand the content, try out new strategies and then reflect on their practice. Furthermore, the authors assert that leadership practices associated with high levels of Internal Coherence (IC) contribute to: “modeling public learning, creating a learning environment, active engagement in teaching and learning, and providing meaningful professional development” (p. 11).

In my journal (October 13, 2015), I reflected on a teacher team meeting dedicated to reviewing beginning of year Benchmark Assessment System (BAS) results where teachers completed a template to help guide them in creating a plan to address their students’ needs. The template had three sections: results indicate; implications for instruction; and next steps. As I reflected on the activity, I noted how the structure of meeting and the conditions present led to collaborative plan:

The teacher team meeting is an excellent structure to use to review data and plan next steps with colleagues present. Being there as principal to lead the discussion and ask questions to help the teachers reflect on their student data demonstrates how I model public learning. In addition, this context allows me to create a learning environment with access to data that they can analyze with protocols as tools; this allows them to break down the data and plan meaningful next steps. I also hope the TTM (Teacher Team Meeting) environment provided a sense of psychological safety as it appeared that they spoke candidly about the challenges they were facing while their team members provided suggestions on practices to implement. This structure and process also demonstrated support for team, as together they reviewed data and came to a shared understanding of what is and can be successful teaching strategies to help accelerate student growth in reading (written journal, March 13, 2015).

Improving end of year outcomes for the primary students is one of the reasons I began this study. In order to affect that change, teachers needed to analyze student benchmark data and create plans to help ensure their growth in the area of Spanish literacy. By creating the conditions for this to occur during a teacher team meeting the teachers had



the benefit of collaborating on the plans with their peers as team. Elmore et al. (2014) note, “school leaders also play an important role in making collaboration possible by supporting the work of teacher teams” (p. 16). My use of the teacher team meeting for teachers to analyze student data and address their needs by creating a plan exemplifies this condition in action. My supporting the teachers during the teacher team meeting demonstrates this condition because I as a leader modeled public learning with the teachers as I reviewed data collaboratively with them and brainstormed ideas to address student learning. In addition, I structured the meetings to create a learning environment with active engagement focused on teaching and learning. Additionally, I made professional development meaningful by reviewing recent student data while make connections to the professional learning in which teacher were engaged during the cycles of professional learning. Furthermore, my reflection also addressed another organizational condition that must be present to promote both excellence and equity in student learning: teachers’ confidence in and responsibility for their efforts to obtain desired student outcomes (Elmore et al., 2014). Elmore et al. address this concept in domain four of their IC framework and refer to it as individual and collective efficacy beliefs.

The authors (Elmore et al., 2014) argue that because of teachers’ collective experiences, they develop beliefs about their efficacy in supporting student learning. In this context my teachers collaboratively developed plans to address their students’ needs using the template I provided them where they noted what their students’ beginning of year assessment results indicated to them, what the implications for instruction were, and

how they were going to address this as next steps. In addition to providing the template, I structured the meetings so that teachers were able to leverage each other's strengths and experiences in providing intervention supports to students not on grade level in reading or progressing more slowly in comparison to their peers. For as teachers discussed intervention supports for their own students, other teachers on the team discussed what had been successful for them. This led to teachers incorporating ideas from their colleagues into the plans. In designing the teacher team meeting in this fashion, I created the conditions for them to feel empowered with respect to the decisions they made as a team and the potential solutions to problems they identified and addressed without my having to dictate to them what needed to be done. Additionally, in their plans they made use of the new resource that I made available to them, *Estrellita*, a Spanish phonics program, as the teachers were at the time learning how to use the resource to support Spanish foundational skills instruction, the focus of the first cycle of professional learning. In addition, the majority of the teachers included how they would address their students' needs using guided reading as well; this would become the focus of the next cycle of professional learning.

While the experience I had with my teachers during professional development appeared to demonstrate that I did create conditions for active engagement and a sense of psychological safety, I wonder if I did enough to create that environment. Based on the minutes of the teacher team meetings in most cases, each member of the team contributed through either discussions or the completion of a plan. This demonstrates their engagement during these activities. Nevertheless it took several weeks before I received

a professional development exit slip from each of the teacher participants. I sent a professional development exit slip after each activity in order to gauge the teachers' level of knowledge gained, how they will use this knowledge and what they believe are the next steps to support the initiatives. I found this unusual as I expected each teacher to respond every time to exit slip after each activity. My reflection on their response revealed that they appeared to respond to the question prompts honestly and speak candidly about their challenges:

This time 100% of the participants responded to the PD exit slip survey. The exit slips reflect that the teachers gained new knowledge about GR (Guided Reading) and each stated how they will use what they learned as they continue implementing GR in the classroom. There was great divergence of ideas about next steps for this initiative focused on GR. One teacher said she would like to see it in practice at different levels; another mentioned that she needed GR books with more diversity; a third mentioned how some students need a special environment according to their needs; finally, the fourth discussed her next steps in using the strategies to accelerate her students' learning (written journal, January 12, 2016).

Perhaps all the teachers responded to the exit slip at this time because this teacher team meeting was focused on the second cycle of professional learning, guided reading, and this is an area with which the teachers had more experience. It is likely that they felt more comfortable with this approach and therefore found it easier to respond the question prompts, as all these teachers had been employing the strategy of guided reading from several years now. In contrast, during the cycle of learning focused on Spanish phonics and the use of the *Estrellita* program, they needed more time become familiar with the program to feel comfortable enough to respond to the PD exit slip. Another reason why they all responded during this cycle and not during the previous cycle could have been that not all the teachers were implementing the Spanish phonics strategies with the same

amount of frequency as guided reading and so they were less likely to complete the exit slips.

This experience taught me that providing teachers with more time to try out a new approach with support from each other is more important than sticking to a professional development plan. Regardless of how engaging professional development activities appear to be, if the teachers are not putting into practice what they have learned, especially when it is an approach that is new to them, then as the instructional leader, I need to be responsive and then make a change in course. The teachers' lack of a response to the exit slips during the first cycle of learning might have been a sign that I missed for me to make an adjustment.

***“These are learning cycles...professional readings, doing walks, peer observations...really interactive.”*** This is how I responded to my critical friend's question about what my expectations were of the professional development that I would lead at the start of the year (critical friend interview, August 5, 2016). Having served as an Instructional Support Leader at a network office, I supported school teams in designing professional development using a structure called a professional cycle of learning, or sometimes a “learning cycle” focused on a powerful practice. In this study, I led two cycles, one focused on Spanish phonics development and another on Spanish guided reading. The template I used to design the cycles of learning included various components that described the work that various teams did with respect to the powerful practice. The input section of the template described the work that transpired when teacher teams or the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) met. Included in the input

section of the template was a brief description of the activities that took place on professional development days and what professional readings participants interacted with. The feedback loops section of the template noted when learning walks and peer visits took place. During learning walks members of the ILT visit classrooms for a brief time, approximately seven to ten minutes, to collect data around a powerful practice. The data collected generally include what was in the classroom environment, what the teacher was saying and doing, and what the students were saying and doing with respect to the powerful practice that is the focus of the walk. The final section of the template described what type of student work participants analyzed and discussed. Using the template to organize the professional development activities of the two cycles of learning helped me to plan out the activities that were engaging and job embedded.

In my review of the literature I noted a gap in how Spanish bilingual teachers were prepared to teach reading in Spanish to Spanish-speaking ELLs. For instance, Escamilla (1999) asserts that few universities offer specific course work in methods of teaching reading in Spanish and that teachers have been taught to apply best-practice strategies for teaching literacy in English to Spanish literacy instruction. In addition, Gonzalez and Darling-Hammond (2000) speak to the importance of connecting theory and practice, especially as it relates to building on students' language, culture, and experience in creating learning opportunities for students. Furthermore, Cadiero-Kaplan and Rodriguez (2008) note that practicing teachers of ELLs need ongoing professional development in order to appropriately respond to the needs of ELLs. For in most pre-service programs for bilingual teachers, the programs did not prepare teachers to teach

Spanish foundational reading skills with strategies that are appropriate to the structure of the Spanish language. Because of this, it is incumbent upon school-based administrators and leadership teams to provide job-embedded learning opportunities on current best practices in the instruction of Spanish-speaking ELLs to bilingual teachers on a regular basis to compensate for this gap. Job-embedded learning opportunities provide teachers various opportunities to learn about a topic or strategy over a period of weeks that includes the reading of professional literature or the viewing of videos of a topic; observing a peer demonstrate the strategy; trying out the approach while being observed by a peer; and then coming together as a team regularly to discuss and reflect on their implementation of the approach. This is in contrast to a teacher attending a one-day workshop and learning about a new strategy that does not include any follow up. For that reason, I intentionally designed professional learning activities that would engage the teachers with resources that were aligned to the focus of the learning cycle and allowed them use the resources to implement the strategies within their own classrooms. For example, during the cycle on Spanish guided reading, the teachers read from the *Continuo* (2014) resource for Spanish guided reading during a teacher team meeting. Then they discussed how they would be able to use what they learned in their plans for guided reading. Next the teachers created a guided reading plan for one of their reading groups using what they learned. One teacher at a later teacher team meeting shared her plans with her colleagues after having been observed by the Dual Language Coordinator (DLC) and been given feedback.

In my written journal, I reflected on a teacher meeting during which teachers analyzed middle of the year BAS data and discussed next steps. I noted how teachers incorporated a new resource, *Estrellita*, which was presented to them during the previous learning cycle and what the significance of that was:

It appears that the PD provided on *Estrellita* helped the teachers identify how to use the resource to help students struggling with reading and identifying syllables. This speaks to the importance of job-embedded PD that Elmore points out in the IC framework. Teachers had several opportunities to learn about the program and implement it during literacy instruction. In doing so, they also began tailoring it to the needs of their students. As Elmore notes, these discussions among colleagues during TTM lead to a professional learning community focused on data and teaching and learning. Finally, as the teachers are the ones providing each other suggestions on how to improve outcomes for students, this should in turn build their confidence in and responsibility for their efforts to obtain their desired student outcomes (January 12, 2016).

It appeared that one success of the professional cycle of learning was that in bringing together the primary team and providing them an instructional focus relevant to their position as bilingual teachers in a Dual Language setting during teacher team meetings, they interacted as a professional learning community by supporting each other in finding solutions for problems concerning student outcomes in reading. My role at this meeting became, once again, one in which I created the conditions for teachers to problem solve as group when provided with a structure to guide their discussions. At this meeting I employed a consultancy protocol in which two out of the three primary teachers took turns to present on two students, one who made gains from the beginning of the year to the middle of the year; one who remained stagnant. After each teacher presented on their students, their colleagues, the DLC, and I had an opportunity to ask clarifying questions for two minutes. Next the participants discussed amongst themselves potential strategies

to help move the stagnant student while the presenting teacher listened without responding for about four minutes. Finally, the presenting teacher reflected on her colleagues' conversation and then discussed the possible next steps she planned to take to address the needs of the stagnant student. As a principal I used this protocol to promote the active engagement of the teachers on this team to help them problem solve and take ownership of their plans to improve student outcomes instead of providing them with directives of what they should do. In this example of how I modeled public learning, I used a protocol that invited input from the teachers and sought out multiple points of view as I listened attentively and also asked probing questions. In addition, this demonstrates one of the building blocks of a learning organization that Garvin, Edmonson, and Gino (2008) describe as leadership that reinforces learning. The authors state, "When leaders actively question and listen to employees – and thereby prompt dialogue and debate – people in the institution feel encouraged to learn" (p. 4). They further argue, "When people in power demonstrate through their own behavior a willingness to entertain alternative points of view, employees feel emboldened to offer new ideas and options" (p. 4).

When each of the two teachers presented they discussed their use of the *Estrellita* resource. One shared how she planned to use the assessment that came with the program to track the number of syllables one of the students was learning. Her greatest dilemma was how to group that student with other students for guided reading when he was at a level much lower than the rest. In addition, a special education teacher offered to assess the student with a reading diagnostic. The second presenting teacher shared how she was



using the *Estrellita* program materials, including the CD, as an intervention for one of her students who demonstrated deficiencies with respect to letter recognition and retention. In addition, the teacher discussed the support she was giving him during guided reading and how he had difficulty with comprehension. Finally, the teacher noted a pattern of absences and tardiness.

Domain three of Elmore et al.'s (2014) IC framework argues that teams are levers for instructional improvement and that this domain "encompasses teams' shared understanding of effective practice, leadership support for teams, and the use of strategic team practices" (p. 16). By having teachers analyze middle of year benchmark Spanish BAS results during a teacher team meeting, I helped make their practices public and facilitated a shared understanding of how the teachers could use the resources I provided them in order to address their students' learning needs. Elmore et al. note that this process of having teachers review data as a team is a shift in the paradigm of a teacher's classroom as a private place to now a public space and that "this culture-building exercise is a critical component of building coherence and improving collective practice" (p. 16).

This activity and others in the study also demonstrate how as a leader, I played an important role in creating the conditions for collaboration to take place around instruction, and clearly showed support for the work of teams which is another aspect of Elmore et al.'s (2014) domain three of the IC framework – teams as levers for instructional improvement. Additionally, the third aspect of domain three of the IC, team processes, is evident in how I ensured that I provided an agenda for all the teacher team meetings and professional development sessions. Furthermore, I used protocols at times

to ensure that all team members had the opportunity to actively contribute to discussion around the teaching and learning of students in the school's Dual Language program.

**“Something that I know I didn’t do enough of, and wish I’d done more, was trying to figure out how to get more peer observations done.”** This was how I responded to my critical friend’s question about something I would change with respect to some aspect of the activity (critical friend interview, August 5, 2016). This experience also taught me that having a plan for professional development does not always ensure that all components of the plan will get implemented as planned or get the same level of attention as others. In my interview I explained that only a couple of teachers took advantage of the opportunity to observe a peer implementing some of the approaches they learned about during the professional development sessions and that I struggled with how to increase its frequency. As a leader, I have to strike a balance between creating the conditions for teachers to take advantage of these opportunities with mandating that they occur. The latter is more likely to result in a teacher feeling forced to do something he or she does not necessarily want to do. If a teacher participates in order to comply, then I suspect the results of such observation would not be as optimal as it could be were there a greater sense of buy-in from both parties.

This idea of teachers visiting each other’s’ classrooms is aligned to Elmore et al.’s (2014) IC framework’s domain three – teams as levers for instructional improvement. The authors argue that this practice brings learning into the public space and, in this way helps to build a shared understanding of effective practices. While I planned for peer observations to occur as part of the cycle of learning, and peer observations were part of

previous years' cycles of learning, I fell short of creating the conditions for teachers to take advantage of it at a higher level. Perhaps what I needed to do was to first lay the groundwork for this practice by devoting time during a professional development session to understanding what beliefs teachers held about this practice and whether they saw the value in it. In addition, I could have included them more in the process by enlisting their support in the development of the observation and feedback tool used among the teachers during these peer observations.

*“It is fortunate the Network office also considered this a priority for PD.”* This reflection from my written journal (February 2, 2016) speaks to the fact that for the first time as principal at this school, the network or sub-district office that supports my school and more than 20 other schools directly with professional development and other instructional improvement efforts provided a professional development series that aligned with both the school's professional development plan and the school's program model for serving ELLs. Unbeknownst to me when I created the professional development plan for the school, the network office rolled out professional development on Spanish guided reading at the primary level concurrent to our cycle of learning focused on Spanish guided reading.

Lower West Side Elementary School was one of two schools out of the more than 20 schools in the network or sub-district that had a school wide Dual Language program during the year of the study. Furthermore, the school district recognized 15 schools out of almost 500 elementary schools as having Dual Language programs, either school wide or strand programs, in the 2015-16 school year. The vast majority of district schools that

serve ELLs do so with a transitional bilingual education program. This places schools with Dual Language programs at a disadvantage with respect to coherence in the areas of curriculum, pedagogy, and accountability measures, as the district is set up to support and evaluate schools that serve ELLs in the transitional model of bilingual education, not one that has as its goal bilingualism and biliteracy. It is for this reason that as a leader, I felt it was a priority to focus on bringing a sense of coherence to our instructional program knowing that support from the district level was minimal. However, in this case, since even schools with transitional bilingual programs need to provide Spanish instruction at the primary level, it was fortunate for our teachers to have the opportunity to receive professional development on Spanish guided reading with other primary bilingual teachers in the network.

Elmore et al. (2014) stress that coherence in the instructional program is one of the five organizational conditions that must be present to positively impact student learning. In their IC framework, the authors consider this condition a part of domain two – whole-school processes for instructional improvement. Within that domain, they note that schools with high internal coherence adhere to, “whole-school processes [that] are closely aligned with the improvement strategy” (p. 15). Although the initiatives of this study were focused on teachers of kindergarten through second grade, as the areas of focus were more appropriate for students at the emerging and beginning stage of reading, the structure of team meetings, review of student data, and the protocol used to analyze these were school-wide processes regardless of the grade level that teachers taught. Greater coherence was present during the second cycle on Spanish guided reading when

teachers became part of a cohort of bilingual teachers from other schools in the network to also receive professional development in this area. In addition, alignment of the processes with the strategy was also present in that the BAS assessment used to assess students' reading levels was used to determine in which guided reading groups students would be placed. Additionally, the resource I provided the teachers, the *Continuo*, gave them guidance on how to advance students' reading levels when working with the teachers in the guided reading groups. Thus, alignment existed among the assessment tool, the published resources to support teachers, and the professional development activities that allowed them to develop their skills in guided reading. In addition, coherence existed in the fact that the publisher of the BAS assessment also publishes the *Continuo* as well.

To exemplify how the coherence between the processes and the strategy led to teacher efficacy, I share a quote from my written journal (April 8, 2016):

First, I helped to distribute leadership focused on instruction, as this teacher is a member of the school's ILT, and in leading the PD she can help with creating buy-in among the teacher. In addition, I also helped with this teacher's confidence in and responsibility for her efforts to obtain desired student outcomes. It was clear this teacher had learned about GR at both the school-level PD and at the network-led PD as she took the initiative to meet with the DLC to create a GR lesson plan. Furthermore, her willingness to share the plan and lead the TTM speaks to her greater understanding of the topic.

This reflection was my response to one of the teachers on the primary team leading a professional development session for her colleagues. To prepare for this session, the teacher, in collaboration with the school's Dual Language Coordinator, used a template for planning guided reading lessons. She then presented to her colleagues during teacher team meetings how she planned her lessons for her guided reading groups. I interpreted

this teacher's action as demonstrating that her use of this strategy resulted in improved outcomes for students in reading and she felt empowered to share it with her colleagues. This teacher's end of year Spanish BAS results showed that 81% of her students moved at least three reading levels from the beginning of the year to the end of the year, which was higher in comparison to her colleagues. However, it is important to note that her two other colleagues took extended leaves during that school year, which resulted in one group of students receiving instruction from a less experienced temporarily assigned teacher who did not have the same level of experience in teaching guided reading as the other teachers on the team. In the case of the other group of students, they received instruction from a substitute teacher for several weeks. Therefore, two out of the three primary classrooms in this study had inconsistent instruction due to extended leaves that these teachers took. Elmore et al. (2014) argue that providing conditions in which teachers as a collective group see the connection of their efforts with student outcomes, they develop beliefs about their efficacy in supporting student learning. Furthermore, as more teachers see the impact of their instruction on student achievement, achievement should continue to grow. To support this notion, the authors refer to research that shows collective efficacy "as a powerful predictor of student achievement, able to offset the effect of student demographic variables and explain high proportions of between-school variance in student achievement..." (p. 19).

As principal of this school whose student body in the 2015-16 school year was close to 100% Latino, over 90% economically disadvantaged, and 66% ELL, it is a priority for me to create conditions that will lead to higher student achievement. I

successfully moved the school off of probation and during the year of this study, and currently, have taken actions to improve outcomes even further. Ensuring that students start the third grade at grade level is essential to success in this area.

***“Including teachers in the discussion of the tool that would be used to collect data from the classroom environment gave teachers a sense of ownership in the process.”*** In this reflection from my written journal (September 23, 2015), I recognized the importance of including teachers in school improvement strategies. In this scenario, during a teacher team meeting the teachers revised the Spanish phonics learning walk observation checklist that I presented to them as the tool I would use to collect data on how the classroom environments support the development of Spanish phonics and foundational skills. However, I noted that an area of improvement for me when creating a sense of coherence across the school was that I needed to include teachers in this process in a more regular manner.

In an effort to provide more coherence across the curriculum with respect to resources and assessment and with pedagogy across the school’s primary grades in an expeditious manner, I excluded the majority of teachers in this process. I selected materials and resources to enhance the school’s efforts in improving reading outcomes for students in the primary dual language program based on my review of the literature and in consultation with the Dual Language Coordinator. I wonder if I would have had greater buy-in and better results across all grade levels if I had included the entire team in the selection of these resources. Elmore et al. (2014) have found that in schools with high levels of IC, “teachers work collectively to develop improvement strategies,

evaluate curricular and assessment materials, and design professional development experiences that are tailored to teachers' learning needs" (p. 15). As the instructional leader of the school, I need to ensure that I create the conditions for teachers to take on a greater role with the evaluation and selection of curricular and assessment materials, even if it means that doing so will take longer.

**Sub-question 1a: What am I learning from my teachers?** In reviewing my analysis from my experiences in leading the professional development activities, I have learned three things: (1) my teachers appreciated my leadership in providing them resources and professional development to improve their practices in teaching Spanish reading to their students; (2) while the structures and protocols I put in place for the professional development sessions led to productive sessions, they did not necessarily increase the level of trust between the teachers and me; and (3) my teachers desired to be supported in order to be successful teachers.

*“Teacher listed Estrellita and Cancionero as resources she would use in the ‘implication for instruction’ section. It is encouraging to see that she sees this as a resource to assist her students who are behind.”* This quote from my written journal (October 13, 2015) demonstrates how a teacher was able to incorporate a resource that I provided them in order to assist some of her struggling students. Prior to the year of the study, the teachers did not have a common resource or program to teach Spanish foundational skills within their literacy block. *Estrellita* filled that void for them as each of the teachers on the primary team determined a way they could use the program to support their students as they completed their beginning of year data discussion



templates. I also reflect on my sense that teachers appreciated getting the resources along with the professional development to support them during my interview with a critical friend, “Giving them the kit, and the PD that came with the kit, I think the teachers felt, okay I can do something with this. I’m not being asked to do something without any resources” (critical friend interview, August 5, 2016).

***“As a principal in my third year at the school, it was important that I continue to gain the teachers’ trust so that they could freely participate and share challenges they were facing in order to address them with help from their colleagues.”*** In this quote from my professional development journal protocol, I reflected on how I had demonstrated leadership for learning through my actions with respect to psychological safety and professional development. Researchers who have studied group dynamics of teams in the business field have identified psychological safety as a shared belief that a team can take risks in sharing ideas and opinions with their peers and authority figures without fear of being belittled or marginalized for their difference of opinion (Edmonson, 1999; Edmonson, 2002; Garvin et al., 2008). Elmore et al. (2014) also argue that levels of psychological safety need to be present as one of the conditions of learning that school leaders must establish among the teachers and themselves. This quote clearly shows that I was aware that I needed to continue creating a sense of trust between my primary teachers and me. Yet some experiences I had during the year of the study show that my teachers did not feel completely psychologically safe. For instance, their lack of regularly completing the exit slips at the start of the year could have been an indicator of not feeling psychologically safe, even though the exit slips were anonymous. In

addition, the fact that many of them did not take advantage of the peer observation opportunities also makes me wonder if there might have been a lack of trust among them as well.

*“Another teacher noted that the Network PD tried to cover a lot, but it did help her plan for GR and also had her think more closely about the connection between reading and writing and how to purposely plan to incorporate it.”* In this quote from my written journal (February 2, 2016), I noted a teacher’s reflection on the professional development she received outside the school from the network office. In this reflection, I sensed that although the teacher might have felt overwhelmed by the session, she still appreciated the support she received in helping better plan meaningful literacy lessons for her students. This demonstrated to me that my teachers had a desire to be supported in order to be effective teachers. In another entry from my written journal I noted how a teacher reached out to the dual language coordinator to receive support in planning a guided reading lesson. Not only did she receive this support, but she also shared how she planned for guided reading with her colleagues at a teaching team meeting in order to support them with their planning. In my interview with my critical friend in my response to the question about what I learned from my teachers I discuss this same teacher, “She takes on any challenge. She asks for support when she needs it. She’s willing to go the extra mile” (critical friend interview, August 5, 2016).

**Sub-question 1b: What am I learning from my students?** In my analysis of the end of year BAS data using my data analysis journal prompt protocol, I noted that although over 90% of my students came from an economically disadvantaged

background, they could make growth in their reading ability if certain conditions were present at the school to develop the teachers' skills in learning how to meet their students' needs. Due to CPS' Research Review Board (RRB) policy that allows for only the use of aggregate data that already exists as a result of typical activities of the school, I answered this question in terms of how they performed on the Fountas and Pinnell BAS benchmark data. As the CPS RRB policy does not allow research on subjects known to the researcher, I was limited in what data to use to answer the research question related to what I learned from my students. While I know that a student's results on an assessment do not provide a complete picture of what he or she is capable of, due to the limitations of the study, I focused on analyzing aggregate benchmark reading data in Spanish within the context of my leadership actions. Table 8 illustrates the percentage of students that met benchmark reading expectation targets at the beginning, middle, and end of year in the 2015-16 school year. These results are referred to as attainment, as they indicate what percentage of students attained expectations set for the specific interval.

Table 8

*2015-16 Spanish Primary Literacy Outcomes at the Beginning of Year (BOY), Middle of Year (MOY) and End of Year (EOY) on the Benchmark Assessment System (BAS)*

Grade Level (N)	% at/above on BAS BOY (N)	% at/above on BAS MOY	% at/above on BAS EOY
K (27)	N/A (27)	0% (27)	12% (26)
1 <sup>st</sup> (23)	22% (23)	23% (22)	36% (22)
2 <sup>nd</sup> (27)	41% (27)	37% (27)	42% (26)

While the data show that more than half and even up to more than three quarters of the Spanish-speaking ELLs ended the year below grade level at one grade level, analysis of growth throughout the year gives a better sense of how students moved closer to grade level expectations.

Table 9 illustrates the percentage of growth students made from the end of the year according to the expectations per grade level as determined by Fountas and Pinnell (2011) the publishers of the BAS assessment. Kindergarten, first grade, and second grade students are expected to move four, five, and three readings level respectively over the course of a year from the beginning of the year assessment to the end of year assessment. In contrast to attainment results, these data are referred to as growth data, as they demonstrate the level of growth that students made throughout the year regardless of where they started at the beginning of the year. These data are crucial in demonstrating the level of growth that students made while recognizing that they may have different starting points.

These data also tell me that my students were very sensitive to changes in instruction and staffing, as only the second-grade teacher did not go on an extended leave of absence that year and they were the group that made the most expected growth at the end of the year. In comparing the end of year Spanish reading level data of the study year to the prior year, I noted a decline in the percentage of students on grade level in kindergarten from 24% to 12%; this alerted me that this group of students would need additional support in the next grade. In contrast, end of year data in first grade and second grade showed a slight increase in the percentage of students ending the year at

grade level. In first grade prior to the year of the study 34% ended at grade level in comparison to 36% in the year of the study. In second grade, a year prior to the study, 37% ended the year at grade level and 42% did in the year of the study. Table 10 illustrates the benchmark data for the year prior the study and the study year.

Table 9

*Percent of Students who made Growth from the Beginning of Year to the End of Year on the Spanish Benchmark Assessment System (BAS) at Various Levels in the Primary Grades in 2015-16 School Year*

<b>Grade Level (N)</b>	<b>% of students who made no growth</b>	<b>% of students who made growth lower than expected levels</b>	<b>% of students who made growth at/above expected levels</b>
K (26)	46%	42%	12%
1 <sup>st</sup> (23)	0%	41%	59%
2 <sup>nd</sup> (27)	0%	19%	81%

The final the thing I learned from my students in reviewing the data, was that I need to continue to support my teachers with resources and professional learning experiences to ensure that my students ended the year closer to grade level. One way to achieve this is by monitoring their growth throughout the year, especially those farthest behind, and then allocating resources so that they get the support they need to be successful.

Table 10

*Comparison of 2014-15 and 2015-16 Spanish Primary Literacy Outcomes at Beginning of Year (BOY), Middle of Year (MOY) and End of Year (EOY) on the Benchmark Assessment System (BAS)*

	2014-15	2015-16	2014-15	2015-16	2014-15	2015-16
Grade Level	% at/above on BAS BOY		% at/above on BAS MOY		% at/above on BAS EOY	
K	N/A	N/A	0	0	24	12
1 <sup>st</sup>	34	22	28	23	34	36
2 <sup>nd</sup>	32	41	32	37	37	42

## Research Question 2

How has my leadership, as understood using Elmore's instructional coherence framework (2014), changed over the course of the year in leading professional development on Spanish literacy development at the primary level?

As I reflect upon the various experiences I had with leading the two cycles of professional learning, I feel I became more aware of the importance of organizing a school to create professional learning communities that foster conditions for change. At the same time, I learned the importance of making adjustments to plans based on the needs of my teachers. Related to this, I learned that including teachers' voices throughout the process would help with fomenting trust at all levels and in the end increase teachers' individual and collective efficacy beliefs. At the start of the year I either led or facilitated the professional development sessions to ensure active

participation. At the end of the year, I learned to let the teachers lead the professional development sessions. In Elmore et al.'s (2014) discussion on collective efficacy they note, "in schools with high levels of perceived collective efficacy, teachers learn that extra effort and educational success are the norm" (p. 19). I learned to change my leadership actions and allow teachers to lead and model how to plan instruction to ensure the success of their students. Previously, I created a professional development plans in the form of cycles of learning with the teachers who form the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT). After this experience I also learned to be more responsive to teachers' needs by making an effort to include all teachers in the writing of the cycles of learning. I learned to accomplish by including their voice in the writing of the cycle through various brainstorming activities during teacher team meetings or on professional development days. In addition, I learned to adjust plans when a teacher wanted to take on a facilitation role during a teacher team meeting or professional development session.

A second way that my leadership changed was in how I led student data analysis more frequently than in previous years; I led data reviews with teachers after the three benchmark assessments administration session – beginning of the year, middle of the year, and end of the year. In addition to just reviewing data, I turned the sessions into one where all teachers were able to brainstorm interventions for students, while also allowing time for teachers to reflect on their own practice. While I feel I still have room for growth in this area, I recognize that I looked at student results in the year of the study more so than in years past. In addition, I followed up more with teachers on plans to address areas of student need. I spoke to this in my interview with a critical friend:

Once we had the beginning of the year results, we went through them, which we had done in the past, but then this time we were okay, let's follow up. A month ago we looked at this, and we did this plan, you're going to work with these students in this manner, etc. It's a month later, now let's take a look at that plan. I think following up on a plan a month later to see where people are at. People are like no, I didn't get to do that, something got in the way. Fine, well then come on, what are we going to do? What have your colleagues done? (August 5, 2016).

In this reflection I spoke to how I changed in my support for teacher teams in reviewing student data during teacher team meetings. In Elmore et al.'s (2014) IC Framework this notion of support for teams is an element of domain three, Teams as Levers for Instructional Improvement. The authors note, "School leaders also play an important role in making teacher collaboration possible by supporting the work of teacher team" (p. 16). They further argue that interpreting student data "is a complex task that requires adequate time for productive discussion" (p. 16). I learned to give teachers that time to review and discuss data at greater levels.

### **Summary**

This study sought to examine my leadership actions while attempting to improve primary student outcomes in reading in a Dual Language (English/Spanish) neighborhood school by supporting teachers in implementing a balanced literacy approach to teaching reading in Spanish. In analyzing my leadership actions through Elmore et al.'s (2014) IC framework and the organizational conditions for success that are foundational to this framework, I learned how my leadership actions helped to create conditions for success. I also discovered I had opportunities for growth. These experiences first led to my reflection on my role as leader and also participant in professional development experiences with my teachers. Second, I reflected on the processes and structures that



were part of the professional development experience that promoted teamwork and collaboration in order to address students' learning needs. Finally, my reflections helped me consider the importance of creating coherence across instruction, assessment, and processes to positively impact student learning outcomes.

From my teachers, I learned that I need to continue building trust with them, as they have the desire to continually develop their teaching skills, but need to feel safe to take risks in doing so. In addition, I learned that I needed to allow them to also take on the role of instructional leader at times. From my students I learned that they needed to have conditions in place for them to be successful and that review of student data should be matched with resources to help them advance in their learning.

Leading professional development as a principal helped me develop as a leader in understanding that professional development is done **with** a team not **to** a group. Also, it helped me understand that just monitoring data without providing support for adjustment as a response to the data is inadequate. Finally, I learned that the results of implementing change in a year might not be evident that same year.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### **Overview**

This chapter provides a summary of the study highlights, a discussion of the finding from Chapter IV, and implications for practice for school leaders. In addition, I provide recommendations for future research.

#### **Study Highlights**

The focus of this self-study was on how I attempted, as a principal, to improve outcomes for the primary students who received their literacy instruction in Spanish as part of Lower West Side Elementary School's Dual Language Education model. My focus was leading professional development with the primary teachers that included job-embedded learning opportunities on current best practices in the instruction of Spanish-speaking English Language Learners (ELLs). In my dual role as principal and practitioner as researcher, I reflected on the leadership decisions I made while leading this professional development throughout the 2015-16 academic year. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) note that in a self-study the duality of roles allows the school principal and other school staff to participate in the "inquiry process as researchers, working from the inside" (p. 41). They further note that with respect to knowledge, the major emphasis is action and social change and not knowledge generation. For me, this emphasis on social change aligns well with my purpose for serving as principal of an elementary

school that has a high percentage of low-income students who are predominantly of Latino heritage and the majority of whom are ELLs.

I reflected on the professional development focused on two areas, Spanish phonics development and Spanish guided reading, which I led during the 2015-16 academic year. To reflect on my leadership, I used Elmore et al.'s (2014) Internal Coherence (IC) framework as a leadership conceptual framework. As I reviewed my reflections, I noted how the following conditions of the IC framework were relevant to the decisions I made as a school principal: 1) leadership that is distributed and focused on instruction; 2) coherence in the instructional program; 3) ongoing, embedded professional development; 4) professional learning communities anchored in data on instruction and student learning; and 5) teachers' confidence in and responsibility for their efforts to obtain desired student outcomes (p. 3).

As a principal, I strive to create the conditions for students' success that first must begin with creating the conditions for adult learning focused on teaching and learning for the teachers. While the needs of the students and teachers at Lower West Side Elementary School are unique to the school and the school's Dual Language Education program, the challenge to improve outcomes for students in all contexts is a principal's main focus. This study provides the voice of a school leader during the age of accountability when all schools are measured by the same metrics without taking into account the very local nature of school improvement.

### **Discussion of Findings**

In Elmore et al.'s Internal Coherence framework (2014), five conditions must be present in schools to promote both excellence and equity in student learning. While my leadership addressed all five of the conditions, I noted that three areas emerged as most significant to creating the conditions for success. The first is how the teacher team meetings and professional development opportunities of the cycles of learning were focused on instruction and relied on everyone's active engagement for them to be successful. The second is how the cycle of learning structure promoted ongoing and embedded professional development. The third is how alignment of resources brought a sense of coherence to the school's primary Spanish literacy program.

#### **Teams Focused on Instruction**

In domain three of Elmore et al.'s (2014) IC framework –teams as levers for instructional improvement, the authors note the importance of teams' shared understanding of effective practices, leadership support for teams, and the use of strategic team practices. Review of my reflections over the course of the year revealed to me which practices I engaged in, specifically during the teacher team meetings and the professional development sessions, were aligned to this domain.

Providing time in the school day for teachers to collaborate with each other has been a priority for me as a principal. At Chicago Public Schools (CPS) teachers have a 45 minute duty-free lunch and a 60 minute preparation period daily when students leave their homerooms and attend an enrichment or other "specials" class such as physical education, technology, art, and health education. It is during this time that once a week

principals can direct a teacher team, grade level, or department meeting. At Lower West Side Elementary School I organized the teacher teams by grade level or grade band. In the case of the primary team, the kindergarten, first, second grade, and primary special education teachers shared a common preparation period time daily and met with either me or another member of the administrative team once a week. It was during some of these teacher team meetings that I led activities focused on Spanish primary literacy for this study.

The teacher team meeting structure provided an excellent opportunity to help the teachers develop a shared understanding of effective practices as they related to Spanish literacy development. As the team of teachers read about effective practices to promote Spanish phonics development and guided reading, they discussed what they learned and how they implemented such strategies. They also planned guided reading lessons with support from each other during one of these teacher team meetings. In addition, they gave each other suggestions on how to address a specific concern, such as providing intervention supports to students who were not progressing in their reading. These actions all helped to move the teaching out of the classroom and into the public space of the organization, which Elmore et al. (2014) refer to as a “culture-building exercise [which] is a critical component of building coherence and improving collective practice” (p. 16). The authors also include visiting each other’s classrooms as an activity aligned to this component of domain three. It was in this area that I felt I needed to do more to promote a greater level of peer observations among this team of teachers. A principal cannot force teachers to engage in peer observations, so I need to further investigate the

ways I can lay down a foundation for teachers to participate in this activity, if I want to continue developing a shared understanding of effective practice among teams of teachers.

With respect to the second component of domain three – support for teams, I felt I provided the team support, for as principal I ensured through scheduling of the school day that they had a regular time to meet as a team during the school day. In addition, the team meetings were guided by an agenda and teachers were given the resources they needed to make the best use of their time. Additionally, the school's Dual Language Coordinator (DLC) served as someone the teachers could co-plan with. To my knowledge, at least one of the teachers on the team regularly planned with her. One area I need to develop as a leader is how to give teams more autonomy to act on the decisions they make as a group and then hold them accountable for following through with those decisions.

The third component of domain three – team processes, speaks to how teachers engage in instructional dialogue or inquiry and then put that into practice in order to see more connections between their practice as teachers and students' outcomes. I noted that using certain protocols during teacher team meetings led to more active participation from all members and allowed teachers to assist each other with developing plans to provide intervention supports for some students who were progressing more slowly in reading. Additionally, many of the protocols I used during these meetings allowed for me to move among several roles such as facilitator, participant, and learner with my teachers. As a leader, actively participating with my teachers during discussions about

teaching and learning is something I consciously do in order to both model how I too am a learner and that I am completely invested in my students' success in school as they are as well.

### **Ongoing Embedded Professional Development**

In Elmore et al.'s (2014) domain one of the IC framework, leadership for instructional improvement is the focus. Many of the practices I engaged in during the teacher team meetings and professional development sessions I described above also address some of the notions of this domain. For example, the authors argue that shared instructional leadership is "characterized by the active, ongoing collaboration of principals and teachers on issues of teaching and learning" (p. 11) and that in this practice principals involve teachers in decision-making around instruction, but also remain as central agents for change. In order to accomplish this I designed professional development activities using the cycles of professional learning structure I became familiarized with as a network Instructional Support Leader when working with several schools. I found this structure to be powerful as its aim is to provide professional development in a way that is job-embedded and promotes active learning about an instructional strategy or approach over an extended period of time. Elmore et al. note the importance of this element in domain one of the IC when they argue, "leaders ensure that educators have access to useful professional development (PD) when teachers reach the limits of the knowledge" (p. 12). I would add that because the field of Dual Language Education is relatively recent and not as prevalent in school districts across the nation, principals of Dual Language schools need to ensure that their teachers have access to the

latest strategies and teaching approaches that lead to biliteracy. The case may not be that teachers have reached the limits of their knowledge, but rather as more research emerges in the field, principals have to ensure that their teachers are kept abreast of recent approaches and strategies. Providing job-embedded professional development is one approach to address this gap, especially when there are only two schools in a network of over twenty that implement a dual language program, as is the case for Lower West Side Elementary School.

### **Program Coherence**

In leading professional development in primary Spanish literacy, I also sought to provide more coherence among curriculum, assessment, and the use of these resources in conjunction with the instructional approaches to help students develop their Spanish literacy skills. Before I provided the *Estrellita* program and led the professional learning cycle on Spanish phonics instruction, teachers used a variety of materials to teach Spanish foundational skills. While I would not argue that this program is necessarily the best and only way to teach students to read in Spanish using the syllabic method, I felt it did provide teachers with plenty of resources they could tailor to meet the needs of emergent readers in kindergarten to struggling readers in second grade. The professional development in that first cycle of learning also helped teachers see how instruction in Spanish foundational skills progresses over time from kindergarten to second grade and how they can support students at various stages with different kinds of anchor charts in Spanish.



In designing the second cycle of learning focused on Spanish guided reading I sought to bring coherence to the approach by making the *Continuo* (2014) the anchor book of the professional development. I believe this provided more coherence to the primary team's approach to guided reading because the assessment tool that the school had been using for several years, *Sistema de evaluacion de la lectura, grados K-2* (Fountas & Pinnell, 2011) and the *Continuo* (2014) were both created by the same authors. This ensured instructional and assessment alignment, as the resource provides teachers with appropriate strategies and areas in which to focus development based on a student's instructional level as determined by the assessment tool. Furthermore, because the *Continuo* (2014) is written in Spanish, the language of instruction of guided reading in this school's program, it also helped develop the teachers' Spanish academic language. Rarely have I attended professional learning sessions on bilingual education for Spanish-speaking ELLs delivered in Spanish. Like the students, Spanish-speaking bilingual teachers and administrators need to have opportunities to learn in Spanish as well.

An unanticipated point of coherence that occurred during the study was the network's series of Spanish guided reading sessions for primary teachers that coincided with the school's second cycle of learning also focused on Spanish guided reading. Having been a principal for almost ten years at CPS at two different schools, I can say this was one of the few times that a network or district office provided professional development for bilingual teachers in an area that at the same time was an area of focus for the school. I can only imagine how powerful this could be if this type of coherence in professional development occurred in a coordinated fashion more often. The only

drawback to the professional development led by the network was that Lower West Side Elementary School was the only school part of that cohort that implements a Dual Language program while the others implement a transitional bilingual education. This is significant because in a Dual Language model the aim is to develop the two languages equally throughout the elementary school years, while in a transitional model the home language is developed only until a certain point and then only English literacy becomes the focus. Development of the home language of ELLs ceases in a transitional model, as the goal is English proficiency. How much more powerful would that professional development experience had been if it had been geared towards only Dual Language program teachers from several schools across the district?

### **Primary Literacy Outcomes One Year Beyond the Study**

While the focus year of this study was the 2015-16 academic school year, I would like to note that as a school leader, I have experienced that the impact of professional development on student learning is not always evident in the same year during which the professional development occurred. Rather, its impact can continue beyond the year of the intervention provided that the school leader provides teachers continued support with implementation of the instructional approach. Elmore et al. (2014) place this notion of the effect of teachers' collective impact on student learning in domain four of the IC – individual and collective efficacy beliefs. The authors argue that, “in schools with high levels of perceived collective efficacy, teachers learn that extra effort and educational success are the norm” (p. 19). Due to the limitations of a self-study, I was not able to gauge the teachers' sense of individual and collective efficacy beliefs, however I did note

an upward trend in the percentage of students achieving grade level expectations in reading at the end of the year over three years and wonder if this can explain the trend.

Table 11 below illustrates Spanish literacy outcomes for the ELLs at Lower West Side Elementary School in end of year benchmark assessment results on the *Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System* (BAS) in Spanish (Heineman, 2015) from the year prior to the study (2014-15) to a year after the study (2016-17).

Table 11

*2014-15, 2015-16 and 2016-17 Spanish Primary Literacy End of Year (EOY) Outcomes on the Benchmark Assessment System (BAS)*

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Grade Level	% at/above on BAS EOY		
K	24	12	42
1 <sup>st</sup>	34	36	39
2 <sup>nd</sup>	37	42	48

The data in the table show that end of year results increased from 24% at level at the end of kindergarten in 2015 to 42% at level at the end of the year for the group of students in kindergarten during the 2016-17 academic year; an increase of 18% of students leaving kindergarten at grade level. At first grade the percent increased from 34% to 39%; an increase of 5%. At second grade it increased from 37% to 48%; an increase of 11%. It is also important to point out that the group of kindergarten students in the 2014-2015 academic year is the cohort of students that were in second grade during

the 2016-17 academic year. The percentage of students in that cohort went from 24% at the end of the year at grade level to 48%; an increase of 24%. In addition, it is important to note that the cohort of kindergarten students from the year of the study, which ended the year with 12% of students at grade level expectations, the following year increased by 27% to 39% at grade level expectations in 2016-17 academic year. Note that the data do not account for mobility of the students.

### **Implications**

One of the challenges school principals face in improving outcomes for students is ensuring that the school's teachers receive quality professional development. Elmore et al. (2014) provide a framework for whole school improvement based on organizational conditions they argue must be present to promote both excellence and equity in student learning. Central to these conditions is the notion of ongoing, embedded professional development. While I agree with this, I would argue that a school's context within a larger organization could pose a challenge in ensuring that teachers receive adequate professional development. For example, Lower West Side Elementary School is one out of a group of 20 Chicago Public elementary schools implementing a Dual Language in a system of 479 elementary schools; only 4% of CPS elementary schools implement a Dual Language program. As CPS rolls out initiatives and provides professional development opportunities for teachers, it seldom provides professional development geared toward teachers who teach in a program model that has as its goal biliteracy in English and another language. Aside from the CPS Office of Language and Cultural Education (OLCE), I am not aware any other district department that provides professional

development to teachers who teach in a dual language education context. The challenge this creates for school leaders who lead a school with a focus that is in a tiny majority in a large school district is that they have to build internal professional capacity without being able to rely on adequate support from the district. If school leaders cannot turn to the school district for support, to whom can they turn?

In this study my attempt to address this challenge was to create professional learning opportunities using current mentor texts, such as *Teaching for Biliteracy* (Beeman & Urow, 2013) in the first cycle of professional learning and the *Continuo* (Pinnell & Fountas, 2014) in the second cycle. During teacher team meetings and professional development sessions, teachers had the opportunity to read and learn from these texts, apply what they learned, and then discuss with their colleagues how it went. This provided the teachers an opportunity to learn from each other in authentic ways, while I served as a facilitator at times. However, I wonder if the professional learning opportunities in the cycles of learning could have been richer if an outside partner or expert in the field of Dual Language Education would have been part of some of the professional learning sessions. During my almost five years as principal at Lower West Side Elementary School, the CPS Office of Language and Cultural Education has partnered a few times over the years with Dual Language Education of New Mexico and DePaul University to provide professional development to a limited number of dual language program teachers. Yet these professional development sessions were one to two-day sessions that were not couched within a cycle of ongoing job-embedded professional learning. In addition, they did not include all the Dual Language teachers in

a school. I feel that the impact of professional development on teachers would be greater if schools with specialized programs could partner with experts on creating professional cycles of learning that could provide the type of ongoing job-embedded experiences that leads to improvement in teacher practice and thereby improved student outcomes.

Unfortunately, the funding that Lower West Side Elementary School receives from CPS does not allow for that, as the costs associated with these types of partnerships are beyond what most schools can budget for.

A second challenge that leaders of schools implementing specialized programs face is with respect to how university teacher preparation programs prepare teachers for the type of teaching and learning that occurs in those specialized programs. In the case of Dual Language Education, in Illinois there is no certificate or endorsement for Dual Language Education. Instead, teachers can acquire a bilingual endorsement on their professional license in a language other than English by taking an assessment that proves proficiency in the language and by taking six three-credit hour courses in areas such as bilingual education, English as a Second Language (ESL), and multicultural education. While a bilingual endorsement is a requirement for teachers to teach ELLs in a transitional bilingual education program model and it is acceptable for the Dual Language education model, I feel it is not sufficient for teachers providing instruction in a dual language context where the goal is biliteracy in English and the partner language as opposed to using students' home language for a short period of time in a transitional model. Escamilla (1999) asserts that few universities offer specific coursework in methods of teaching reading in Spanish. To my knowledge, there is only one university

in the Chicago area, Roosevelt University, that offers a program in Dual Language Education, and it is at the master's level. This challenge requires school leaders to provide teachers new to the Dual Language program model with professional learning opportunities on dual language program best practices. Not doing so could jeopardize coherence in the school's program and the goal of developing biliteracy in all students. For this reason, I would like to advocate for universities to develop Dual Language education coursework within their bilingual and ESL teacher preparation programs. Doing so would not only better prepare education majors to teach in a dual language setting, but it would also provide school leaders with the opportunity to partner with such universities to support both the school's professional development efforts and also provide education majors that opportunity to observe and student teach within a Dual Language context.

### **Recommendations for Research**

While generalizability in a self-study is limiting, due to the very local context of the study, I found that my reflections on my leadership actions presented questions that might merit further investigation for school leadership and leading professional learning. In addition, I can offer suggestions for further research in the area of Dual Language education within the context of a majority Latino school in an urban school setting.

Elmore et al. (2014) present a framework to improve student outcomes provided that school leaders ensure that certain conditions are in place. As noted in the implications section, I wonder if additional conditions need to be present in the case of schools implementing specialized programs that are not supported by the school district.

Furthermore, I wonder what effect a district's accountability policy has on schools implementing specialized programs when the metrics used to rate schools are not aligned to the program's goals and instructional and pedagogical context. For instance, in the case of Dual Language Education, the goal is bilingualism and biliteracy in English and the partner language. At CPS only outcomes of exams given in English are considered in the district's accountability policy, although at least 50 percent of instruction in a dual language program happens in the partner language. In addition, research from Thomas and Collier (2012) has noted that the effects of Dual Language programs are not visible in the early elementary grades. The authors note that it is not until the middle grades that the positive effect that a Dual Language program has on achievement in reading in English becomes apparent. If a district values an enrichment program that has shown to lead strong achievement in reading but does not measure a school's success with the program's goal in mind, what can school leaders do to positively influence teachers' individual and collective efficacy beliefs when outcomes according to traditional measures appear low? This speaks to Elmore et al.'s domain four of the IC – individual and collective efficacy beliefs.

A second opportunity for exploration also relates to schools implementing specialized programs. In this case, I wonder what the effects on achievement are for schools whose leaders leverage support from community, university, and professional partners with their specialized program. In the absence of true support from the district level, does creating partnerships with organizations or universities that provide expertise in the specialized area to create ongoing professional learning opportunities lead to



improved program outcomes? Additionally, what are the effects of cross-school collaboration on professional learning in specialized programs?

A final opportunity for research is specifically in the field of Dual Language Education. My experience as a principal in an overwhelming majority Latino school in a neighborhood that has been historically Latino for decades has shown me that a great deal of language diversity exists even within this context. Students identified as ELLs represent a spectrum of language abilities from predominantly Spanish-speaking to predominantly English-speaking to balanced bilinguals. Dual Language programs have traditionally been described as either a one-way model, in which almost all students are identified as ELLs and speak the partner language as their home language or a two-way model, in which there is an even distribution of ELLs who speak the partner language and native English speakers in the program. What are the implications for leaders whose Dual Language schools have a greater diversity of language ability by classroom or where it is changing to one in which there are more balanced bilingual and the program cannot be easily defined as one- or two-way? In what ways do school leaders have to make adjustments to professional development plans to address these changes in the profile of Dual Language students to ensure that teachers provide appropriate instruction and remain faithful to the program's goals?

### **Final Words**

This self-study has helped me to reflect on how I as a school leader support teachers in a Dual Language school with professional development. By providing ongoing job-embedded professional development and then reflecting on my practice

throughout the study I gained valuable insight on what appeared to be effective and what I needed to improve. As a leader, I will continue to provide opportunities of growth for my teachers in the area of Dual Language Education, as I am committed to providing ELLs with a program that not only ensures their success in English, but also in their home language. I hope there comes a day in which the only bilingual programs in which ELLs participate are those whose goals are true bilingualism and biliteracy. Until then, I will use what I have learned about my own leadership toward improving my school's Dual Language program with the support of the teachers and entire school community.

## APPENDIX A

### SPANISH PRIMARY PHONICS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EXIT SLIP

## Spanish primary phonics instruction PD Exit Slip

Please answer these questions based on the professional development focused on Estrellita implementation that occurred on 11/13/2015.

\* Required

1. What new knowledge did you gain today about teaching Spanish phonics? \*

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2. How might you use this knowledge in your instruction? \*

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3. What do you believe are the next steps for this initiative focusing on the teaching of Spanish phonics? \*

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APPENDIX B

SPANISH GUIDED READING INSTRUCTION PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

EXIT SLIP

## Spanish Guided Reading PD Exit Slip

\* Required

**1. Date of PD \***

(Teacher Team meeting, Flex Day PD, or other  
PD day)

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**2. What new knowledge did you gain today about teaching Spanish Guided Reading? \***

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**3. How might you use this knowledge in your instruction? \***

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**4. What do you believe are the next steps for this initiative focusing on Spanish Guided Reading instruction? \***

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## APPENDIX C

### TEACHER TEAM MEETING AGENDA AND MINUTES TEMPLATE

Teacher Team Meeting Agenda and Minutes Template

School Teacher Team Meeting Agenda

Date:\_\_\_\_\_ Time:\_\_\_\_\_ Team:\_\_\_\_\_

Content Focus: \_\_Literacy-Reading \_\_Literacy-Writing \_\_Math \_\_Dual Language

Topic(s):\_\_\_\_\_

Team members present: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Minutes:

Next Steps/Action Items:

Item:	Owner:	Timeline:



APPENDIX D

SPANISH PHONICS OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

**Elementary School**  
**Spanish Phonics Learning Walk Observation Checklist\***

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Room: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Element</b>	<b>Present: Yes or No</b>	<b>Notes</b>
1. Separate words walls in Spanish and English		
2. Frequently used words on word walls		
3. Word walls illustrating initial consonant sounds and “rr” and “ñ” in medial positions		
4. Word walls with articles ( <i>el, los, la, las</i> )		
5. Word walls that model upper- and lower-case letters.		
6. Words walls with examples for each initial consonant and vowel		

Element	Present: Yes or No	Notes
7. Word walls with examples of high-utility words that are frequently misspelled		
8. Word walls for common blends		
9. Words walls with high-frequency words that need accents/tildes/diereses		
10. Words walls to demonstrate how to join syllables to make words		
11. Word walls with words that children frequently use in their writing		
12. Word walls with word families ( <i>libro</i> , <i>librería</i> , <i>librero</i> )		

\*Based on *Teaching Literacy in Spanish*, K. Escamilla, 1999.

APPENDIX E

SPANISH GUIDED READING OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

**Elementary School**  
**Spanish Guided Reading Learning Walk Observation Checklist\***

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Room: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Element</b>	<b>Present: Yes or No</b>	<b>Notes</b>
1. Separate table or section present for guided reading instruction		
2. Schedule posted		
3. Groups posted		
4. Materials present (leveled books)		
5. Binder or other system to monitor progress present		
6. Goal setting sheets available for each student		

<b>Element</b>	<b>Present: Yes or No</b>	<b>Notes</b>
7. Text selected is at group's instructional level		
8. Teacher introduces text to group (before reading)		
9. Teacher introduces and models strategy to group (during reading)		
10. Teacher listens in on students and provides guidance and support on strategy as necessary (during reading)		
11. Teacher discusses text, strategy, and provides students feedback and next steps as appropriate (after reading)		
12. Teacher makes note of students' progress in binder or other system (after reading)		

\*Adapted from [http://www.busyteacherscafe.com/literacy/guided\\_reading.html](http://www.busyteacherscafe.com/literacy/guided_reading.html).

APPENDIX F

FOUNTAS AND PINNELL INSTRUCTIONAL LEVEL EXPECTATIONS FOR  
READING CHART

Fountas &amp; Pinnell

## INSTRUCTIONAL LEVEL EXPECTATIONS FOR READING

	Beginning of Year (Aug.–Sept.)	1st Interval of Year (Nov.–Dec.)	2nd Interval of Year (Feb.–Mar.)	End of Year (May–June)
<b>Grade K</b>		C+	D+	E+
		B	C	D / E
		A	B	C
				Below C
<b>Grade 1</b>	E+	G+	I+	K+
	D / E	F	H	J / K
	C	E	G	I
	Below C	Below E	Below G	Below I
<b>Grade 2</b>	K+	L+	M+	N+
	J / K	K	L	M / N
	I	J	K	L
	Below I	Below J	Below K	Below L
<b>Grade 3</b>	N+	O+	P+	Q+
	M / N	N	O	P / Q
	L	M	N	O
	Below L	Below M	Below N	Below O
<b>Grade 4</b>	Q+	R+	S+	T+
	P / Q	Q	R	S / T
	O	P	Q	R
	Below O	Below P	Below Q	Below R
<b>Grade 5</b>	T+	U+	V+	W+
	S / T	T	U	V / W
	R	S	T	U
	Below R	Below S	Below T	Below U
<b>Grade 6</b>	W+	X+	Y+	Z
	V / W	W	X	Y
	U	V	W	X
	Below U	Below V	Below W	Below X
<b>Grade 7</b>	Z	Z	Z+	Z+
	Y	Y	Z	Z
	X	X	Y	Y
	Below X	Below X	Below Y	Below Y
<b>Grade 8+</b>	Z+	Z+	Z+	Z+
	Z	Z	Z	Z
	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Below Y	Below Y	Below Y	Below Y

## KEY

Exceeds Expectations

Meets Expectations

Approaches Expectations:  
Needs Short-Term InterventionDoes Not Meet Expectations:  
Needs Intensive Intervention

The Instructional Level Expectations for Reading chart is intended to provide general guidelines for grade-level goals, which should be adjusted based on school/district requirements and professional teacher judgement.



APPENDIX G

CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS K-2 RECOMMENDED BALANCED LITERACY

BLOCK: 120 MINUTES



### K-2 Recommended Balanced Literacy Block: 120 Minutes

The components detailed below support best practices in a balanced approach to teaching early literacy to meet the [Common Core State Standards](#). Literacy blocks can be organized in different ways depending on objectives within the allotted instructional time. This literacy block provides teachers with *ideas* on how they can *flexibly* utilize these elements when instructionally appropriate. *Note: The 120 minutes may be distributed throughout the day.* Teachers should decide the order and time allocation appropriate for their classrooms given their students, instructional materials, and learning environments. The block should be implemented using the Gradual Release of Responsibility approach, which requires that, the teacher shift from assuming "all the responsibility for performing a task ... to a situation in which the students assume all of the responsibility", ([Duke & Pearson, 2002](#)). Common Core instruction should also embed the [Social Emotional Learning Standards](#) to create a classroom culture where students can develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that will prepare them to thrive in college, career and life.

Component	Approx Time	Suggested Elements/Strategies for CCSS Instruction
Shared Reading	5-10 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read enlarged text together (scaffolding to independent practice)</li> <li>Read the same text more than once with different foci</li> <li>Engage students in deliberate Word Study (ex. Heggerty)</li> <li><a href="#">Balance literary and informational texts</a></li> <li>Guide students to read closely (<a href="#">Close Reading</a>)</li> <li>Use Formative Assessment to inform instruction</li> </ul>
Read Aloud (Instructional or Community)	5-10 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use component to make the learning objective explicit and instruct in genre, strategy and comprehension</li> <li>Cultivate <a href="#">oral language</a> and vocabulary development</li> <li>Build understanding and comprehension</li> <li>Guide students to read closely (<a href="#">Close Reading</a>)</li> <li>Use Formative Assessment to inform instruction</li> </ul>
Whole group focus lesson: Reading	7-10 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make a connection between current day's lesson and previous lessons</li> <li>Teach – model, explain and/or demonstrate skills and strategies</li> <li>Actively engage students (students listen talk, write or try out the skill and strategy while teacher listens in and provides support)</li> <li>Link this lesson with students' growing repertoire of habits</li> </ul>
Small Group (Guided Reading, Strategy Lessons)	(Occurs during Independent Reading or Writing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage students in explicit Word Study (ex. Sight Word Initiative, Sing, Spell, Read &amp; Write)</li> <li>Engage students in explicit Vocabulary instruction</li> <li>Use component to promote Foundational Skills (print concepts, phonological awareness, phonics and word recognition and fluency)</li> <li>Guide students to read closely (<a href="#">Close Reading</a>)</li> <li>Use Formative Assessment to inform instruction</li> </ul>
Independent Reading and Conferencing	20-30 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilize conferring as a formative assessment (individual or small groups)</li> <li>Use component to encourage strategic reading to increase comprehension</li> <li>Set up structures so students read to practice skills and strategies taught</li> <li>Use student partnerships (for a portion of the independent reading time)</li> <li>Set up structures to allow for students to read independently and to write in response to reading</li> </ul>
Whole Group Share: Reading	5 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Restate the objective</li> <li>Guide students in reflection on what was learned as a way to inform plans for subsequent lessons</li> <li>Set up structures to allow a few students to share per day</li> </ul>
Whole Group Focus Lesson: Writing	7-10 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make a connection between current day's lesson and previous lessons</li> <li>Teach – model, explain and/or demonstrate skills and strategies</li> <li>Actively engage students (students listen talk, write or try out the skill and strategy while teacher listens in and provides support)</li> <li>Link this lesson with students' growing repertoire of habits</li> </ul>
Shared Writing or Interactive Writing	5-10 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with students in whole group to compose text orally together (scaffolding to independent practice)</li> <li>Write while questioning or prompting students</li> <li>Use Formative Assessment to inform instruction</li> </ul>
Independent Writing and Conferencing	20 – 30 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilize conferring as a formative assessment (individual or small groups)</li> <li>Set up structures to allow for students to write independently to practice skills and strategies taught</li> <li>Use student partnerships (for a portion of the independent writing time)</li> <li>Introduce and provide opportunity for students to write in modes (narrative, informative/explanatory or opinion)</li> </ul>
Whole Group Share: Writing	5 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Restate the objective</li> <li>Guide students in reflection on what was learned</li> <li>Set up structures to allow a few students to share per day</li> </ul>

Revised 10/15/2014

APPENDIX H

CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS LITERACY BLOCK GLOSSARY

### Literacy Block Glossary

Term	Explanation
Close Reading	Close reading is about code-breaking and meaning making. It is about how the two come together, how the child practices, learns and absorbs the skills and meanings so that they become internalized. The young reader can do close readings around: what the text says (retell/summary), how the text is written (word choice, details in the illustrations, style) and why the text was written (central idea/purpose/lesson) ( <a href="#">Allyn, 2013</a> ). Teachers model and encourage students to read closely as part of a read aloud or shared reading instruction (see <a href="#">Read Aloud and Shared Reading explanation below</a> ).
Conferring	Conferring enables a teacher to understand each student's reading/writing process. Providing powerful, customized instruction based on what is learned during conferring will help students refine and extend their reading/writing competencies ( <a href="#">Fountas and Pinnell, 2011</a> ). Notes taken during both reading and writing conferences should be used to inform instruction and set goals with students.
Formative Assessment	The check for understanding mechanisms used to inform instruction and ensure each student gets the instruction needed to be successful. Teachers formatively assess students constantly but specifically "as the process of teaching and learning unfolds" ( <a href="#">Gambrell, 2007</a> ).
Guided Reading	Guided reading instruction is one type of small group instruction driven by students' needs, which are matched to the supports and challenges of a text. Planning for guided reading includes knowing students' strengths and needs to ensure that each student reads the text successfully. Whenever reading, students use strategic actions that support thinking ( <a href="#">Fountas and Pinnell, 2011</a> ).
Independent Reading	Independent reading provides students with time to work on their reading, confer with their teacher, and share work or new understandings. Reading with fluency and understanding builds when students spend extended time processing text at their independent reading level. A variety of text stretches readers' powers of comprehension so that they apply systems of strategic actions in different ways and learn to adjust their reading. With genuine choice, students experience the role of an authentic reader. The reading process is enhanced when it is surrounded by talk and writing ( <a href="#">Fountas and Pinnell, 2011</a> ).
Independent Writing	Independent writing provides students with time to work on their writing, confer with their teacher, and share work or new understandings. Students need exposure to many aspects of writing in order to understand the array of writing choices and the purpose of each. Regular reading and reviewing of student writing assists teachers in planning whole and small group mini lessons.
Read Aloud: Instructional	Instructional Read Aloud offers opportunity for instruction in genre, strategy and comprehension, cultivate vocabulary development, and build understanding and comprehension in texts. In addition, talk that occurs before, during, and after a read aloud allows students to process and grow ideas.
Read Aloud: Community	Community Read Aloud is an important component of effective literacy instruction that improves comprehension, vocabulary, and listening skills. Students need exposure to expressive and fluent readers who model for them. Community Read alouds help children learn to enjoy books that are beyond their ability to read independently.
Interactive Writing	A teaching context in which the teacher and students cooperatively plan, compose, and write a group text; both teacher and students act as scribes (in turn) ( <a href="#">Fountas and Pinnell, 2007</a> ). The emphasis is typically on foundational skills and conventions.
Focus Lesson (Reading or Writing)	This is the time when the teacher is demonstrating, modeling, and sharing his or her thinking with students. This is the time when the teacher uses the students' attention to introduce the concept, skill, or strategy they are to learn ( <a href="#">Fisher and Frey, 2008</a> ).
Shared Reading	An interactive and collective reading experience that matches the level of 60% of your students ( <a href="#">Allyn, 2013</a> ). Usually refers to students' reading from a common enlarged text, either a large-print big book, a chart, or a projected text. Individuals may have their own copies. The teacher leads the group, pointing to words and modeling other proficient reading behaviors. Reading is usually in unison, although there are adaptations, such as groups alternating lines or individuals reading some lines ( <a href="#">Fountas and Pinnell, 2007</a> ).
Shared Writing	An instructional technique in which the teacher involves a group of students in the composing of a coherent text together. The teacher writes while scaffolding children's language and ideas ( <a href="#">Fountas and Pinnell, 2007</a> ). Storytelling is encouraged throughout a K-2 classroom. Shared Writing is an excellent extension of Storytelling experiences.
Oral Language	Oral language shows evidence of thinking and supports the construction of meaning. Explicit teaching about words, phrases, and sentences creates opportunities for student to construct an understanding of how words work and can be used in reading and writing. ( <a href="#">Fountas and Pinnell, 2011</a> ).
Word Study	Word Study focuses on student recognition of language patterns, integrates inquiry into vocabulary and spelling instruction, and is based on a developmental continuum and scaffolding of skills and concepts. Word study builds on and emphasizes for students the relationship that exists between reading and writing. Students greatly benefit from examining word structures and the meaning of the parts that create the word ( <a href="#">Bear, 2012</a> ). Word study includes instruction on phonemic awareness, sight word recognition, phonics, spelling, and vocabulary.

Rev. 10/21/2014

## APPENDIX I

### CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS LITERACY BLOCK SCHEDULE SAMPLE



### Literacy Block Schedule - Sample 1

Component	Approximate Time	Description of Sample
Word Study (phonics, phonemic awareness, spelling, vocabulary)	Approximately 10 minutes	In the primary literacy block teachers should keep the rhythm of whole-part-whole in mind. The 120 minutes of a literacy block does not need to take place during one 120 minute section of time. The time can be spread across a day. Time for Reading Aloud AT LEAST ONCE A DAY and protecting time for students to read and write independently should be considered sacred time in the literacy block, and should happen every day.
Shared Reading/Close Reading	Approximately 10-15 minutes	
Standards Based Reading Focus/Mini-Lesson	Approximately 7-10 minutes	
Guided and Independent Practice Reading with one on one conferring and small group work	Approximately 30 minutes (stamina must be built over time)	In each of these components we are teaching students what real readers and writers do to understand and articulate their understanding and thinking. We do this teaching by providing opportunities for explicit modeling through a focus lesson (reading or writing), providing guided practice of that skill/strategy and thinking work, as well as protected time for students to practice independently what they've been taught. This Focus Lesson, Guided, Collaborative and Independent Practice is the Gradual Release of Responsibility.
Closure/Share – Reading	Approximately 5 minutes	
Standards Based Writing Focus/Mini-Lesson	Approximately 7-10 minutes	
Guided and Independent Practice Writing with one on one conferring and small group work	Approximately 30 minutes (stamina must be built over time)	It is not developmentally appropriate to expect students in Pre K-2nd grades to sit for long periods of time. Because of this, we provide approximations of time and encourage you to build student stamina for engaging in whole class lessons and reading and writing independently over time.
Closure/Share – Writing	Approximately 5 minutes	
Shared or Interactive Writing	Approximately 5-10 minutes	
Instructional/Community Read Aloud	Approximately 10-15	This version of a literacy block outlines how one teacher begins her day with a lesson focused on word study, then moves into shared/close reading, then into focused reading and writing lessons with time for both guided and independent practice. Both Reading and Writing focus lessons end with some sort of closure or share. Following the focus lesson teachers conduct shared or interactive writing. The literacy block, or another part of the day may end with a 10-15 read aloud of a text with the teacher modeling how a proficient reader reads and comprehends a text.

\*Literacy blocks can be structured in many different ways depending on what a teacher plans to accomplish within their allotted instructional time. The sample literacy blocks provide schools/teachers with *ideas* on how they can use the time they have for literacy instruction. Once again, these samples are *ideas* schools/teachers can use to *flexibly* structure their individual literacy blocks throughout their day.



### Literacy Block Schedule - Sample 2

Component	Approximate Time	Description of Sample
Shared or Interactive Writing	Approximately 5-10 minutes	<p>Similar to the option above, this schedule allows for the whole-small-whole or up – down – up – down rhythm that is necessary with Pre-K – 2nd grade students who do not yet have the attention span or stamina to sit for long periods of time. As teachers work to build student stamina, the reading and writing happening during independent practice can increase. It should be noted that assessments like running records or early literacy skills can be administered as one on one or small group conferences. The components reflected in this literacy block should be planned and thought of in concert with each other and planned based on data. For example, the skill practice you're modeling and practicing in word study and the comprehension and fluency work you're modeling during a read aloud is directly based on your early literacy and running record data as well as your goals for the unit and what you know about your students. You will want to then connect this work to what the students do while independently reading. The same is true for Writing. What a teacher is modeling during interactive writing is based on what she sees from the writing data as well as what her goals are for the unit (CCSS).</p>
Word Study (phonics, phonemic awareness, spelling, vocabulary)	Approximately 10 minutes	
Standards Based Reading Focus/Mini-Lesson	Approximately 7-10 minutes	
Guided and Independent Practice Reading with one on one conferring and small group work	Approximately 30 minutes (stamina must be built over time)	
Closure/Share – Reading	Approximately 5 minutes	
Standards Based Writing Focus/Mini-Lesson	Approximately 7-10 minutes	
Guided and Independent Practice Writing with one on one conferring and small group work	Approximately 30 minutes (stamina must be built over time)	
Closure/Share – Writing	Approximately 5 minutes	
Shared/Close Reading	Approximately 10-15 minutes	
Instructional/Community Read Aloud	Approximately 10-15	

\*Literacy blocks can be structured in many different ways depending on what a teacher plans to accomplish within their allotted instructional time. The sample literacy blocks provide schools/teachers with *ideas* on how they can use the time they have for literacy instruction. Once again, these samples are *ideas* schools/teachers can use to *flexibly* structure their individual literacy blocks throughout their day.

Rev. 10/21/2014

Chicago Public Schools Knowledge Center (2014)

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## VITA

Antonio Acevedo was raised in the Humboldt Park and Belmont Cragin neighbors of Chicago before he attended the University of Notre Dame and obtained his Bachelor's degree in Psychology with a second major in Spanish. He began his teaching career as bilingual teacher in a neighborhood elementary Chicago Public School (CPS) located in the West Humboldt Park neighborhood. He obtained his Masters of Science in Education from Northern Illinois University in Administration and Supervision.

Antonio began his career as an administrator when he became a Bilingual Facilitator in Region Two of CPS. After working as an assistant principal at Ames Middle School in the Logan Square neighborhood, he was given the opportunity to open a new CPS elementary school, Talman Elementary School, in the Gage Park neighborhood of Chicago. After several years as principal he worked at the CPS central office, first as Senior Assistant to the Chief of the Office of Elementary Areas and Schools and then as Deputy Officer for the Office of Language and Cultural Education. Afterwards, as he worked as an Instructional Support Leader in the Pilsen-Little Village Network, he decided to pursue his Doctorate of Education in Administration and Supervision at Loyola University Chicago. Antonio is currently principal of Whittier Elementary School in the Pilsen neighborhood and enjoys leading a school with a Dual Language Education focus.

Antonio is a father of two children and lives with his wife, a teacher, and his youngest child in the Logan Square neighborhood of Chicago.

## DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

The dissertation submitted Antonio Acevedo has been read and approved by the following committee:

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