

12-2017

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Carmina Tirado
California State University, Monterey Bay

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Let's Talk: Increasing Communication with Dual-Immersion Parents

Carmina Tirado

California State University Monterey Bay

Abstract

In 2016, California passed Proposition 58, which repealed Proposition 227. The latter proposition, passed in 1998, prohibited the use of non-English instruction in public schools across California. Since then, bilingual education programs such as dual-immersion, or two-way immersion programs have seen a rise in enrollment. Due to its novelty, parental involvement is crucial for the success of the program. This Capstone project focuses on understanding the obstacles that parents of second language learner students, specifically those in dual-immersion programs face when it comes to their involvement. Several factors such as language barriers, parent/teacher misunderstanding, and time restraints, can impact the level of involvement from parents. The primary stakeholder perspectives obtained were two teachers and an administrator, due to their direct experiences with the focus issue. Based on an analysis of the data, three action options emerged as possible ways to build relationships and promote the involvement of dual-immersion parents.

Keywords: Dual-immersion, Bilingual Education, Parent Involvement.

Let's Talk: Increasing Communication With Dual- Immersion Parents

Growing up, my parents worked long hours and did not consistently check to see what I was doing at my school. Although they rarely attended school sponsored workshops or meetings, they took part in my education by supporting me with the means that they had. What they had was a strong desire for me to succeed and have an opportunity for a better education. In fact, although they barely knew how to form a sentence in English, they strongly believed in the empowerment I would gain from having an education. So there I was, a first-generation student, who happened to also be learning a second language. I remember staying up late, struggling to finish homework. I also remember the helpless look of my parents, and the confusion in their faces when I would ask for help. Now as an adult, I can understand that the helplessness came from wanting to help me but not being able to. My experiences and my education made me realize that they too were involved in my education. The way that they were involved might have differed from that of my classmates, but they did care about my education nonetheless.

It all came full circle for me when I began working with children, specifically preschool children. In the classroom setting, I came to the realization that my experiences as a child are still relevant to this day. In each of my students I saw a reflection of the young girl I was. I saw their struggles in having to pick up a completely new language, and I also saw the implications that the involvement of their parents had. As I observed this, I began to recall my own childhood and I remembered the ways I had wished my own parents had been more involved. I remembered how I would be the last child to be picked up consistently, and how school staff responded to that. They would look at me with pity, and disbelief that a parent could be so “forgetful.” Now over ten years later, the clock read 4:15pm, almost an hour since the school day had been over, a I realized that I was thinking the same thing about some of my student’s parents. I could not help but think that the parent “did not care,” or that they had no desire to be involved in their student’s education.”

I quickly refrained from having those thoughts, as I remembered that I too had been

that student. I had forgotten about the long days my parents had put in working hard to provide for us. Most importantly, I had made a flawed assumption based solely on things were all my own opinion. What if this parent was not allowed to be leave work any earlier? What if they had no transportation? These are all questions that I had failed to think about, and something many teachers can forget. As a teacher, I do not want to jump to conclusions, or form ideas on what it is that is preventing parents from being involved. Quite the opposite, I want to create an environment where parents will feel comfortable when approaching me. This way of thinking does not invite parents in, quite the contrary, it can push them away. I want to educate, and welcome parents into the classroom. A great way to allow parent participation is to find ways that I can include them, regardless of their busy schedules. This is important because at the end of the day, we both share the same goal, the success of students.

Literature Synthesis and Integration

For the last 40 years, parental involvement has been regarded as an important element for an effective education (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). This is especially true for Latino youth, as academic achievement is strongly correlated with high parental involvement (Alexander, Cox, Behnke, Larzelere, 2017). Many of these Latino youth are considered English language learners (ELL), and are part of the growing enrollment in second language education. According to the Center for Immigration Studies, one in five students ages 5 to 17 speaks a foreign language at home. This population accounts for 44 percent of students in California. In 2016, California passed Proposition 58, which gave a green light for bilingual education in California. This ended the almost 20 year reign of Proposition 227 which banned bilingual education in public schools across California (Ee, 2017). Since then, bilingual education programs such as dual-immersion, or two-way immersion programs have seen a rise in enrollment. A dual-immersion education allows the integration of language-minority students and language-majority students (Giacchino- Baker, Piller, 2006).

Involvement of Second language Learner Parents

It is projected that by 2050, one in three students born in the United States will come from a foreign born parent (Ee, J. as cited in Javier, Festa, Florendo, & Mendoza, 2015). This mimics a similar increase seen in California, as the Latino community made up 38 percent of the state's population (Maldonado- Higle, 2014). In the past decade, the increase of students coming from Latino families has sparked interest regarding the involvement of Latino parents in their students' education (Alexander, Cox, Behnke, 2017). In many instances these Latino students are also learning a new language. In California, 83.5 percent of the state's 1.4 million English Language Learner (ELL) students speak Spanish, making it the most common language in the state (Hopkinson, 2017). However, Turney and Kao (2009) discovered that although the interest in parental involvement is high, many parents of Latino students are likely to be less involved in their students' academics (Alexander et al. as cited in Turney and Kao, 2009). When compared to non-minority parents, minority parents tended to be less involved than their counterparts, largely in part to economic and accessibility barriers (Alexander et al, 2017).

Factors such as lack of transportation, work, language differences, and feeling unwelcome by school staff have negative effects on participation and prevent parents from playing an active role in their student's education (Alexander et al, 2017). It is also important to note that parental involvement of second language learner parents can vary. What might be considered as involvement by a parent, might be seen differently in the eyes of the teacher. Gerena (2011) states that differences in views can lead to the parent's behavior to be seen as indifference. The idea that a parent is indifferent can create barriers for a healthy parent-teacher relationship, thus creating a barrier for parent involvement. Figure 1 explains four types of barriers that prevent parents from being involved (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). These four barriers impact how parents perceive their involvement, their capabilities, and how much or how little they are involved. Hornby & Lafaele (2011) include parent-teacher factors, child factors, societal factors, and individual parent/ family factors. Although the presence of obstacles might

deter involvement, parents of second language learners in dual-immersion programs strongly believed in the power that their own participation had in their student's education (Gerena, 2011).

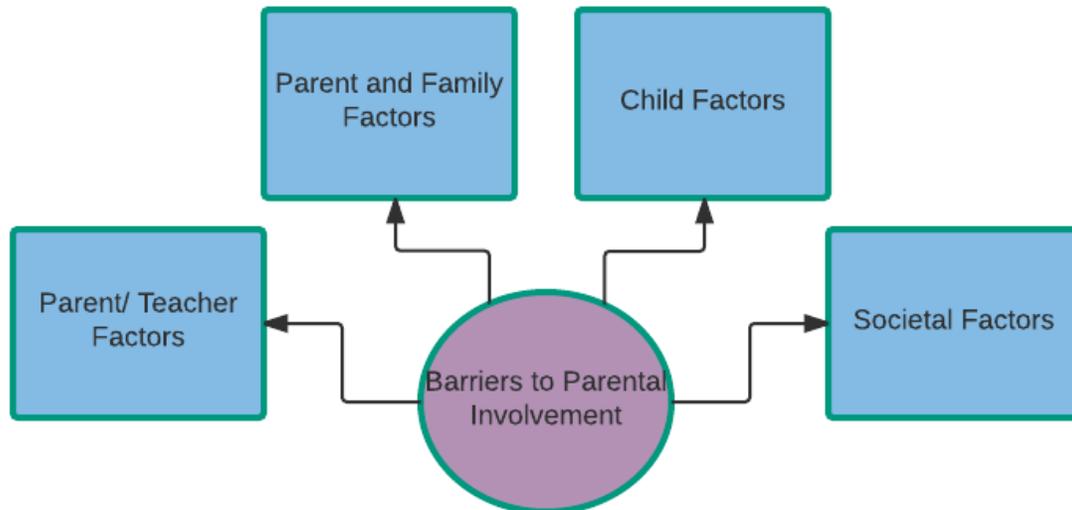


Figure 1. Barriers to Parental Involvement (Hornby, Lafaele, 2011).

Academic and Dual-Immersion Success

How involved the parent is plays an important role in both the academic achievement of the student and the success of the program. In her study, Maldonado-Higle (2014) concluded that the more involved and educated about the dual-immersion program the parent is, the more successful the outcome. In fact, students in dual-immersion programs have been identified as consistently having higher levels of proficiency in the target language. These levels are higher than the traditional one-way immersion counterparts (Kavanaugh, Hickey, 2017, as cited in Hinton, 2001). Hinton (2001) argues that classroom environment alone is not sufficient for success in a dual-immersion classroom, but rather a combination of classroom environment and parental support is needed. Not only is parental involvement crucial in the success of the dual-immersion program itself, but it is an essential factor of academic success. According to Alexander (2007) parental involvement is associated with higher academic achievement in diverse populations. Parental involvement can also help determine

success in higher education. Ee (2017) states that parental involvement can be a predictor for academic achievements such as test scores, high school graduation, and college enrollment.

Parental involvement of parents of children in dual-immersion programs can vary, and so can its interpretations. Some parents could believe that they are highly involved, but seem uninvolved to the teacher. It is also important to look at the dual-immersion student perception. Stone (2009) suggested that a student's perception of their parents involvement could negatively or positively affect academic achievement. This positive or negative outcome is explained as the Theory of Rationality, or Rational Choice Theory. The Theory of Rationality, although originally developed in the field of economics, has been adapted to explain the adolescent decision-making process (Alexander et al., 2017, as cited in Stone, 2009). According to the theory, there are two assumptions for decision making, intentionality and rationality. A student that interprets their parent's involvement in a rational way will perceive the lack of involvement as logical, and therefore not be affected by it. Examples of this are work related barriers, where a student would be able to rationalize the lack of involvement as something that is out of their parent's control (Alexander et al, 2017). This contrasts with intentionality, where in the student's mind, their parents could have done something to be involved but they purposefully chose not to.

Parent- Teacher Relationships

Perception can influence how parents see their own abilities as an active role in their student's education. Kavanaugh and Hickey (2011) suggested that parents decide to participate in their children's education when they feel welcome and their ideas are valued. However, when that is not the case, parents can feel isolated or incapable of helping students at home or in school settings (Kavanaugh & Hickey, 2011). A teacher's perception is also crucial to participation. Much of participation is measured by the behaviors teachers can observe, while any other efforts remain unappreciated (Ee, 2017). These perceptions lead to misunderstandings between parents and teachers,

which create barriers for parent-teacher relationships. According to Bakker & Denessen (2007) there is an “ideal” perspective in regards to parental involvement. Due to this perspective, teachers might hold the involvement of a certain group, in many cases non-minority groups, above the involvement of minority groups (Bakker & Denessen, 2007). This means that a non-minority group’s involvement can be the preferred method, and anything different is seen as insufficient.

In order to counteract such behaviors, it is necessary for the teachers to value what each child and their families have to offer. Gonzalez (2005) calls this the Funds of Knowledge. Funds of knowledge is explained as the cultural and linguistic resources that students and their families possess (Kinney, 2015 as cited in Gonzalez, 2005). There can be an array of circumstances that deter parental involvement, but when a teacher uses the resources each family has to offer, they can ensure that each family can feel competent and knowledgeable enough to participate (Kinney, 2015). One of the ways a teacher can learn more about the resources parents and families can bring into the classroom is through family engagement activities. A teacher can assign an activity such as a parent-student homework assignment where parents and students work together to complete it. According to Spellings (2005) a family homework assignment can help create greater understanding between families and teachers, and can provide opportunity for increased communication. Additionally, an activity such as homework can allow families to be informed about what their children are learning as well as the policies and programs of the school. Teachers who employ the funds of knowledge mentality not only allow parents to feel appreciated, but they create an environment where parent- teacher relationships can flourish. A great way that a teacher can utilize the knowledge is

A New Opportunity For Communication

As technology becomes more widely available, communication across various medias has increased. According to Blau (2016) mobile devices are a convenient tool for increasing parent- teacher communication (Blau, 2016, as cited in Ho et al, 2013). Allowing parents to be involved through the use of technology can increase the

involvement of parents who otherwise would not be able to. With the help of technology, parents are now be able to access their child's grades and classroom announcements at any given time. Currently there are several applications that allow for parents and teachers to communicate without having to physically meet. Two of these applications are Seesaw and ClassDojo, which are completely free of cost to parents. Seesaw is an application which allows parents to stay up to date with their students learning by providing opportunities for them to see their classwork and class updates. This application also has translation tools, which allows parents to participate who might not have otherwise because of language barriers (Seesaw, 2017). ClassDojo is very similar to Seesaw and also allows for parent participation throughout the use of technology. Additionally, teachers can communicate with parents through the class story feature or in private messages (ClassDojo, 2017).

Education Is Not Only For Students

Parent education is essential for parental involvement of parents of second language learners. According to Ee (2017), one of the keys to improving parental involvement in dual-immersion programs is to provide parents with a welcoming and supportive school environment where they receive appropriate language support (Ee, 2017). This language support could come from a series of workshops or classes where parents could gain valuable knowledge all while participating in school related activities. Parents could also benefit from interaction with other parents. This is because successful dual-immersion programs allow parents to be engaged with various types of networks, thus helping parents connect and create school communities, further increasing participation (Ee, 2017). In her study, Maldonado- Higle (2014) provides parents of dual-immersion parents with various opportunities to create networks with others through a series of workshops. Some examples of these workshops include dual-immersion workshops, and family social gatherings. During the Dual-immersion workshops, parents are equipped with research and strategies that assist them in providing support to their students (Maldonado-Higle, 2014). Parents also have an open opportunity to ask and get answers to questions they could not express in the

classroom setting. Additionally, while attending these workshops, parents can make their voices heard by making suggestions for future meetings. Another opportunity for parent growth comes in the form of social gatherings. Maldonado- Higle (2014) identified that parents who participate in the family social gatherings, have the opportunity to share their own language, and cultural aspects. This helps create communities where parents can learn from each other and find common ground.

Preparation Is Key

The number of second language learners is seeing a rapid growth (Lucas & Villegas, 2013). As this number increases, so does the need for teachers who are aware of cultural and linguistic diversity. Teachers play a major role in the parental involvement of second language learners. Therefore, it is important to prepare teachers to have a positive attitude towards involving parents from various backgrounds. This will help teachers encourage participation, and increase the overall effectiveness of parental involvement (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Teacher preparation programs are in the forefront in regards to parental involvement, and are responsible for preparing the teachers of today. According to Lucas & Villegas (2013) teacher candidates must develop sociolinguistic consciousness, which in return will help them value linguistic diversity and teach them to be advocates for second language learners. It is also important that during their education, future teachers receive classes where they can interrogate their own beliefs in regards to linguistic diversity (Lucas & Villegas, 2013). Having such classes can help future teachers develop a new way of thinking that will mold them into teachers who have an understanding of the connections between language, culture, and identity. Once a teacher has this understanding, he or she will be capable of seeing linguistic diversity as a valuable classroom resource.

Conclusion

The increase of students learning a second language has put the topic of parental involvement in the spotlight. It is important to consider the various barriers that could

impede the participation of the parents of such group. Factors such as work, language barriers, and feeling unwelcome by school staff can all affect the ways in which parents of second language learner students participate. It is also important to consider that the level of involvement can be interpreted differently, which may lead to misunderstandings. Given this issue, it is essential that the teacher, and schools provide opportunities for parents gain new knowledge and voice their opinions.

Method

For this capstone project, the researchers investigated how teachers viewed parental involvement both within and out of the classroom setting, and what they thought could be done to improve it. Based on an analysis of the data and the relevant research literature, the researchers utilized the new knowledge to formulate an action that responded to the focus issue in a way that inspired, informed, and involved teachers and parents.

Context

The site was an elementary school in Sunny City,¹ Sunny City has a population of 155,000, with its population being predominantly Latino/ Hispanic (Data USA, 2017). This was a school where the majority of its student population was also from a Latino/ Hispanic background (SARC, 2017). The school's name was West Sunny City Elementary School, which served students from kindergarten to sixth grade. It was a newer school, as it had been built in 2005, on the west side of Sunny City. As of Spring 2017, this school had an enrollment of 804 students (Mancera, 2017). Of these students, 63 percent were second language learners, and 93 percent were considered socioeconomically disadvantaged. The majority, 92.9 percent of the students were Latino/ Hispanic. West Sunny City Elementary offered a dual- immersion program for students in grades kindergarten through sixth. Due to its structure, the program had parallel instruction in both English and in Spanish, which gave students the opportunity to learn both languages. For those who need it, additional language support in English

¹ Pseudonym was used in place of city name and school name.

is offered after school. In 2008, West Sunny City Elementary's dual-immersion program won the School of Excellence Award through California Association for Bilingual Education, CABE (Sunny City Elementary School District, 2016).

Participants and Participant Selection

We invited three educators; a school administrator, classroom teacher, and college professor, to participate in this study. This group of prospective participants were invited to participate based on their experience, knowledge, and membership, which was relevant to the focus issue. Among these three participants, two were male, and one was female. All of the participants had a similar ethnicity and cultural background; namely, all came from a Spanish speaking background.

Victor M. A Latino/Hispanic male administrator of an elementary school in Sunny City (Not Sunny City Elementary). He had been an administrator for three years, and was an alumnus of CSUMB.

Claudia R. A Latina/Hispanic female, and a second grade teacher at Sunny City Elementary . She had been a teacher at this site for 10 years, and was an alumnus of CSUMB.

Antonio G. A Latino/Hispanic college professor, who had a diverse background in working with students of various grade levels.

Researchers

Both researchers came together based on a common interest for finding opportunities that allowed dual- immersion parents to become more active in the education of their students. Their bilingual education backgrounds and experiences in the school system were relevant to the focus issue, and allowed them to conduct this study.

Carmina T. This concern was personally meaningful to me as I was a second

language learner myself, and I recall the lack of involvement of my parents when it came to school related activities. I also had experience in working with students from second language backgrounds, and communicating with Spanish speaking families. My experiences both personally, and work related qualified me to carry out this project because I could relate with the students I worked with and I could communicate effectively with families when necessary. I thought that I would be different from the “informants” and “influentials” because not one second language learner student or family could relate to all of my experiences, but there would be some common ground. My experiences such as my educational level, and work experience stood out as differences between informants, influentials, and myself. Such differences could impact my perspectives and work on the concern because I might overlook, or dismiss certain details due to my knowledge and personal experiences.

Iliana I. This concern was significant to me because I was a also a second language learner. Contrary to some students, my mother was involved when it came to my schooling and extracurricular activities. My experiences in the workplace and in service learning, allowed me to notice that the parents of children who had second language backgrounds seemed less involved than parents in other demographic groups. My background and experiences in the workplace have qualified me to carry out this project. My partner and I collaborated to find ideas that could better promote the parental involvement of dual immersion parents. Both Carmina and myself, used our experiences to find some common ground. Our contributions led us to find ways to help dual immersion parents be more involved in their children’s education.

Semi-Structured Interview and Survey Questions

1. Tell me about parental involvement at your school. What do you see as the challenge with parental involvement from second language learner parents? What are you concerned about when it comes to the parental involvement of this specific group?
2. What is currently being done to raise the level of involvement from parents of second language learner students? By whom? and what do you think of these efforts? Why?

3. What do you think should be done to improve the parental involvement of parents of second language learners in school related activities? What are some possible methods to improve the involvement of parents in activities both within and outside the classroom?
4. What do you think are the obstacles/drawbacks/disadvantages to seeking more involvement from parents?
5. Is there anything else that you would like to say about the parental involvement of parents of second language learners in your classroom?

Procedure

Researchers communicated through email with potential participants. Once the participants agreed to be part of this project, the participants were interviewed. All interviews were done individually. When it was not possible to interview participants in person, they were invited to complete a survey of the same questions, either through email or paper and pencil. Face-to-Face interviews were audio-recorded (with participant consent) and took place at the school site. A semi-structured interview format was used for face-to-face interviews, to allow for follow-up questions to unclear, interesting or unexpected responses. All interviews/surveys were scheduled at the convenience of the interviewee and took approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Data Analysis

Transcribed interviews were coded and analyzed for emergent themes.

Results

For this capstone project, teachers and school administrators were interviewed to see what they think could be done to improve parental involvement both within the classroom and outside. This is important because both researchers were second language learners, and they believe in the important role parental involvement plays in a student's education. As more dual-immersion programs emerge, it is essential to continue to seek opportunities that involve parents. Based on an analysis of the data and the relevant research literature three themes emerged (see Table 1). Evidence-based decision making required evaluating each potential Action Option by the following criteria: time, impact, and reach. Based on the evaluation of each Action Option an action will be recommended and justified. Each action option is shown below (see Figure 2).

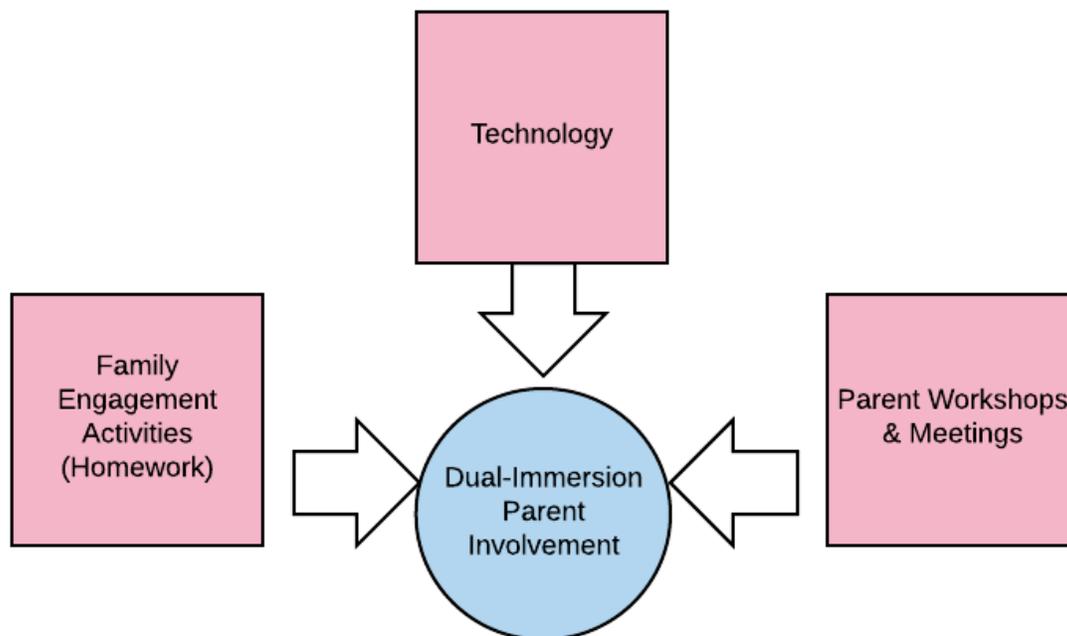


Figure 2: Action Options for Dual-Immersion Parent Involvement

Family Engagement Activities

Parents of second language learner students can be involved through school activities given by their child's teacher. Claudia R. (Personal communication, 2017) stated, "I am considering assigning activities where my students can work at home with their parents but I have never acted on it." She added that "it might be a good way to promote collaboration between students and their parents." Margaret Spellings (2005) states that homework can help create greater understanding between families and teachers, and can provide opportunity for increased communication. She also mentions that homework allows families to be informed about what their children are learning as well as the policies and programs of the school. Additionally, Antonio G. (Personal communication, 2017) suggested that "parents of dual-immersion children have a better opportunity to communicate with their children's teacher through paper based methods, since most parents are usually working long hours of the day and there are times when they cannot use technology or attend meetings." Epstein (2016) stated that TIPS (Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork) is a good way for parents to participate in their children's activities. One of the methods used in TIPS involves Home-to-School Communication. In this method, the teacher sends out a form where parents are required to give the teacher feedback on the given activity, their child's work, and to provide any questions or comments. The parent then signs the form to document the child's completion of the assignment and the parent's engagement.

Keeping Parents in the Know Through Technology

Advances in technology over the past few years have allowed teachers to communicate with parents without ever having to meet face to face. This has made it convenient for those parents who have restricting work schedules and cannot make it to school functions. Victor M. (Vice Principal of Sunny City School, expressed his concern on parental involvement and suggested that technology is a good method to have parents participate in their children's schooling. Victor M. stated that "he hopes to have an application called 'ParentSquare' up and running by the end of the year as it is a great tool to increase communication with parents."According to Graham-Clay (2004), a study in 1995 showed that the use of videos to communicate with parents allowed

parents to have better communication with teachers and a better understanding of their child's school program (Graham- Clay, 2004, as cited in Alberto et al, 1995). In recent years, applications such as ClassDojo, have facilitated video communication with parents. Claudia R., teacher of West Sunny City Elementary, personally "found ClassDojo helpful as she got the most involvement from parents in that application." Additionally, she "believed that using technology can help her student's parents be in the know of classroom activities regardless of their schedules." According to Ho (2013, as cited in Blau, 2016) mobile devices are a convenient tool for increasing parent-teacher communication. Allowing parents to be involved through the use of technology can increase the involvement of parents who otherwise would not be able to.

Parent Workshops and Meetings

Educators need to provide parents with a welcoming and supportive school environment where they receive appropriate language support (Ee, 2017). According to Victor M., "Spanish speaking parents get language support through programs like ELAC and making sure all school handouts are in both English and Spanish." The language support given to the parents could also come from a series of workshops or classes. During these workshops, parents could gain valuable knowledge while participating in school related activities. Parents could also benefit from interaction with other parents while they participate in the workshops. Claudia R. stated "In West Sunny City Elementary, we have workshops that are done once a month with the school psychologist who gives advice on how parents can improve their children's academics by being involved. These workshops benefit the parents allowing them to interact with teachers, psychologist and other parents." The parent workshops and meetings are successful because dual-immersion programs allow parents to be engaged with various types of networks, thus helping parents connect and create school communities, which further increase participation (Ee, 2017). In her study, Maldonado- Higle (2014) provides parents of dual-immersion students with various opportunities to create networks with other parents through a series of workshops. Some examples of these workshops include dual-immersion workshops, and family social gatherings. During the Dual-immersion workshops, parents are equipped with research and strategies that assist

them in providing support to their students (Maldonado-Higle, 2014). Parents also have an open opportunity to ask and get answers to questions they could not express in the classroom setting. Additionally, while attending these workshops and meetings, parents can make their voices heard by making suggestions for future meetings. Maldonado-Higle (2014) identified that parents who participate in the family social gatherings, have the opportunity to share their own language, and cultural aspects. Opportunities such as these, help create communities where parents can learn from each other and find common ground.

Table 1

Evaluation Of Action Options

	Time Constraints	Probability of Impact	Reach
Family Engagement Activities that parents and students can work on together	Medium	High	High
Parent Workshops/ Meeting	High	Medium	Low
The use of applications and other forms of technology to keep parents in the know	Low	Medium	Medium

Conclusion

Considering all of the scholarly research, the interviewees perspectives, and criteria, we came to the conclusion, that family engagement activities were a better option. The reach for this option was high because parents and children would be able to complete

the assignment on their own time; regardless of their busy work schedules or language barriers. Although technology is widely available, many parents still have no access to it, making the reach less successful. Furthermore, workshops would require a time frame and most parents would not be able to meet that frame.

Further recommendations for this project are to have an increase in the opportunities that allow for the involvement of parents of second language learner students. Regardless of the availability of technology, it is important to continue to make communication available through traditional methods such as handouts and workshops. One way to ensure that these methods are successful would be to provide parents with the necessary language support. Having this support, will create an inviting environment where parents will feel that their input is needed and important.

As in many studies, there will be limitations. In the case of parental involvement of second language learner parents, access to technology might vary. These variations in accessibility might make it easier or difficult for parents to use these tools in order to communicate with the teacher. Another possible limitation is that the interviewees were so limited. With more time, this project could add more influentials in the topic of parental involvement to identify more ideas that can promote the involvement of the discussed group.

In conclusion, if this project were to be reproduced by others, it is essential that these recommendations are considered. Parental involvement of parents of second language learners can be improved through various ways, but it is important to consider the possibility for limitations. Factors such as work schedules, language, and limited access to communication tools can act as impediments for involvement. Nevertheless, providing an environment where all those obstacles are addressed can ensure that parents and teachers can create lines of communication where relationships between both parts can flourish.

Action Documentation and Reflection

As the population of second language learning students increases in California, Spanish has become the most common language spoken by students, making up 83.5 percent of the state's English language population (Hopkinson, 2017). Although the percentage of students is high, this is not reflected in the percentage of parental involvement of this given group. According to a study by Turney and Kao (2009), many parents of Latino students are less likely to be involved than non-minority parents, due to economic and accessibility barriers (Turney & Kao, as cited in Alexander et al., 2017). Lack of transportation, inflexible work schedules, language differences, and feeling unwelcome by school communities, are among some of the barriers (Alexander et al, 2017). Another obstacle can arise when levels of parental involvement are interpreted differently. According to Gerena (2011), some parents might think their involvement is sufficient, while in the teachers' eyes it can be seen as indifference. Such beliefs can act as barriers for a good parent-teacher relationship. Taking into consideration all of these obstacles, it is important to create opportunities where parents feel welcome and parent teacher relationships can flourish, as this can invite parents to participate more actively in their student's academics.

Given the issue, it was important to reach out to stakeholders who were knowledgeable in the matter, who could provide possible action options. We interviewed two educators; Claudia R., an elementary school teacher, and Antonio G., a professor at CSUMB. The third interviewee, Victor M. who is an elementary school vice principal, also shared his knowledge on the matter, and added both an educator perspective and an administrator perspective.

From each of the interviews, we gained knowledge about the involvement of parents of second language learner students, such as those in dual- immersion programs. After taking into account all perspectives, as well as scholarly research, three action options emerged. These were: 1) family engagement activities (homework); 2) using technology to keep parents in the know, and 3) parent workshops and meetings. As the options were narrowed down based on our criteria, we concluded that implementing family engagement activities would be the best option for our sample

parents. Both Iliana and I, chose to implement family engagement activities that parents and students could complete together as homework, as this would allow parents and students to work together in order to complete the assignment. We also saw it as a way for the teacher to get to know her students' parents better. Parents could complete the homework assignment at the comfort of their home without having to attend a meeting and technology would not be a limitation.

Artifact 1

The image shows a double-sided worksheet. The left side is in English and the right side is in Spanish. Both sides have a 'Name:' field at the top. The English side is titled 'Meet My Family' and the Spanish side is titled 'Conociendo A Mi Familia'. Both sides have four circles connected by lines, each containing a question or statement about family. At the bottom of each side, there is a section for 'My family traditions are' with a line for writing.

English Side:

Name: _____

Meet My Family

Draw Your Family

I have _____ brothers.

I have _____ sisters.

My family likes to eat _____.

How is my family unique? _____

My family comes from _____ (country).

My family traditions are _____

Spanish Side:

Nombre: _____

Conociendo A Mi Familia

Dibuja a tu familia.

Tengo _____ hermanos.

Tengo _____ hermanas.

A mi familia le gusta comer _____.

¿Cómo es mi familia única? - _____

Mi familia viene de _____ (país).

Mis tradiciones familiares son _____

Artifact 1: An image of our worksheet. This worksheet is double sided, one side in in English, and the other is in Spanish. Text has been translated to be identical.

For our action option we decided to create an activity that parents and students could complete together, in the form of a homework assignment. Claudia R. welcomed us into her classroom, and allowed us to implement our action option with the classroom parents. The assignment was titled “ Meet My Family” or “ Conociendo A Mi Familia”

and offered the opportunity for students to get to know their backgrounds. Additionally, it gave Claudia R. the opportunity to get to know family backgrounds, without ever having to physically ask them anything. This was very important as Claudia expressed that many of the parents worked long hours. To further meet the needs of parents, our worksheet was created in both English and Spanish. The worksheet can be found above (Artifact 1).

After conducting our interview and sharing our ideas with Claudia R., we were greeted with a positive response. She also offered her full support and agreed to work with us to find suitable options that would allow parents to be more involved in their student's education. One unexpected surprise was that not every student in Claudia R.'s class speaks Spanish or English. More than five students speak Mixteco, a dialect spoken in Oaxaca, Mexico. This was unexpected because ideally, we would have wanted to create a worksheet that would cater to all the languages represented within Claudia R.'s classroom. This is something we regret not knowing from the start. With more time, we would have searched for someone knowledgeable in Mixteco who could help us create an additional worksheet in that dialect. Due to this, our next step would be to work towards getting the Mixteco population represented in Claudia R.'s classroom, by creating a worksheet that meets their needs.

Critical Reflection

This project gave me the opportunity to improve my skills both as a writer and a researcher. Furthermore, working with a partner taught me how to effectively collaborate with others to reach one similar goal, such as the completion of the project. I also learned that although I usually allow others to lead, I can be a leader too when it is necessary.

As I conclude my time at California State University, Monterey Bay (CSUMB), I can reflect upon all my experiences both within the classroom and out in my service learning sites. All of these experiences have shaped me into the teacher that I aspire to be, and have given me the courage to take my education even further. Specifically, the themes of the Liberal Studies department (MLOs) and the required coursework have impacted my professional development. Being a liberal studies major has exposed me to an understanding of subject matter which will make my transition from a student to a teacher, that much easier. In the past two years that I attended CSUMB, I have had the opportunity to acquire pedagogical skills that allowed me to think critically about what it means to be a teacher in this day and age. Several of my courses provided me with the chance to obtain general knowledge on my future responsibilities both as public educator in and out of the classroom. I will use all of the gained knowledge to assist me as I continue with my education, and eventually have my own classroom. My journey at CSUMB has also been one where I have also learned about myself. In many ways, the past two years have permitted me to find my true self by identifying exactly what makes me the person that I am. My own awareness about diversity and culture, will allow me to be a teacher who will empower students and teach them to embrace their own diversities.

The next necessary steps in order to become the professional that I envision to be, include using all the acquired knowledge to prepare for graduate

school. Nevertheless, I now have a good foundation that I will continue to add to as I transition to a teaching position. I will continue to learn and grow both as a person and as an educator, this especially true because a teacher never stops learning.

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