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Where Have All the Bilingual Programs Gone?!: Why Prepared School Leaders are Essential for Bilingual Education

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Enrollment in bilingual education has declined significantly in New York City in recent years, in spite of state and city policies that support it. To better understand this alarming trend, we interviewed school leaders, particularly principals, who have dismantled their school's bilingual education programs in recent years. We also interviewed school leaders who have managed to preserve their bilingual education programs within the same time period. We examined these leaders' knowledge and understandings about bilingual education and their emergent bilingual students, and their rationale for the respective language education policies they have adopted.

Our research points to the very important role of school leaders, particularly principals, in sustaining or eliminating bilingual education. We found that the leaders of what we term *English-only* schools had received no formal pre-service preparation to work with emergent bilinguals, while the leaders of *bilingual* schools in our sample were well prepared. We conclude with a call for greater preparation of all school leaders in New York, including principals, by changing their state certification requirements in order to improve the education of emergent bilinguals through the preservation and expansion of bilingual education.

Keywords: bilingual education, educational leadership, emergent bilingual, English-only, English language learner, language policy, New York, principal preparation, school leadership.

This article examines the dramatic loss of bilingual education programs over the past 14 years in New York City schools and highlights the essential role of school leaders in either dismantling or nurturing bilingual education. Although bilingual education has often been overtly contested in U.S. public schools, most visibly through the passage of anti-bilingual education legislation in California, Arizona, and Massachusetts in recent history, this has occurred more covertly in New York with no changes in official policy statements. Notably, emergent bilinguals¹ are far less likely to receive bilingual education in city schools than they were in the past, in spite of state

and city educational policies in place that encourage this type of educational program (Menken & Solorza, 2014).

Although in 2000 emergent bilinguals in New York City were evenly divided in terms of programming, with about half enrolled in English as a second language (ESL) and half in bilingual education (New York Times, 2000), bilingual education enrollment has rapidly decreased since then. At present, 76% of emergent bilinguals are enrolled in ESL programs, while just 22% are in some form of bilingual education (i.e., transitional bilingual education or dual language bilingual education) (New York City Department of Education, 2013). The graph included in Figure 1 details this program enrollment trend over the past decade. The greatest decline has been in transitional bilingual education programs, which historically have been the favored bilingual model in city schools. Specifically, 37% of emergent bilinguals were enrolled in transitional bilingual education programs a decade ago, but now only 18% are; in other words, there are only half as many emergent bilingual students in transitional bilingual programs as there were a decade ago. Dual language bilingual education programs have actually grown, doubling in enrollment during the same time period, though their overall presence in city schools remains very small. Ten years ago, 2% of emergent bilinguals were in dual language programs and now 4% are enrolled in this program model (New York City Department of Education, 2013). However, this increase in dual language enrollment has not been enough to counter the loss of transitional programs, resulting in a steep overall decline in bilingual education programs citywide, as illustrated in Figure 1.

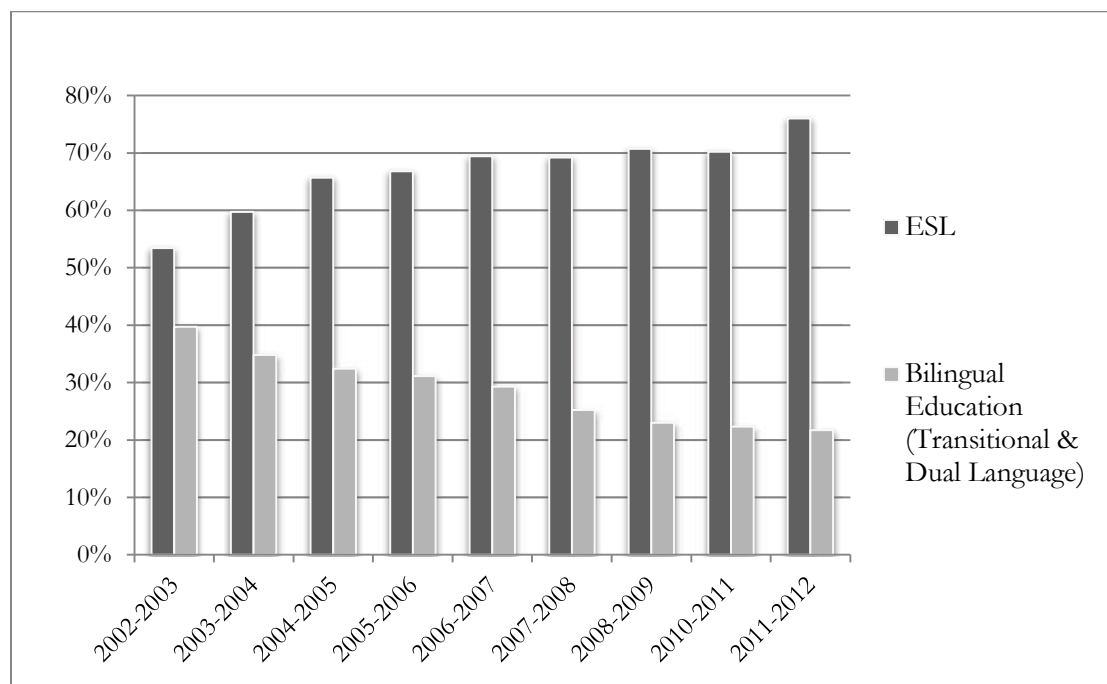


Figure 1. Program enrollment of New York City emergent bilinguals by school year, 2002-2012 (New York City Department of Education, 2013).

We wanted to better understand why bilingual education programs have decreased so dramatically, even though nothing has changed during this time period in official language policy statements, and what it takes to successfully maintain bilingual education programs within the present climate. Towards this end, we interviewed school leaders who had recently eliminated their school's bilingual education program and replaced it with ESL,² and other leaders who had done just the opposite, continuing to provide bilingual education. As we report elsewhere (Menken & Solorza, 2014), we found that all of the leaders who had eliminated their school's bilingual programs identified the extreme pressure of high-stakes standardized testing and accountability under *No Child Left Behind*³ as a main reason that they dismantled bilingual education programming, with the belief that English-only instruction would improve their students' performance on tests administered in English (particularly the English language arts exam).

We also found that none of the leaders of what we term here *English-only* schools (where bilingual education was replaced by ESL) had received any formal pre-service preparation in the education of emergent bilinguals (Menken & Solorza, 2014). They, therefore, hold a number of misperceptions about bilingual education, bilingualism, and language learning as well as limited understandings of their emergent bilingual students. By contrast, we found that all of the leaders of what we term *bilingual schools* (those where bilingual education continues to be provided) are well prepared, in that they hold a formal degree in bilingual education and/or teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL), and are knowledgeable about bilingualism and bilingual education. They expressed understandings of their emergent bilingual students and their communities, as well as connections to their experiences. Moreover, leaders of bilingual schools were found to actively support, sustain, and protect their school's bilingual education program.

Notably, in this article we expand this discussion by reporting on the specific knowledge and understandings that the leaders of the *English-only* and *bilingual* schools in New York City have about bilingual education and their emergent bilingual students, as well as their rationale for the respective language education policies they have adopted. After examining these findings, we probe the implications of our research. Specifically, we conclude this article with a call for greater preparation of all school leaders in New York, including principals, as a means to improve the education of emergent bilinguals through the preservation and expansion of bilingual education.

Literature Review

New York's Language Education Policies in National Context

Policies for the education of emergent bilinguals in New York, as elsewhere, both reflect and are strongly influenced by policy trends and national discourse (Dorner & Layton, 2013; Menken & Solorza, 2014). Specifically, schools must offer at least one of the following programs to students officially designated ELLs (their terms): transitional bilingual education, dual language bilingual education, and/or freestanding ESL (New York City Department of Education, 2008, New York State Education Department, 2009). New York's language education policy is actually quite progressive, as it is one of just seven states that require the provision of bilingual education when a school has

the student population to support it (Menken, 2012). In 1974, the *Aspira Consent Decree* established the right for emergent bilinguals in New York to receive bilingual education, mandating that transitional bilingual education be provided in schools where there are 20 or more emergent bilinguals who speak the same home language in the same grade (Reyes, 2006). While the *Aspira Consent Decree* (Reyes, 2006) has been contested periodically, it remains the official language policy and is currently upheld through the New York Commissioner's Regulations Part 154 (New York State Education Department, 2007). Although the mandatory provision of bilingual education remains on paper, the findings we present below reveal how educational practices tell a different story.

Nationally, bilingual education has been challenged through two significant policy shifts in recent years (Menken, 2013). First is the passage of anti-bilingual education mandates by ballot measure in California (Proposition 227, passed in 1997), Arizona (Proposition 203, passed in 2000), and Massachusetts (Question 2, passed in 2002). Bilingual education opponents led by Ron Unz and reinforced through media discourse offered the public images of students languishing in costly *Spanish-only* bilingual education programs, a *failed educational experiment* where they never learn English, rooted in the belief that English immersion helps emergent bilinguals learn English more quickly and effectively. These anti-bilingual education sentiments were acted upon in the absence of a research base to support such views (Combs & Nicholas, 2012; Crawford, 1999). The efforts to altogether eliminate bilingual education in these three states have had a national impact, as enrollment of emergent bilinguals in bilingual education programs decreased nationally from 59% to 37% during the period from 1992 to 2002 (Zehler et al., 2003).

In spite of the promise that English immersion would result in improved educational outcomes for emergent bilinguals, the achievement gap has not decreased in California, Arizona, or Massachusetts, and instead, evidence suggests that educational quality and opportunities have declined for emergent bilinguals since the passage of these restrictive language education policies (Arias & Faltis, 2012; Gándara & Hopkins, 2010). Not only have English-only educational policies affected these three states, they have been deeply influential across the US in shaping public opinion and the discourse surrounding bilingual education, promulgating negative attitudes towards it – particularly through the media (Johnson, 2007).

The second main policy shift that has proven detrimental to bilingual education is federal education legislation emphasizing accountability, which relies almost entirely on students' performance on standardized tests as a means to evaluate students and their schools. Galvanized by *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) in 2002, emergent bilingual students must take and pass academic content exams. Yet language poses a barrier to test performance whether it is administered in English or the student's home language,⁴ as in states like New York where test translations are a permitted accommodation for certain subjects (Menken, 2008). Emergent bilinguals underperform in New York and nationally in comparison to their English monolingual peers on all of these exams (Menken, 2008, 2010) and, as a result, these students, their teachers, and their schools are disproportionately penalized for failing to meet the accountability requirements (Menken, 2010). Many researchers have criticized the high-stakes testing of emergent

bilinguals that is currently rampant across U.S. schools for their lack of validity when used to assess this student population (see Solórzano, 2008 for a review).

In spite of these concerns, the test and punish approach to educational accountability in the US has recently been advanced through Race to the Top (a 2010 grants competition program for federal education funding, of which New York was a recipient) and the newly adopted Common Core State Standards, as states move into the assessment phase of their implementation (see Menken & Solorza, 2014 and Menken, Hudson, & Leung, forthcoming for further discussion). On New York's new Common Core tests in grades 3-8, a paltry 3.2% of emergent bilinguals passed the English language arts test and just 9.8% passed the math test in Spring 2013 (EngageNY, 2013); this is a decline from the statewide passing rate of about 13% on English language arts tests and 30% on math tests for emergent bilinguals in those same grades (New York State Education Department, 2011). Yet the state and city accountability systems have remained unchanged, and schools serving emergent bilinguals continue to be highly susceptible to restructuring or closure if their passing rates are deemed too low (a trend that was described in Menken, 2010 and continues today).

The intensity of these accountability pressures has been found to encourage English-only approaches in schools (Dorner & Layton, 2013; Menken, 2008; Menken & Solorza, 2014). Taken together, anti-bilingual education mandates and test-based accountability policies have created what Gándara and Baca (2008) term *a perfect storm* for dismantling bilingual education programs in New York.

School Leaders as Policy Negotiators and their (Un-)Preparedness in New York

Research has shown that maintaining a bilingual education program within this restrictive policy context demands leaders who are not only deeply committed to bilingual education, but also knowledgeable about emergent bilinguals and their educational needs (Brooks, Adams, & Morita-Mulaney, 2010; Hunt, 2011). For bilingual programs to succeed, top-down policies cannot simply be implemented exactly as policymakers intend, but rather must be negotiated and at times contested by practitioners in schools (Menken & García, 2010). Principals are the first line of defense in doing so, and there are several documented instances of their resistance to both state-imposed English-only policies (Combs, Evans, Fletcher, Parra, Jiménez, 2005; Gándara & Hopkins, 2010; Gort, de Jong, & Cobb, 2008) and the pressures of federal education reforms like NCLB that promote an English-only agenda (Johnson & Freeman, 2010; Menken, 2008). For instance, administrators and principals in school districts in Massachusetts that had offered bilingual education programs negotiated and resisted the English-only ballot measure that had been adopted in their state, rather than simply implementing it as is, and their actions were driven by their knowledge and beliefs about bilingual education (Gort et al., 2008).

In our previous research in New York City schools, we found that prepared principals were better able to resist accountability policies promoting exclusively the use of English than the unprepared principals in our sample who eliminated their bilingual programs in the face of the exacting pressures of testing and accountability.

We found that these English-only school leaders were like “reeds blowing in the winds of education reform” (Menken & Solorza, 2014, p. 117). In language policy research, this exemplifies what Shohamy (2006, p. 78) has termed “soldiers of the system carrying out orders.” Although understandings of bilingual development and emergent bilingual students would be necessary for school leaders to make informed language programming and policy implementation decisions, school leaders in New York are not required to have received any formal preparation in the education of emergent bilinguals. The New York State Education Department (2014) currently offers the following credentials to qualify a candidate to serve in a leadership position in a school, such as principal, assistant principal, or supervisor: School Building Leader certificate and School District Leader certificate. While institutions of higher education offering paths to these certificates require courses in areas such as leadership theory, curriculum and supervision, school finance, and technology to name a few (as is the case in our own universities), no understandings of emergent bilinguals are required.⁵ For those school principals who hold a teaching certificate, a course solely about the education of emergent bilinguals is not required for teacher certification in New York in areas other than bilingual education or teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL), though it may be a topic embedded within a generalist course.⁶ This is true even though New York is now in its second year requiring that all teachers take at least a course in special education as part of their certification requirements (New York State Education Department, 2013).

New York is like the vast majority of U.S. states in this regard, which do not require any preparation for principals or other school leaders about how to educate emergent bilinguals. There are some exceptions worth mentioning. For instance, the Florida Department of Education requires that all teachers take at least one three-credit college or university course about the education of emergent bilinguals for teaching certification (Florida Department of Education, 2011), and all principals must hold a teaching license. In Massachusetts, knowledge in this area is actually embedded into administrator certification requirements. In accordance with state policy 603 CMR 7.09(2)(a), principals and assistant principals must possess a Structured English Immersion (SEI) Administrator or Teacher Endorsement (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2012). While we would not promote SEI per se,⁷ it is noteworthy that Massachusetts does require that principals have some formal preparation in the education of emergent bilinguals. Moreover, New York—where this research was conducted—does not at present require that teachers or principals have any formal coursework about the education of emergent bilinguals as part of their state certification requirements (New York State Education Department, 2014).

Methodology

The purpose of our research study was to identify why New York City school principals and administrators are dismantling bilingual education programs, and what is required to maintain a bilingual education program within the current restrictive policy climate. We wanted to identify the factors in school administrators’ decisions to eliminate bilingual education programs, as detailed in Menken and Solorza (2014). After first gathering this data, we became interested in how bilingual education

programs could be sustained by educational leaders working within the same context, so we extended our study to collect data from schools that have maintained bilingual education programs in recent years.

The findings presented in this article re-examine the data that was initially gathered from what we term here *English-only schools*, those that eliminated their bilingual education programs, and from the data later gathered in *bilingual schools*, those that have sustained their bilingual programs. Specifically, the research questions guiding the current analysis are: (a) Why have leaders of *English-only schools* eliminated bilingual education programs, and what are their understandings of bilingual education and emergent bilinguals? and, (b) How have leaders of *bilingual schools* maintained bilingual education within the current context, and what are their understandings of bilingual education and emergent bilinguals? We sought to examine why some school leaders responded to testing and accountability pressures by immersing emergent bilinguals in English-only schooling, while others have proven unwavering in their commitment to providing bilingual education.

Accordingly, we interviewed a total of 28 participants in 16 schools, including one school district administrator,⁸ 11 principals or acting principals, 10 assistant principals or supervisors/teacher leaders, and six teachers (as detailed in Appendix A). Principals were the main source of interview data because, as noted above, in New York City it is ultimately principals who decide which language education program(s) will be offered to emergent bilinguals in their school. Of the 16 schools in our study, eight were English-only schools and the remaining eight were bilingual schools. The English-only schools and bilingual schools are comprised of a mixture of elementary, middle, K-8, and high schools across the boroughs of New York City (excluding Staten Island⁹) as shown in Appendix A. As noted above, the English-only school leaders were interviewed during the first phase of data collection (2009-2011), while the bilingual school leaders were interviewed later (2011-2014). The English-only schools were selected from a listing provided to us by the New York City Department of Education of schools that had reduced or eliminated their bilingual programs in recent years. The bilingual school leaders were selected by snowball design starting with leaders we knew of whose bilingual education programs had been in existence for ten years or more and who in turn recommended other longstanding programs (ten years or more) from which we invited participants.

Interviews were conducted in person or by e-mail, and some participants were interviewed more than once to gather more comprehensive and in-depth information. All interviews were semi-structured and guided by a protocol (in the case of e-mail interviews, interview questions were sent to participants with room for back and forth correspondence as needed, as per Meho, [2006]).¹⁰ Oral interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed although in a few instances school leaders refused permission to record interviews; in these cases, detailed notes were taken. The data was coded and analyzed to identify prevalent themes using Excel to aid in data organization and analysis (Meyer & Avery, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Findings

Two scenarios from our data collection bring to life the sorts of issues we observed at play in the schools where we conducted our research. Both English-Only School A and Bilingual School B are medium-sized elementary schools in the same borough, and both schools serve significant numbers of emergent bilinguals from the Dominican Republic. When NCLB was passed into law and the New York State Education Department began requiring that emergent bilinguals take and pass the state's math and English language arts exams to meet the law's requirements, and later when New York City began using those scores to factor into a school's report card, the schools responded very differently. After realizing that emergent bilinguals were failing to make annual progress on the exams required under accountability policies, English-Only School A decided to dismantle their longstanding transitional bilingual education program and replace it with a self-contained ESL program. They carefully matched the school's curriculum to test content and immersed all students in English in an effort to improve their test scores.

For their part, Bilingual School B had in place a strong and cohesive schoolwide language policy rooted in their mission to support the bilingualism and biliteracy development of their students through their dual language bilingual education program. In response to testing pressures, this bilingual school also made changes to their curriculum and language allocation by subject area, while always being extremely careful not to sacrifice the delicate balance between languages (at this particular school, students in the early grades receive more home language instruction until second grade and then move into a 50-50 model evenly balanced between Spanish and English). In the later phase of our research study, we wanted to better understand why the schools in our sample responded so differently to identical pressures. Our findings are presented below, first from the English-only schools and then from the bilingual schools.

English-Only Schools

A striking finding from our interviews of school leaders who had chosen to eliminate their school's bilingual education programs was that none possess a license or other formal preparation in the education of emergent bilinguals. They tended to have a number of misperceptions about language learning, bilingualism, bilingual education, and their emergent bilingual students; negative perceptions of bilingual education and bilingual teachers; and, they show strong preference for English-only approaches. These findings are elaborated below.

No formal preparation and limited understandings. As noted, none of the school leaders we interviewed in our sample of English-only schools had received formal preparation to work with emergent bilinguals, for instance by holding a degree in bilingual education or TESOL, or even by having taken a course in this area. The interview excerpt below offers an example (note that "special ed" refers to special education and "AP" is the acronym for assistant principal):

I was a special ed and literacy teacher, then a literacy coach, then AP, principal, AP and principal again over 30 years, it's hard to believe. But I

haven't had the training for this... This has been a big learning experience for me. (Ms. V, elementary school principal, interview transcript, November 10, 2010)

In this passage, Ms. V notes how she has worked as an educator and administrator in the city school system for over 30 years and has, during that time period, gained a great deal of practical experience. Even so, as she notes, she feels unprepared to meet the needs of the many emergent bilinguals who attend the school where she is now principal. In other words, practical experience cannot replace formal training. Although Ms. V noted feeling unprepared to work with emergent bilinguals, she feels confident in her decision to eliminate the school's bilingual education program and replace it with ESL. Elsewhere in the interview, she goes on to say that because the students come from homes where a language other than English is spoken, they need to be immersed in English at school; this, she argues, is "not rocket science" (November 10, 2010).

The passage below offers another example, when an assistant principal describes her principal's background and how she feels it has shaped his views on bilingual education.

They'd have native language arts, which I've been trying to get him to reinstitute. But he won't. That's where you take literature, and that helps with their Regents. So he won't do it. He's an assimilationist. He really is. And it's interesting, he was a social studies teacher by trade, and I have my own theories about people in different subject areas. From like their view of what's the purpose of school. (Ms. A, high school assistant principal, interview transcript, June 22, 2009)

In her interview, Ms. A describes how the school formerly offered native language arts courses to their emergent bilinguals in addition to bilingual education. This school was on the list of schools targeted for closure under accountability policy at the time because their emergent bilinguals were unable to pass the state exams, and the new principal at this school was brought in to increase the test scores of the school's emergent bilinguals on the high school exit exams (the Regents, also used to determine high school graduation in New York). The first thing the principal did in his new position to achieve this aim was to eliminate the school's bilingual program as well as its provision of a course in Spanish for speakers of the language. As Ms. A noted, the principal's background was in social studies, which she felt shaped his viewpoint that the purpose of education for emergent bilinguals is *integration* and *assimilation*, goals he believed are best achieved through English-only instruction.

Ms. A goes on in her interview to speak about herself and explain some of the challenges that not having a background in ESL or bilingual education poses for school administrators who are called upon to make instructional and programming decisions for emergent bilinguals:

And I'm new to ESL this year, previously I supervised only English. And I was not an ESL teacher so I had to do a lot of learning really quickly. And when you asked support personnel in the Department of Ed, their responses are always about complying, never about instruction or

curriculum. Like you can never get what we should be doing, there isn't a curriculum, it's always like, "Well look at the specific data of your students and then decide from there." (Ms. A, high school assistant principal, interview transcript, June 22, 2009)

As Ms. A explained, schools were given little guidance from above with regard to how to educate emergent bilinguals, and it was expected that school staff would have the expertise necessary to decide a school's language education policy from programming to implementation. Moreover, although school leaders were called upon to determine language programming for emergent bilinguals, those we interviewed in our English-only schools sample were poorly prepared to do so.

Limited understandings of emergent bilinguals. Concomitant with their lack of formal preparation, the English-only school leaders we interviewed held limited understandings of their emergent bilingual students, their communities, and their languages. For example, we found that school principals were often unable to tell us how many students in their school are emergent bilinguals, as shown in the following (interviewer's voice in italics):

So we're interested in your ELL student demographics. What percentage of ELLs are at your school?

I would say close to 80%. Hmmm, I have to look that up. Can we go on without that?

(Ms. D, elementary school principal, interview transcript, October 6, 2010)

Likewise, schools leaders often had limited knowledge about the languages their emergent bilinguals speak. Below are three examples from our interviews that illustrate this point:

1. *About what percent of the [ELL] students are Spanish speaking in this school?*

In this school? I don't know if they are Spanish speakers. But I know that 53% of the school are Spanish. (Mr. R, high school principal, interview transcript, March 19, 2009)

2. *And what native languages do the ELLs here speak?*

Mostly Spanish

Anyone else or is it almost entirely...

Oh, I have, I have one from, the ahhh, the aaa, Arab . (Mr. M, high school principal, interview transcript, February 28, 2011)

3. The majority of them speak Spanish although we have a good number who speak French, a variety of African languages and dialects...The French students are African and they're from Ghana and mostly African. (Ms. E, junior high school principal, interview transcript, July 6, 2009)

In the first excerpt, Mr. R was unable to say how many emergent bilinguals in his predominately Latino school speak Spanish, and went on to say that 53% of the school's population are "Spanish." We believe that in the interview he used 'Spanish' to mean 'Latino' (even though the school's Latino population is actually well over 60%), thereby confounding the terms and overlooking the complex home language practices of U.S. Latinos, many of whom speak English as a home language (García, 2009). In the second excerpt, Mr. M also struggled to tell us which languages the emergent bilinguals in his building speak. Eventually, the school's assistant principal for ESL came in and clarified that in addition to the Spanish and Arabic speakers, speakers of Haitian Creole and French also attend the school; however, even the assistant principal's description was limited, in that these were West African students from several different countries who likely each speak one or two home languages in addition to French. In the third excerpt, Ms. E explained that there are French speakers in her building as well, whom she describes as Africans from Ghana; but English is actually the official language of Ghana, with 11 local languages holding official status (Bureau of Ghana Languages, 2006), making it highly unlikely any Ghanaian students in her building speak French. Like the previous administrator, she also overlooked the local home language(s) of these students. These comments display poor understandings about the students' language backgrounds, identity, prior schooling experiences, or knowledge base.

The principals who eliminated their school's bilingual education program often had limited understandings of the students in terms of their educational needs. For instance:

Most of our students are long-term ELLs who have gone through the bilingualism system, and then being taught in middle school, and they come here to high school just speaking Spanish. (Mr. A, high school principal, interview transcript, July 6, 2009)

Mr. A indicated that most of the emergent bilinguals in his building were long-term ELLs (LTELLs) whom he described as monolingual in Spanish. While LTELLs maintain their ELL designation, they are defined as students who have attended U.S. schools for seven years or more and are thus characterized by having very strong English oral language skills, particularly when language is used for social purposes, and their academic English language practices are typically perceived as stronger than those in their home language (Menken, 2013). The principal's statement suggests limited understandings about LTELLs, which places him in a poor position to develop educational programming for them.

Several of the administrators of the English-only schools we interviewed displayed shallow understandings of their emergent bilingual students and their communities. In the passage that follows, a school leader discusses the Dominican students who comprise the majority of her school's student population.

It's a very transient population in that I feel, I think we all agree that a lot of these students do not feel that this country is their home in the same way that say my ancestors came at the turn of the century, say from Russia and Poland. They were here, they were not going back. This was their home and they made a more larger investment into this place in

accepting it and perhaps the children learn English in a different way.
(Ms. C, high school assistant principal, interview transcript, February 28, 2011)

In this excerpt, Ms. C suggested that because the emergent bilinguals from the Dominican Republic in her building maintain strong ties with their country of origin and visit frequently, that they are less motivated to learn English than European immigrants of the past such as those in her own family. Research about Dominican American students in New York offers deeper understandings. In contrast to her view, Dominican students in New York have been documented learning English well, and research instead suggests the real threat is to their Spanish, as there is a mismatch between English monolingual education and the students' complex language practices and beliefs (Bartlett & García, 2011; Dicker, 2006). Based on this statement and others she made during her interview (such as referring to the neighborhood as a "Dominican Ghetto"), we concluded that Ms. C is uninformed about her emergent bilingual students and holds negative views about them and their communities. Moreover, although these school leaders do not appear to know much about their emergent bilingual students, their languages, or their communities, they are called upon to determine school language policies.

Negative perceptions of bilingual education and bilingual teachers. Within our sample of English-only schools, we repeatedly heard two common complaints about the schools' former bilingual education programs: (a) that bilingual education actually means covert monolingual instruction in the students' home language with too little instructional time devoted to English, and (b) that bilingual education teachers have poor competency in English. The following quotation offers an example of the first point.

[T]hen my experience has been that those classes end up often being monolingual in the native language. So they'd be monolingual Spanish instead of being truly bilingual. (Ms. A, high school assistant principal, interview transcript, June 22, 2009)

Ms. A shared a common misconception amongst our participants that bilingual education is in fact tantamount to monolingual instruction in the minoritized language. It is possible that teachers were simply following the language allocation policy for their school's bilingual education model, if it called for the use of the home language when observations were conducted in their classrooms, something an administrator with limited knowledge about bilingual education might not realize.

This theme is reiterated in the quotation below.

[Ms. N asks me here to shut off the recorder]. [T]he bilingual teachers never spoke English to the kids. I would go in and the kids were only speaking Chinese... I had people here who I can't get rid of, they were common branch certified with the bilingual extension but I have no clue how they got by it. (Ms. N, junior high school assistant principal, interview field notes, November 23, 2010)

In this passage, Ms. N maintained that the transitional bilingual program that used to be in place in her school was actually a monolingual program in Chinese. Ms. N then went on to imply that the instruction favored Chinese because the teachers' English proficiency was so limited that they could not teach in English. This belief that bilingual teachers do not know much English was very common, as supported by another school administrator.

[T]he fact is that they themselves need some kind of English language courses. They themselves are transitional bilingual students. And they're very nice people...but they also struggle with English. (Ms. E, junior high school principal, interview transcript, July 6, 2009)

In this passage, Ms. E described her view that the bilingual teachers have the same limited English as their students. The reality is that it is quite unlikely a teacher's English would be too limited to teach, given stringent teacher certification requirements (Clark & Flores, 2002).

Interestingly, we also heard from these leaders of English-only schools an idealization of highly heterogeneous populations of emergent bilinguals.

In, like this year, we have one of our ESL classes the majority; I'd say two-thirds of the class are from Spanish speaking countries so those kids learn English slower because they can always resort to Spanish. And so you know the ESL teacher says to me all the time, you know, "Get a mix! Get a mix of kids." (Ms. E, junior high school principal, interview transcript, July 6, 2009)

Mr. M, a high school principal, also indicated a preference for a linguistically heterogeneous population of emergent bilinguals in his interview. After sharing his experiences at a school with many different languages he noted how, in that school, the common language was English whereas in the school where he was currently the principal, the common language is Spanish. He concluded by arguing what his school really needed was "more diversity." This points to the challenges that arise in schools with the numbers of speakers of the same home language to provide bilingual education (and who are in fact required by official policy to do so), but who instead provide English-only instruction. When students speak the same home language, they naturally draw on their home language practices to help make sense of the material in English (García, 2009). In these schools, the elimination of their bilingual education program seems to have raised some unexpected instructional challenges. What is quite interesting is how the principals criticize their student population for not being diverse enough, rather than questioning the appropriateness of their own programming choices given the population they serve.

Belief in English immersion. For all of the reasons noted above, the leaders of the English-only schools in our sample strongly favored English immersion approaches for their emergent bilingual students, even though all but one had the student population to provide bilingual education as per state regulations (Part 154)¹¹. This preference for ESL is explained below, in a quotation that captures well a number of the issues raised in this article:

What keeps me up at night is what kind of jobs and what kind of ultimate opportunities are available to the students if they do not master the English language... My sense is, and this is based on nothing other than my feeling, that if they don't begin to master it here they're going to drop out of high school because the, you know, the testing requirements... I would still put them in ESL classes because I still don't think the transitional bilingual program was successful... (Ms. E, junior high school principal, interview transcript, July 6, 2009)

Ms. E clarified how important English mastery was for her students, particularly as they moved onto high school where they faced high school exit exams. She believed strongly that full English immersion is the best approach to do so, in spite of her admission that she has no expertise in this area and that her decision is based on "nothing other than my feeling." Ironically, the strong base of research in bilingual education instead indicates the importance of home language instruction to help students acquire the very academic language and literacy skills in English needed to pass high-stakes exams (Rolstad, Mahoney, & Glass, 2005; Thomas & Collier, 2002).

Ms. V espoused a similar belief, that English immersion through ESL programming is the best approach to learning English.

I know the children need to be immersed in English. I learned this on the job, observing classrooms, being a good listener and because we're sending them home to homes that don't speak English, so they need to be immersed. (Ms. V, elementary school principal, interview transcript, November 30, 2010)

In her interview Ms. V described how she learned what she knows about educating emergent bilinguals on the job, rather than through formal study. For many, it is contradictory to think that a student's home language would actually help and not hinder English learning, and in fact that students who benefit from bilingual education might learn English better – as shown in the research base in bilingual education (e.g., Rolstad et al., 2005; Thomas & Collier, 2002).

As noted in this section, school leaders who do not have a formal background in the education of emergent bilinguals hold a number of misconceptions about bilingual education and language learning, including the belief that English immersion is the best way for emergent bilinguals to learn English. Yet bilingual education theory explicitly states that students do not learn academic English more quickly when immersed in English-only classrooms, but rather do so when they can build on prior knowledge of content and language through the continued use of their home language(s) (Goldenberg, 2008).

Bilingual Schools

Successful bilingual principals serve as important counterexamples in helping to explain how school administrators are able to keep their bilingual programs intact under mounting accountability pressures, curricular changes, and within a sociopolitical context critical of bilingual education. In contrast to other interviewed principals, these school administrators were knowledgeable about bilingual education

theory, practice, and pedagogy. The school principals and other school leaders we interviewed are able to make nuanced administrative and curricular decisions that strengthen and protect their bilingual programs.

Building upon a bilingual foundation: Formal preparation and strong belief in bilingual education. The school leaders in our sample of bilingual schools were all firm believers in bilingual education, and their beliefs were developed through formal preparation in bilingual education or TESOL. In interviews, these school leaders reflected on their beliefs, and how these guided their work as educators. For instance, a dual language bilingual principal discussed the additive nature of her school's program model, when discussing bilingual education.

I believe in its basic tenets... If you have that philosophy you are building on what a child brings to school. So if he's coming in with an L1 [first language] you are building on that... That's going to give you the results that all longitudinal research has proven...It sets the stage for your vision and subsequently, your mission for that year, and next couple of years. You are the one that drives that vision. (Ms. P, elementary school principal, interview transcript, May 19, 2011)

In this quotation, Ms. P revealed how important a deep understanding of the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of language acquisition processes is for leadership, as her strong convictions regarding bilingual education shaped the priorities she set as a school leader. She described how some other principals do not "trust the process" and fail to see the long-term benefits of bilingual education, and was critical of her colleagues who believed that providing ESL services to emergent bilinguals is the only solution. "They don't understand the transference of skills from one language to the other... It goes back to them not understanding that you're building, not replacing. We can't replace" (Interview transcript, May 19, 2011). Ms. J, a teacher in Ms. P's school indicated the importance of her principal's views when she said, "She believes in dual language. Her belief has kept us alive" (May 5, 2012). This highlights how a school principal's beliefs in the benefits of bilingual education provide an important basis for the vision and mission of the school, without which bilingual education would not be prioritized.

A teacher leader in a bilingual elementary school reflected on the importance of her formal background when discussing her own strong beliefs in the benefits of bilingual education.

My formal background has helped me to be consistent in my advocacy for bilingual education. I do not doubt its effectiveness because I have read the literature and am able to relate it to my own personal experience, as an individual, a member of a bilingual family, and as a bilingual educator. (Dr. M, elementary school teacher leader/supervisor, written transcript, December 9, 2013).

Dr. M holds a doctoral degree in bilingual education. In this quotation, she described how her belief system developed from formal study as well as her personal experiences, and how this knowledge base drives her daily work as a school leader and advocate for bilingual education.

Leaders of schools serving emergent bilinguals face additional pressures and challenges that the bilingual school leaders we interviewed feel can best be negotiated by those who are highly knowledgeable in the field.

Principals, assistant principals, and teacher leaders who are experts in bilingual education not only can better support students by designing programming that best benefits these students, but also by being able to be the spokespeople for their programs, and thereby influence others. (Ms. Z, bilingual elementary school supervisor, written transcript, December 8, 2013)

While noting the importance of expertise for school leaders to be effective in serving their emergent bilingual students, like many others she noted how being an effective bilingual school leader also entails advocacy, which is seen by the leaders we interviewed as central to their work. Dr. H concurred, stating: “At the heart of everything we see bilingualism as enrichment and as a gift we are giving all children. We know and believe this, but fight daily to ensure it is maintained, implemented, and valued” (Dr. H, elementary school principal, written transcript, December 3, 2013).

Impact of bilingual schooling on emergent bilingual students: Holistic views of children. The bilingual school leaders in our research study likewise argued for the strong impact of language policy decisions on emergent bilinguals and their families. For instance, a bilingual elementary school principal in an email interview listed possible consequences for emergent bilinguals if they do not receive some form of bilingual education:

- Less likely to finish school
- Less empowerment of families in their child’s education
- Less likely to maintain ties with their families
- Possible difficulty learning higher order synthesizing and comprehension skills in more challenging work
- Can develop a negative sense of self-worth
- Isolation from the total person they are and possible rejection of their culture
- Inability to communicate fully within the language and culture of their family
- Inability for children to return to the place of their families for future employment. (Dr. H, bilingual elementary school principal, written transcript, January 12, 2012)

In this passage, Dr. H included academic, social, emotional, and economic impacts of bilingual education. She gave equal weight to academic performance outcomes as she did to all of these other concerns, thereby implying a more holistic view of children.

This was reinforced by Ms. K, a middle school teacher leader, who was able to provide a unique perspective from having taught in English-only and bilingual programs at a school where both ESL and bilingual education were offered. She

described in her interview how the children in the bilingual program academically outperformed their peers in ESL, had fewer disciplinary issues, and were more engaged in their studies. She noted further how “students who were placed in bilingual settings did very well in their academic subjects because they could use all their language skills to learn new concepts and language” (Ms. K, middle school teacher leader, written transcript, January 14, 2012). In contrast, students in the monolingual setting reported that they did not like or understand Spanish even when this was the only language their parents spoke at home. Ms. K believed bilingual education provides emergent bilingual students with the critical space to negotiate their cultural and linguistic identities without having to *sell out* by adopting monolingual and monocultural identities.

A supervisor in one of the bilingual schools in our sample emphasized the significance of bilingual education for preserving a connection to the home language and culture. “The importance of this cannot be underestimated. Children are part of a family in which language plays a central role” (Ms. Z, bilingual elementary school supervisor, written transcript, January 10, 2012). Ms. LJ added, “People that are bilingual are an asset to any school or job. If we don't acknowledge their home language and culture, they will become marginalized and feel less motivated in school” (high school teacher leader, written transcript, January 10, 2012). Another school leader noted:

After years of subtractive schooling that refuses to build on the strengths students come in with, students may develop oppositional identities to school that impede their academic success. In short, if students equate becoming educated with somehow being untrue to their sociocultural identity, they will refuse to learn the formal academic registers of school. (Mr. F, high school supervisor, written transcript, January 17, 2012)

Each of these school leaders pointed to the importance of schools acknowledging and building upon students' home languages as central to a child's individual, familial, and community identity, and how doing so is an essential means of fostering academic achievement.

Moreover, while the leaders of English-only schools typically attributed their preference for ESL to their goal of improving their students' English and thereby increasing schoolwide test scores, what we discovered in our analysis of the data gathered from bilingual schools was how the bilingual school leaders focused on children holistically. In their interviews, when describing why they believe bilingual education is effective, they placed equal weight upon the students' academic outcomes as they did upon their social and emotional well-being. As such, they saw building on all of a child's resources as an essential strategy for improving their educational experiences in school as well as their academic outcomes in the short and long term.

Bilingual school leaders as instructional leaders. In their interviews, the bilingual school leaders in our sample noted the importance of their formal training in order for them to serve as instructional leaders, supporting teachers to meet the many demands placed upon them in schooling today. Research in educational leadership over the past 40 years has emphasized the importance of principals being able to rise above and beyond managerial tasks and instead focus on instruction as instructional leaders

(DuFour, 2002). What the bilingual educators in our sample pointed out was how difficult it would be to assume that role without the knowledge base it requires.

As one school leader stated, “I think the most concrete way in which a foundation in bilingual education supports school leaders is it allows them to be instructional leaders within their schools as well as within the community” (Ms. Z, bilingual elementary school teacher leader/supervisor, written transcript, December 8, 2013). A bilingual school principal echoed this point, saying:

Knowing and understanding language acquisition provides a context to know that kids need time and space to use language in order to learn it. Knowing how to support teachers to scaffold language and create language goals within lessons is important. It is very hard to do all this without training. (Dr. H, elementary school principal, written transcript, December 3, 2013)

Due to the complexity of carrying out city and state curricular and assessment mandates in two languages, the principal plays a pivotal role in supporting bilingual teachers. “A strong principal must maintain a supportive school-wide climate and be willing to learn, alongside the teachers, on a continuous basis, and supervise/motivate to ensure quality implementation and improvement” (Calderón & Carreón, 2000, p. 54).

Schoolwide faith in bilingual education. A common finding from our data was that the bilingual schools in our sample relied on a strong and cohesive language education policy to maintain their bilingual programs within a context of English-only pressures. The principal, leaders, and teachers alike believed deeply in the tenets of bilingual education within these schools. “Because you would never, ever, ever do it, unless somewhere inside of you, you believe it’s important. Nobody is even going to ask you about it. They could care less!” (Ms. J, elementary bilingual teacher, interview transcript, April 5, 2012). Ms. J’s school offered a dual language bilingual education program schoolwide, and she relentlessly created and modified curriculum in order to protect the careful balance between languages in her classroom. When talking about her staff, Ms. P says, “They have the passion and commitment. You have to be committed to do this job... [It] goes beyond what you get paid for” (Ms. P, elementary school principal, interview transcript, June 12, 2012).

In our interviews with leaders of bilingual schools, we found that the bilingual teachers in their schools are highly valued by the administration and parents alike due to a shared commitment to bilingual education. “We have a really strong dedicated staff that really believes in our goals. I think we do a good job at hiring people that are aligned with our mission and vision and work tirelessly to ensure that we are meeting those goals” (Ms. L, elementary school principal, interview transcript, July 30, 2011). An administrator of an elementary school with a dual language bilingual education program concurred: “[We] recruited teachers who also had a good sense of ownership and authorship in the development of the dual language bilingual program” (Ms. Z, bilingual elementary school teacher leader/supervisor, written transcript, December 8, 2013).

The teachers we interviewed likewise understand their importance in leading their school and implementing bilingual education successfully. “The learning community is held together by teachers. It was started by good teachers at the inception of the school... [who] pass the baton onto new teachers” (Ms. J., elementary bilingual school teacher, interview transcript, April 5, 2012). The teachers felt personally invested in their schools, where the principals celebrated them and involved them in leading, for example, by asking them to contribute their expertise at professional development workshops and presentations.

The bilingual school leaders in our sample also understood the need to support teachers through professional development in order to help teachers implement new curricula and implement top-down mandates in ways that support their bilingual education program.

A dual language program is very challenging as a teacher because you are educating students in two languages, evaluating the two languages, monitoring their progress in two languages and then continuously having to adapt your curriculum and your instruction in order to meet those needs and teachers don’t automatically know how to do that. (Ms. L, elementary school principal, interview transcription, July 30, 2011)

Participants saw professional development as essential for advocating for emergent bilinguals and responding to city and state requirements. Curriculum writing and participation in various committees were noted as helping teachers refine their bilingual instructional practices and create more appropriate assessments. As one teacher said of her principal, “She gives us huge freedom in designing curriculum in the content areas. I think she thinks we are an amazing staff” (Ms. W, elementary school teacher, interview transcription, April 5, 2012).

Trust, respect, collaboration, and shared leadership, combined with flexibility, were seen as essential ingredients for the ongoing, reflective, and creative process needed to solve ongoing problems brought on by constant change. “Principals play a key role in maintaining morale in these tough times; it is up to them to rally teachers, other staff, and the community common goals” (Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning, 2011, p. 2). This process also creates a collaborative and constructive relationship to understanding, and responding to, the needs of a school and its emergent bilingual student population (Carrasquillo & Rodríguez, 1998; Hunt, 2011).

Protecting Bilingual Curricula: School Leaders as Policy Shields

Whenever a new educational policy is imposed upon the bilingual schools in our sample, we found that it was never simply taken at face value and adopted as is. Instead, the bilingual school leaders were policy negotiators, on one hand working to implement the new policy and meet top-down demands, while at the same time acting as shields to defend and sustain their school’s bilingual program – particularly in the face of harmful policies that prevent their teachers from educating students in two languages (Arias & Faltis, 2012; Gándara & Hopkins, 2010; Gort et al., 2008).

For example, to protect her school from English-only policies or practices that can potentially hurt her school’s bilingual education program, Ms. Z relied on parents

and teachers.

For example, now about a decade ago, the district came to us wanting to implement a reading program in our school that was English focused. As a school that designed our own curriculum, this was a real danger, of disturbing the intricate ways in which curriculum supported language development. As soon as we heard about this, we called some very vocal parents and they met with the district leadership alongside us to advocate against the use of this curriculum. (Ms. Z, elementary school teacher leader/supervisor, interview transcript, December 8, 2013)

Like the other school leaders in our sample, Ms. Z and her colleagues do not merely accept new policies and adopt them precisely as policymakers intended, but rather resist and negotiate to implement them in ways that made sense for their school and the emergent bilingual students they serve. In this case, they resisted the policy with the support of parents. As Basurto, Wise, and Unruh (2006) state, school leaders are gatekeepers of reform policies, playing a vital role in the translation, interpretation, support, and/or neglect of such policies.

One principal in our study demonstrated how she negotiated her gatekeeping role by being honest with her staff in hopes of developing a solution collaboratively.

I try to shield my teachers. When I can't, I try to share it with them in weekly meetings. How can we make it work with the least amount of damage? I'm upfront as much as possible. (Ms. P, elementary school principal, interview transcript, June 12, 2012)

She noted how "advocacy lies at the principal level." Ms. P shared that in the past, advocacy for bilingual education was not the responsibility of the schools alone, but was a function of the now dismantled Office of Bilingual Education. She asserted that the city's Office of English Language Learners primarily provides support with matters of compliance in her view, but that it neither monitors nor supports the implementation of bilingual education over English-only approaches.

To explore this last point, we interviewed a 1990s employee of the Office of Monitoring and School Improvement in the New York City Department of Education who explained that there used to be an official entity responsible for ensuring that bilingual education be provided in compliance with the mandates of the *Aspira Consent Decree*.

When we monitored schools we found principals didn't have an understanding of categorical aid and how it works. There are different ways of constructing bilingual programs – you may have a bilingual teacher without good English there's nothing to say you can't team teach those classes so a portion of the day is taught in L1 and a regular teacher comes in for other subjects. So, there are different arrangements, but they're myopic about their funding sources. (Mr. O, former school district administrator, interview transcript, July 26, 2011)

Here Mr. O offered a practical response to the complaint among school principals that some bilingual teachers do not speak English well, whether this complaint is legitimate

or not. As this former administrator describes, his office worked with school leaders in the 1990s to help them overcome the common challenges that they described as preventing them from providing bilingual education. However, this office has since closed, and he concurs with the school leaders we interviewed who noted that the current focus is on compliance and ensuring that services are provided to emergent bilinguals, rather than quality and the provision of bilingual education as required. He is also of the opinion that central office administrators do not systematically help schools maintain their bilingual education programs when implementing new mandates. Mr. O feels this has directly contributed to the loss of bilingual programs in city schools.

As school leaders are now charged with the responsibility of determining educational programming for emergent bilinguals on their own, the reality is that one person cannot solve these complexities alone. Research indicates that school leaders need to foster learning communities and support shared responsibility. In her discussion of the need for collaborative leadership in bilingual schools, Hunt (2011) notes: "Flexibility allows multiple ways for various voices to participate in implementing language policy, making decisions, and drawing upon a diversity of expertise within the school community" (p. 28). This is something we observed in our sample of bilingual schools in which teachers and other school staff also were involved in leadership and decision making.

Moreover, schools must have a strong instructional leader with the ability to enforce and infuse a clear language policy into all educational practices. We found that without learning communities, flexibility, professional development, trust in their teachers, and support or monitoring from the central administration, many principals with bilingual programs fold under the pressure of new curricular mandates. Because new curricula are often only offered in English, strong leadership is needed to defend and support continued home language instruction.

Partnering with Parents in a Time of Accountability

"We always have parents who want to take their children out of the program" (Ms. G, elementary school principal, interview transcript, February 26, 2009). Ms. G reported that parents worried that if their children remained in bilingual classes they were not going to learn enough English. Another bilingual school principal concurred. "I think people feel that the only way to ensure for students to do well is to teach them in English" (Ms. L, elementary school principal, interview transcript, July 30, 2011). The bilingual principals in our study took various steps to remedy misconceptions parents carried regarding language acquisition and garnered their support for bilingual education – even in periods of language restriction and testing enforced English-only pressures.

One way the bilingual schools in our study protected their programs was through gathering and disseminating student performance data documenting growth. "Parents really want the best for their children and if you present a case and you have enough proof and enough data, they are going to want what's best for their child" (Ms. P, elementary school principal, interview transcript, May 19, 2011). Similarly, another bilingual school principal said:

I mean it's continuously trying to maintain the data that demonstrates that our students that are with us, for 5, 6 to 8 years demonstrate great gains in their scores. And our data does show that students who, when they first start testing in 3rd grade, are not doing as well as they do eventually when they are testing in 8th grade. (Ms. L, elementary school principal, interview transcription, July 30, 2011)

The bilingual school leaders we interviewed took steps to document longitudinal student growth to provide parents and bilingual education critics with evidence that language development takes time, but that bilingual education works.

Bilingual school leaders made great efforts to work with parents for their continued support of bilingual education through school-wide meetings, workshops, and other forms of outreach for parents. As an example, the principal of a school offering a Spanish-English dual language bilingual program explained her school's efforts in the following excerpt:

How does your school maintain its bilingual education program in the face of these external English-only pressures and ideologies?

Our school is founded on 4 cornerstones, of which the first is supporting full bilingualism and biliteracy in Spanish and English, so that is always considered. Families know this from the beginning. We garner their support by having them in the classrooms during family Fridays which occur every other week, workshops and home visits. (Dr. H, elementary school principal, written transcript, December 3, 2013)

In this bilingual school, their mission to offer bilingual education grounded everything they did, including their efforts to cultivate family support and involvement. Another bilingual school principal added the following: "We do a lot of family nights, math family night, and ELA (English Language Arts) family night, science family night, and a Spanish family night" (Ms. L, elementary school principal, written transcript, July 30, 2011).

Taken together, bilingual school leaders devoted a good deal of time to gaining the support of parents and the school community for bilingual education. Their efforts were even more intense during periods of language restriction, as they worked against English-only pressures and public opinion, which affect parental views. As such, the parents in the bilingual schools in our study were a stronghold in the schools' efforts to continue to provide bilingual education.

Discussion

Within the current period of language restrictionism, when English-only approaches are being promoted through national, state, and city educational policies, most school leaders in New York City simply flow with the language policy tides and offer their emergent bilingual students English-only instruction through ESL programming – as evident in the city's dramatic decline in bilingual education enrollment in recent years. However, as shown in the bilingual schools described above, a significant number of school leaders have maintained their bilingual education programs even in the face of these English-only pressures. The leaders we interviewed

and their staff intensified efforts to swim against the policy tides (what Kleyn [2007] has aptly referred to as the testing and accountability “tsunami” that is impacting U.S. schools today). Our research points to the very important role of school leaders, particularly principals, in sustaining or eliminating bilingual education.

The leaders of what we term in this article English-only schools have chosen to dismantle their school’s bilingual education program and to replace it with ESL, though none of these school leaders had received any formal preparation to make such determinations. They were found to have limited understandings of their emergent bilingual students, the languages they speak, or their communities, and believed English immersion to be the best way for emergent bilinguals to acquire English more quickly in order to pass the required assessments – in spite of research indicating that instruction in a student’s home language helps them acquire the academic language and literacy practices that such tests demand (Goldenberg, 2008; Menken, 2013; Rolstad et al., 2005). The sample of English-only school leaders in our study likewise held negative perceptions about the former bilingual teachers in their schools, believing that those teachers did not use enough English in instruction and had a poor command of the language. For all of these reasons, they opted for English-only approaches.

In marked contrast, the bilingual school leaders we interviewed had received formal education either in bilingual education or TESOL. They were strong believers in the benefits of bilingual education, for its positive academic, social, emotional, and economic impact on students. The bilingual school principals described themselves as instructional leaders, who had the knowledge base needed to support the work of bilingual teachers. Within the bilingual schools, support for bilingual education is schoolwide, and this coherent vision shaped how new mandates or curricula are implemented. Moreover, bilingual school leaders and staff worked tirelessly to protect their bilingual education programs through advocacy, cultivating support from parents and the community, and by negotiating all top-down mandates to ensure they were implemented in ways that did not undermine bilingual education. These school leaders were convinced that bilingual education helped rather than hindered their students’ performance outcomes, and better supported a student’s identity in the process.

Recommendations

In light of these findings, our first recommendation is to *change state certification requirements such that anyone pursuing licensure as a school leader in New York, such as the School Building Leader certificate or the School District Leader certificate, be required by the state to take at least one course about bilingual education and the education of emergent bilinguals as part of their certification requirements.* Given many school leaders hold teaching certification, we would also recommend that this requirement extend to the licensure requirements of all teachers, not only those in TESOL or bilingual education.¹² To be clear, our recommendation is that at the very least an entire course just about emergent bilinguals be required, and that this requirement not be met in a generalist course in which this topic is one subject among many.

We realize that a mere course is far from a panacea, and might not be sufficient to redress the deeper issues of language ideology and anti-immigrant sentiment

embedded within the views of certain school leaders we interviewed. That said, we do believe that this would be an important starting point to increase school leaders' understandings of emergent bilinguals, bilingualism, bilingual education, language policy, and language learning. Our findings lead us to believe that increasing school leaders' understandings of these areas would encourage the maintenance and expansion of bilingual education programs throughout the city and state, and generally help leaders make informed decisions about how best to serve their student population.

There appears to be a language policy change afoot in Albany as this article goes to press, making us think that this could be an optimal time for the New York State Association for Bilingual Education (NYSABE), other professional and community organizations, and individuals to lobby the state to better prepare school leaders about the education of emergent bilinguals. There has been a change in leadership in the New York State Education Department, with known bilingual education advocates now staffing key administrative positions.¹³ In actions supporting bilingual education in recent years, the state mandated the New York City Department of Education's Part 154 Corrective Action Plan,¹⁴ in which the city committed to opening 125 new bilingual education programs; the state developed and adopted Bilingual Common Core Standards (see García & Flores, 2013 for discussion of the significance of new *bilingual* standards); and the state funded the City University of New York-New York State Initiative for Emergent Bilinguals¹⁵ in recognition of the need to prepare school principals and other leaders. We would like for this article to be seen as a call for action, and hope it will be used to pressure the state to change its certification requirements and ensure that all school leaders are prepared to serve their emergent bilingual students and make informed decisions regarding language programming within their schools.

Our second recommendation is *for the city to resume its former practice of monitoring schools' implementation of services for emergent bilinguals, to ensure that bilingual education be provided whenever possible and that whatever services are offered to emergent bilinguals be of high quality.* As described above, the city formerly had an Office of Monitoring and School Improvement in which officials would make sure that schools were complying with the *Aspira Consent Decree*, and who also supported school leaders in their efforts to implement and sustain bilingual education programs. While we are not suggesting this office be reopened per se, we recommend greater monitoring and support of schools. We argue that compliance alone is not enough, but that principals and other school leaders need assistance in their efforts to provide bilingual education, particularly within the current context wherein national language policies and policy discourse are working against them.

This article highlights the importance of school leaders in bilingual education. In conclusion, we suggest that school principals need: (a) preparation to help them become effective instructional leaders for emergent bilinguals, and (b) they need support to help them become effective managers of bilingual education. We assert that doing so would not only protect bilingual education but, more broadly, improve the quality of schooling that emergent bilinguals receive in New York.

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Notes

- ¹ Please note that here we are using García's (2009) term 'emergent bilingual' synonymously with 'English language learner' (ELL), the term commonly used in New York. We prefer 'emergent bilinguals,' because it serves as a reminder that in adding English to their linguistic repertoire these students are becoming bilingual or multilingual; English is not the only goal. We will however occasionally use ELL to refer to the official designation or when quoting others.
- ² While ESL classes need not necessarily be English-only, and in fact research recommends the use of students' home languages even in ESL (García, 2009), the intention within these schools—as in most places citywide—is that these classes only use English.
- ³ *No Child Left Behind* is the name of current federal education policy in the US, and has been in effect since 2002.
- ⁴ Test translations are a permitted test accommodation for officially designated ELLs in New York state. While helpful, translations cannot fully level the playing field because emergent bilinguals receive instruction solely in English or in English and their home language, and language testing researchers maintain that language of instruction needs to match the language of the test for the scores to be valid (Menken, 2008; Solórzano, 2008).
- ⁵ Discussion of emergent bilinguals can be embedded into fieldwork or courses at the discretion of each institution of higher education, but they are not required by the state to do so; therefore, most do not to the best of our knowledge.

- 6 It is worth noting that changing general education teacher certification to require a course about emergent bilinguals was included in the recommendations that NYSABE recently sent to the New York State Department of Education for the rewriting of Part 154.
- 7 SEI is the educational model that was created in the wake of Propositions 227, 203, and Question 2 with little basis in research, and it has received a great deal of criticism in recent bilingual education and language policy literature (see Arias & Faltis, 2012 and also Gándara & Hopkins, 2010 for further discussion).
- 8 The school district administrator, Mr. O, was not included in the table in Appendix A, which lists just the participants working in schools.
- 9 Staten Island was excluded because only 2% of students in that borough are emergent bilinguals, and 90% are already in ESL programs so there has been no documented decline in bilingual education there (New York City Department of Education, 2013).
- 10 In our interviews with administrators and teachers in “English-only” schools, we followed a semi-structured interview protocol which included the following topics: the participant’s position and background, school demographics, the school’s language allocation policy, the educational program that emergent bilinguals previously received, reasons for eliminating the bilingual program, and the pros and cons of the change in language education policy. Our interviews with educators and leaders of “bilingual schools,” where they have continued to provide bilingual education over the past decade during the period of testing and accountability pressures, included the following topics: the participant’s position and background, school demographics, the school’s language allocation policy, the reasons that bilingual education is provided, and how the program has been sustained during this period of language restriction.
- 11 There is one exception – a larger high school that was broken into several smaller schools, none of which offer bilingual education, as the small schools no longer have the student population to support it (one of the small schools was in our sample – this issue is discussed further in Menken & Solorza, 2014).
- 12 While we suspect this would be important to improve teaching as well, this assertion is not based on the empirical evidence we report here, as our study focused on school leaders.
- 13 Here we refer specifically to: 1) Arlen Benjamin-Gomez, a former immigrants rights activist and staff attorney at Advocates for Children who is now a fellow with the New York State Regents Research Fund working on issues related to the education of emergent bilingual students; and, 2) Angelica Infante, who has been a bilingual education teacher and executive director of the Office of English Language Learners

of the New York City Department of Education and who is now Associate Commissioner of Bilingual Education for the state.

- 14 The Corrective Action Plan (2011) can be accessed at:
<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/biling/docs/NYCCAPFinal.pdf>
- 15 Further information about this initiative can be found at: cuny-nysieb.org

Appendix A. Study Participants in 'English-Only' and 'Bilingual' Schools

	Participant	Position	School Level	Borough
English-Only Schools	Ms. V	Principal	Elementary School	Brooklyn
	Ms. D	Principal	Elementary School	Bronx
	Ms. F	Assistant Principal		
	Ms. M	Assistant Principal		
	Ms. E	Principal	Junior High School	Manhattan
	Ms. B	Acting Principal/ Assistant Principal	Junior High School	Queens
	Ms. N	Assistant Principal	Junior High School	Brooklyn
	Mr. A	Principal	High School	Manhattan
	Ms. A	Assistant Principal		
	Mr. R	Principal	High School	Bronx
	Ms. Y	Teacher		
	Mr. M	Principal	High School	Manhattan
	Ms. C	Assistant Principal		
	Mr. E	Teacher		
Bilingual Schools	Ms. G	Principal	Elementary School	Queens
	Ms. I	Teacher		
	Ms. T	Teacher		
	Dr. H	Principal	Elementary School	Manhattan
	Ms. L	Principal	Elementary School	Brooklyn
	Ms. Z	Teacher Leader/ Supervisor		
	Dr. M	Teacher Leader/ Supervisor	Elementary School	Bronx
	Ms. P	Principal	K-8 School (Elementary + Junior High)	Manhattan
	Ms. J	Teacher		
	Ms. W	Teacher		
	Mr. F	Teacher Leader/ Supervisor	Junior High School	Bronx
	Ms. K	Teacher Leader/ Supervisor	Junior High School	Queens
	Ms. LJ	Teacher Leader/Supervisor	High School	Bronx