

THE BILINGUAL RESEARCH JOURNAL
Summer/Fall 1995, Vol. 19, Nos. 3 & 4, pp. 409-428

A SPANISH DUAL LITERACY PROGRAM: TEACHING TO THE WHOLE STUDENT

Leona Marsh
New York University

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to familiarize both the educational community and laymen with the policies and practices of the Dual Language Literacy program at Liberty High School in New York City, designed to provide Spanish-speaking Limited Formal Schooling (LFS) students with opportunities to become literate in both L-1 (Spanish) and L-2 (English) in context-rich environments. In this program, emphasis is placed on the native language (Spanish) as a means of learning content while students are acquiring the target language (English). Additional components of the program, which provide support and intellectual growth, are experiential investigations of the city, after-school programs, and a devoted team of teachers who meet regularly to plan classes, events, and discuss students' individual needs.

This paper describes the Spanish Dual Literacy program of Liberty High School (LHS) and two English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms in the bilingual dual literacy program, taught by the writer from 1991-1995.

LHS of New York City (NYC) is a ninth grade newcomer school open to limited English proficient (LEP) students from all boroughs who may enroll at any time during the school year. Programs at LHS are designed to prepare students to enter four-year high schools in New York City and students usually remain at LHS from six months to a year before changing to another school to complete their high school studies.

The "mainstream" at LHS consists of sheltered English classes across the curriculum and serves primarily students whose numbers are not sufficient to constitute a separate bilingual program within the school. Hence, English is the medium of instruction in these classes. Courses offered include the usual ninth grade subjects such as math, science, social studies/global studies, health, physical education, and art. Several themes, designed by Liberty teachers, that tie the curricula together in most programs at LHS, are a) school life; b) survival skills; c) New York City; and d) the immigrant experience.

Besides mainstreamed sheltered content area classes LHS has ESL classes and six independent programs within it: the Entrepreneur, the Multicultural, the Chinese Coop-Tech (for students who wish to pursue a vocational career), an English language literacy program for students from different ethnic groups, and two bilingual dual literacy programs: one for Polish native speakers and the other for Spanish native speakers. The bilingual dual literacy program components are: ESL, Native Language Arts (NLA), math, science, global skills, physical education, health, and art.

The existence of specific bilingual and other special interest programs is a result of demographic changes in the school population and other social or educational priorities. Although most students leave LHS after one or two semesters to go to a four-year high school to complete their studies, students in dual literacy programs may remain for up to two years to receive the support they need to come up to the level of their ninth grade LHS peers.

Demographics of the city's immigrant population from 1994-95 are reflected at LHS: Dominican and Chinese students outnumber Poles, Russians, Arabs, Africans, and Haitians who make up the rest of the school population. In the mid-1990s, there are also increasing numbers of Eastern Europeans, Africans, and Haitians, while the Dominican population is decreasing, as programs like Liberty's become available in New York City schools located in the Dominican community.

Part I. The Spanish Dual Literacy Program (The Mini School)

As students first began to arrive at LHS in 1986, many of those from Spanish-speaking countries, such as the Dominican Republic,

Mexico, Salvador, and Honduras, found it difficult to succeed in regular ESL, NLA, and content area classes. For Limited Formal Schooling (LFS) students, lack of literacy in the native language and familiarity with US school culture became obstacles to success in the new school, which in turn, caused low self-esteem and discipline problems.

The establishment of the Spanish Dual Language Literacy Program, hereafter referred to as the Mini-School, is the result of a process begun in 1988 by a LHS ESL teacher. He had had previous experience with native literacy programs elsewhere and began a special LHS ESL class for students lacking native language literacy. Content area teachers also expressed concern because students couldn't keep up with their work, which caused students and teachers alike to become increasingly frustrated. From this arose an initiative to expand the native literacy approach to other courses and to establish a separate literacy program across the curriculum. After one and a half years of these special ESL classes, a decision was made to consolidate ESL, NLA, and separate content area classes into the Mini-School.

Organization of the Spanish-English Mini-School

The students. As of 1994-95, out of a total 530 students at LHS, 304 or about 60%, were Spanish-speaking. Of those 304, 70 students with reading levels below 5th grade in Spanish were placed in the Mini-School where classes are relatively small, with the maximum number of students per class at twenty. Paraprofessionals, who assist teachers in ESL and NLA classes in the Mini-School, usually work on a one-to-one basis with students who arrive throughout the semester and need help to catch up or with those who take longer to adjust to classroom routines and school culture. Within the Mini-School students receive help from a bilingual counselor, content area teachers, and after-school programs that offer peer-tutoring and teacher-guided study.

The Mini-School offers both social and academic support. These at-risk students, who are not used to the daily school routine in New York City, have a two-fold task upon entering LHS: 1) To learn to read and write in their native Spanish (L1) and 2) to learn to read, write, and speak in English, their second language (L2).

In addition to literacy issues, Mini-School students have to cope with many uncertainties regarding school, family, and society. From the

time students leave home each day, until they return at night, they may be preoccupied with their own personal safety, returning numerous school forms properly filled out, accompanying family members to city offices, or siblings to school, and adjusting to a new living situation with or without parents nearby. Perhaps one of the most challenging adjustments is learning peer social and linguistic norms for school and recreational interactions in order to fit in with other New York City boys and girls their age (thirteen to seventeen). Newly arrived immigrant students are not always easily accepted by their peers in the school setting or in the trains and buses they take to go to school; they often travel long distances taking up to an hour or two each way. Their dress, language, and mannerisms may even be taken as an affront and/or an invitation to fight, simply because they are different. It is in this context that immigrant teenagers try hard to fit into a society that often rejects them.

The teachers. Teachers in the Mini-School are bilingual speakers from Colombia, Brazil, Peru, and the United States, with varied teaching experiences, both in this country and in Latin America. This writer has lived in the Dominican Republic where she taught on the high school and university levels. She is active in the NYC Dominican community and makes frequent visits to the Dominican Republic where, among other activities, she looks for materials of interest to her students and meets with Dominican educators to compare teaching experiences such as parental involvement, curricula, and methodology. Aside from the writer's personal relationship with the Dominican Republic, most of the students in the Mini-School are Dominican (95%), so that this writer's frame of reference regarding students' cultural backgrounds is the Dominican Republic.

Teachers who work in the Mini-School program choose to work with this population because they have a special interest in and commitment to helping the most at-risk group in the school succeed. Because of their own bilingual/bicultural experiences, they understand how to develop and use appropriate and effective classroom activities and provide meaningful homework assignments which build on students' multicultural, multilingual experiences and prior knowledge.

Assessment and Placement

Initial placement. All students who come to LHS for the first time are assessed upon arrival in their native language to determine their initial and developing level of Spanish (L1) literacy. The Spanish literacy placement test, which was developed by LHS NLA teachers and a teacher trainer from the Office of Bilingual Education of the New York City Board of Education, determines students' ability to read and write in Spanish (L1). Students who read at or below 5th grade level go into the Mini-School. Those students who read at or below 5th grade level but belong to an ethnic group of which there are too few to constitute a separate literacy program, go into a special literacy ESL class and attend content area classes in the mainstream program.

Developmental assessment. Ongoing informal assessment of students already in the Mini-School is done by classroom teachers to inform instruction and provide for students' individual needs. If, for example, a student isn't placed correctly with the in-house placement test, or if a student makes rapid progress, a formal process begins whereby the two teachers involved would begin conversations until they clarify the issue and agree on the student's needs. This process sometimes results in having a student take a new class on a trial basis. This temporary placement can finally become permanent after student performance and teacher observations are discussed. Very often this slower process is more effective than an immediate permanent change and both student and teacher are usually more satisfied with the change because all have actively participated in the decision-making process.

End-of-semester placement. In moving a student from one level to another at the end of the semester, Mini-School teachers take into consideration both the social and academic skills of each student. Having the student remain in a specific level does not necessarily imply that the she/he is slow or doesn't have the capacity to perform on grade level. Some students in the Mini-School, particularly those new to the school, may need additional time to feel secure enough to speak in front of the class in English or in Spanish, or to participate in groups. Often these students may still be feeling the effects of the immigration experience, or may still be in the process of adjusting to a new family situation. In some cases, keeping students in the same level gives them extra time to learn sociolinguistic school and classroom norms, free

from emotional and academic stress and pressure to go fast, while receiving needed encouragement and support for literacy, social and academic development.

The Setting

All Mini-School classrooms are located in the same area of LHS, with students usually together for most classes. As a result, there are frequent opportunities for teachers and students to greet each other during the day and for teachers to "touch base" with each other, thus creating a family-like atmosphere of security and well-being for students while they struggle to become part of the new school and city environment.

Goals of the Mini-School

All Mini-School teachers share three basic goals, which are part of the Mini-School philosophy.

1. *To foster the development of the native language.* High school LFS students have a great deal of work to do to catch up to their LHS peers, who already have developed L- I literacy and content area skills. Mini-School teachers understand that in spite of this, their Spanish-speaking students have developed cognitive skills in their native language (Spanish) upon which they can build literacy and content area knowledge. This native language ability can then transfer to English (L2). According to Cummins (1981), students who are literate in their native language (L1), have fewer difficulties later on in school and in life, especially academically.

2. *To provide opportunities for literacy in English and content areas.* While the instructional approach varies depending on the teacher, the level, and the content, teachers agree that students need to learn study behaviors, classroom routines, and ESL literacy for content in context-rich environments that include working in groups and with partners.

3. *To enable students to increase their experiential base.* Field trips for all students in the Mini-School provide them with new experiences such as visiting parks, zoos, and art, history, and science museums as well as trips to the NYC Native-American museum, the Taipei Opera, and various Latin American photography and film

exhibits. Also, classrooms are supplied with resources such as atlases, picture and regular dictionaries, and books about nature, plant and animal life, and outer space, to name a few examples.

To give a clear idea of the way the Mini-School classes are structured and activities carried out, I will describe my ESL classes in detail.

Part II. My Mini-School ESL Classrooms

Having taught ESL in the NYC schools and elsewhere since 1981, I have developed an educational philosophy that underlies my Mini-School ESL teaching. This philosophy consists of six characteristics related to 1) the role of the native language (Spanish) in ESL; 2) learning contexts; 3) students' prior experiences; 4) interactions; 5) student authors and 6) the community's role in education. Each of the six characteristics is exemplified by the ESL classroom activities which follow.

1. *The role of the native language in ESL.* To facilitate the development of English (L2), I encouraged students to proceed in Spanish (L1) when they were unable to convey their ideas and feelings about situations, both in their lives and about stories read in class. I knew that they would eventually acquire more English over time, but in the meantime, the process by which they created meaning and reflected upon and gave opinions was important for their linguistic, cognitive, and social development, whether it be in L1 or L2.

Examples of context-rich environments that supported native literacy and ESL acquisition were situations requiring students to negotiate for meaning such as teacher-led reading time.

Reading time. During teacher-led reading time, usually held at the beginning of the year when students were just becoming familiar with print, I would read a story in Spanish first, so students would become familiar with the plot and characters. I would involve them in the reading by sharing the illustrations and encourage them to make comments about the story. I would teach them reading strategies such as previewing, viewing, predicting, making inferences, and main idea through "scaffolding," a technique for encouraging students to go beyond their present ability through questioning and modeling. Then I

would read the story in English, but because students now knew the content, they could focus on the target language (English) to talk about the characters, how the story compared with their own culture, and what they would have done in similar situations.

Multicultural stories. Of the numerous stories I read and shared with my classes, the two that stand out are *It Can Always be Worse* and *The Girl Who Outshone the Sun*. I chose these two stories for their universal and multicultural messages, e.g., how life can seem worse than it is and the benefits of tolerance and respect for difference.

The first story about Jewish life in pre-revolutionary Russia, reminded many of them of their own towns and villages. The descriptions of life in another place and time and the humorous and universal message - ideas they could discuss only in Spanish at this point in their ESL development - engaged their attention. The second story, which was based on Latin-American indigenous culture and customs, lent itself to comparisons of foods, topography, and animals and birds. In this story, students knew some of the vocabulary in their native language (Spanish) and enjoyed learning it in the target language (English). Several follow up activities using English (L2) included arranging words in a sentence in the correct order, supplying appropriate words in a doze exercise, providing a different title, sentence completions, crossword puzzles, and acting out events from the stories.

Autobiography. In this activity, I helped students write their autobiographies by proceeding in the following way:

- 1) I would elicit information by asking students what they thought was important in writing an autobiography;
- 2) While students dictated the information in Spanish, I would write it down in English on large chart paper, to be used as text (e.g. "I am from..." and "I came to the US in...");
- 3) At the same time, I would model basic conventions for composition writing.

While at first students would ask and answer in either Spanish or English, after becoming familiar with the format, they would increasingly use English. Later on, students would interview each other in English to practice asking and answering additional questions to be added to their autobiographies. Students would accompany their

autobiographies with a photograph or drawing of themselves, which we mounted on the wall for parents and other students to read.

Social/affective purposes. I would use the native language (Spanish) in specific situations for social/affective purposes to share concerns and build trust - for students to become more comfortable with me and for me to become more accessible to them. This social/affective use of L1, specifically to "show solidarity" with speakers of L1 (Spanish), has been noted in the literature (Marsh, 1987; Poplack, 1984) as a common feature in some bilingual communities.

Register. I would also use the native language (Spanish) to teach concepts such as "register," which match appropriate language for specific situations. For example, when asking for data from LHS staff and each other learners must choose more formal language for staff and more intimate language for friends.

Writing genres. Students in the Mini-School needed the support of the native language (Spanish) when writing in particular genres such as dialogues. In dialogues, they must understand that in this genre the writer uses the character's exact words, as if he/she were speaking in real life.

2. *The classroom speech event: new learning contexts.* Although LFS students may not know US classroom sociolinguistic norms, they have had prior experiences using sociolinguistic norms in Spanish appropriate to their own cultures in a variety of settings. Several commonly used norms at school in their countries include 1) Standing at attention for the teacher or classroom visitor until the teacher sits down or while the national anthem is being played; 2) addressing a female teacher, married or otherwise, as *Senorita* (Miss_____); and, 3) waiting outside of the school for the next class to begin if a student has arrived late.

The use of classroom space. Classroom arrangements in US schools may differ from traditional classroom arrangements found in some Latin American countries. For example, in my classroom, students' desks would be arranged in various ways: groups of four to foster collaborative group work, in a circle to share stories, and pushed to the side to accommodate games, skits, singing, and dramatizations. At times I would move about the classroom going from one group to another or sit next to students observing and participating in various interactions with

them. These physical arrangements created an ambiance in which students were encouraged to play active roles in their own language development, while I would act as a collaborator and facilitator. Some Mini-School students would find the use of classroom space confusing at first because it was different from what they were accustomed to. In order to become comfortable with the use of space and classroom norms, students would need appropriate instruction, practice, and time.

Classroom sociolinguistic norms. To help students learn to adjust to the new setting, I would teach classroom sociolinguistic norms through modeling, scaffolding, and direct instruction to enable students to recognize alternative settings and interlocutor relationships in the classroom and behavior appropriate to each type of relationship. These included: 1) student-to-student; 2) student-to-adult visitors; 3) student-to-student visitors and 4) student-to-teacher.

I would teach students ways of listening to each other, focusing on the speaker when, for example, greeting one another, asking and giving help, and avoiding sneezing and coughing in one's immediate vicinity. I would teach students how to interact with adult visitors who came to see the teacher regarding an urgent matter as well as student visitors with messages and/or materials for the teacher, ways of maintaining an orderly classroom, of entering the classroom when late, and of leaving between classes and at the end of the school day.

I would teach students ways of asking for permission, discussing one's work, asking for help, and showing respect for my space.

Study tools and behaviors. Many Mini-School students from rural areas had not gone to school on a consistent basis and had had little experience using books, notebooks and related materials. For this reason, I would model the use of study tools such as keeping a notebook, copying information from the chalkboard, getting ready to work upon entering the classroom, and taking down daily homework assignments. A classroom activity, which consisted of setting up a homework assignment section in the notebook, with space for the date, assignment, and caretaker's signature, was reviewed by me on a regular basis to help students become organized and systematic.

3. *Students' own experiences as content.* By integrating my students' past lives and learning experiences across the curriculum, I was able to help them make a smoother transition to the new school,

city, and country. By using familiar content about which to talk and write, they could share what they knew best and learn literacy quickly and more easily. Most importantly, in spite of limited formal education in their homelands, both rural and urban students have had rich personal, linguistic, and cultural experiences.

I would often create opportunities for students to perform skits, write dialogues and songs, and recite poems because I know that they have a rich oral tradition, which is handed down from one generation to the next. Several popular narrative forms, which are part of family and community life are nursery rhymes, stories, poems and "décimas" (10-line verse songs sung by agricultural workers). I also know that schools in the Dominican Republic dedicate Fridays to cultural activities such as singing, reciting of poems, dancing, and acting and I would duplicate some of these activities in both L1 (Spanish) and L2 (English) to further students' language development.

Language Experience Approach (LEA). LEA allows teachers to draw upon students' past and present experiences as the basis of oral, written, and reading text by having students dictate stories in the native language (Spanish) to the teacher who writes it down in the target language (English). I would use LEA because I could extrapolate core vocabulary, sentence structures, and language patterns for future activities, thereby making them more predictable and understandable. LEA also provides for authentic material for writing as well as self-esteem because it validates students' past and present realities.

Teachable moments. An example of an LEA activity was when I asked one of my students to explain why he was yawning so much. He then narrated the previous night's events that took place in his neighborhood, which had kept him transfixed at his window. Out of his narration several writing, reading, and listening activities emerged such as role-playing the shoot-out, reporting an emergency via 911, drawings of sequences of events and writing an action packed story. This experience, more motivating than any commercially available material because it was based on a student's real experiences, became the class text for several days.

A different experiential genre was the collection of authentic recipes which students shared and compared. Students collaborated in writing and reading the recipes in both languages. This activity provided

them with new vocabulary and experience in using language related to recipes, e.g., following directions and sequence. As a follow-up activity students cooked recipes they had compiled.

4. *Interaction for language and content learning.* I attempted to create a total classroom community consisting of school staff, teachers, and students from other and their own classes, which students would use as a resource for developing their social, literacy, and academic development. All of these persons were utilized by my students to get information and opinions, which were incorporated in projects. They were also utilized to collaborate on activities, to view exhibits, to have other students and staff accompany them on class trips, and to view other class activities and report back on them.

An example of students interacting with each other for language and content learning, was the project *My Apartment*, whereby students made a floor plan of their apartment, drew or cut out illustrations of furniture, and labeled them. To accomplish their work, students negotiated with peers and the teacher for goods and services to carry out the work, e.g., "Pass the scissors," "Who has the glue?" "Please help me draw a circle."

Theme-centered units. A theme-centered unit, such as the social studies one described below, was organized around a topic offering students opportunities to use speaking, reading, writing, and critical thinking while collaborating with partners and in small groups on activities of their own choice. The idea for the unit arose spontaneously while students were working on a previous one in which they described their NYC apartment and noted the differences between apartments in the two cities. That observation generated a desire to work on a separate unit comparing several areas of interest between NYC and Santo Domingo.

While working on the unit *A Comparison of NYC with Santo Domingo*, students chose to compare one of the following: geography, agriculture, topography, and architecture. After the completion of the unit, students mounted their work in the hall with a heading on a banner above their work. First they presented their projects to each other. Then they prepared invitations on the computer, for students in other classes to see the work displayed, while they explained it, as they had seen done in galleries and museums.

To execute this project, I would help students make plans consisting of what they specifically wanted to do, the resources they already had, and the resources they needed. I would also teach them how to use the various resources they had requested such as dictionaries, atlases, textbooks and photographs, which I provided.

Reader response groups. By the second semester many students would begin to borrow and read books in English of their own choice from the classroom library. At that time I introduced reader response groups (Peregoy & Boyle, 1993), which, in my class, required that everyone present something in whichever language they felt comfortable, Spanish, English, or both, in either whole class or group settings, and say why they did/didn't like the book. During the presentation, students would ask each other questions related to the meaning of the story such as "Why didn't she tell her mother the truth?" "Wasn't she afraid to run away?" I would encourage students to help each other in their story tellings and assist them by scaffolding questions. After each presentation, students would clap for the presenter because they realized that by presenting, they were being initiated as readers of English language books. Oral whole and small group discussions about stories read constituted comprehensible input (Krashen & Terrell, 1983) because the discussions, which were social experiences, required participants to explain meaning to one another.

5. *Students as authors.* All activities in Mini-School ESL classes involved writing, and many culminated in publishing. Having different real-life audiences helped students focus better as they wrote different genres for different purposes such as letters, stories, a school directory, and recipes, while publishing validated their writing efforts and gave students a means for sharing.

Students mainly wrote for two basic purposes: 1) To share information about content areas, e.g., science, history, immigration, directions for traveling, making something, getting around the school, and explaining events and 2) to share their personal feelings and life experiences, e.g., letters to their countrymen, autobiographies, descriptions about family members and friends, stories about favorite classes and themselves as immigrants.

An example of the first kind of writing was the *Liberty High School Directory*, which contained teachers' names, room numbers, courses

taught, and language of instruction, as well as information about administrators and staff. In order to obtain necessary data, students had to use the appropriate register and record the information on a graphic organizer. This activity also required students to negotiate the information with classmates and make corrections. The graphic organizer was then used as a reference to create individual school directories with drawings and written information, which students shared with more recently arrived students as part of the orientation process.

Process-writing. Texts written on a more personal level, which were based on process-writing, were also published. These were often based on the circumstances of students' lives in their own country, and their experiences as immigrants. These stories were more complex than other kinds of writing described previously because they contained more situations and consisted of an introduction, body, and conclusion. They would eventually comprise a single class book, *Our Lives: Past and Present*. Immigrant stories allowed me to create texts in students' own words and in-context activities such as doze exercises, sentence completions, and story retellings.

Drafts. An unplanned but important outcome of my writing down students' stories was that they could observe the process of telling a story in the native language (Spanish) and writing it in the second language (English). They could observe how I would select and change words and phrases to more closely reflect the original Spanish versions, and they could understand that they have to be self-analytical. While at first they would become annoyed because they wanted to write the story quickly without changing or erasing it, they later realized that the process from the oral to the written medium took planning. They would begin to see how meaning was being constructed by going through this process and they would say to each other, "Don't write yet." "It's a draft." "She always does that."

6. *The community.* One of the goals of the curriculum (See Appendix) was to make connections between the school and community in all class activities to support school learning through increased knowledge of the world and to help students see that communities can provide educational resources for life-long learning. To accomplish this goal I basically used two approaches: 1) invite community members,

especially parents, to share their expertise, interests, and experiences with students as a basis for interactive activities and 2) use the school and students' home neighborhoods as resources to learn the prices of food and clothing, the location of stores, offices, parks, recreational facilities, and the variety of architectural styles.

Jobs in NYC. A topic in the curriculum was related to jobs in NYC. Students were expected to use a survey to find out what kinds of jobs their neighbors had and skills required, but when it became impractical for students to carry out the survey, I asked them to invite their parents/and or friends to be interviewed in class where they could share information about jobs. As a result of the interviews, students gained insight about work opportunities in NYC as well as experience in asking different kinds of questions.

Just as interviews were the vehicle for students' making connections with teachers and staff in order to publish, interviews were also the way of getting information about jobs from community members.

Although several adults from the community participated in the interviews, the interview which inspired the most effective story involved the paraprofessional assigned to our class who had been a student at LHS when it first opened. An important feature of these conversations was that they enabled students to see how community members, of all ages, could contribute to their learning.

After each visit, students related what they remembered and/or liked about the interview. Several follow-up activities included learning English vocabulary for specific jobs, making lists of their positive and/or negative attributes, and creating a *Book of Jobs* with illustrations and captions.

Native Americans are also part of the NYC community and I would often read stories about them to my students. Once I invited Cherokee performers to LHS, who told stories about their culture, made comparisons between their own and Mini-School students' culture, and taught students their native dances as part of a "pow-wow" attended by all Mini-School students.

Critical Comments and Recommendations

While teaching in the Mini-School was a challenging experience, there were areas needing improvement such as student isolation, communication between Mini-School and mainstream teachers and counselors, and parent involvement.

Student Isolation

Students in the Mini-School are grouped together according to their level of L-1 literacy. As a result of this grouping, they often have limited contact with other students in the school, which causes some students in the Mini-School to believe that they are inferior.

To overcome student isolation, meaningful contact with students in other programs during the school day, and on school field trips, on an on-going basis should be planned and be a permanent part of the curriculum. Having more advanced students visit, share, and work with Mini-School students in small groups on specific projects would help improve their literacy, academic development, and self-esteem.

Communication Among All ESL Teachers

The sharing of information between mainstream ESL and Mini-School teachers and counselors about decisions concerning students who go from one program to another and to other schools, is not as complete and frequent as it might be. We all need to be informed about decisions as well as different pieces of information related to students' lives.

Although at one time the LHS administration intended to plan formal procedures for staff to communicate with each other about students, little has been done to improve this situation. Efforts, such as including regular ESL/Mini-School departmental meetings to make decisions about specific students, writing case studies focusing on special students needing improvement, and setting up times for counselors to visit the Mini-School would be a major improvement.

Parental Involvement

Although one of my most important professional goals was to make connections between the school and the community, of which the parents are primary, Mini-School parents have not been sufficiently

integrated in LHS or Mini-School activities on an on-going way. Although parents are struggling with basic concerns such as jobs, housing, health, and keeping the family together, special efforts are needed to bring them into the school, so that they can become more active in school life.

Parents of students in the Mini-School are from countries where the teacher often lives in the same community and discusses educational issues with them on an ongoing informal basis. As a result, they may not be accustomed to the more formal manner in which parents and teachers interact in US schools and do not know how to get relevant information about 1) how to participate in the selection process of a four-year high school for their children; 2) how to select the appropriate LHS program and/or courses; 3) how to assist their children with homework, and 4) how to become active in the Parent/Teacher Association at LHS in order to learn about the school budget, hiring practices, courses, programs, and technology.

The School Based Management and School Based Decision Making (SBM/SDM) team at LHS needs to play a more active role in working with parents. The effort would require the establishment of an official parent involvement task force at LHS working together with the superintendent's office and the city-wide PTA organization.

Conclusions

It is difficult to convey the spirit that pervaded my ESL Mini-School classes. When things didn't go well, both teacher and students felt disappointed, but other times, when students were excited about their progress, there was a feeling of joy and excitement. What my newly arrived immigrant students lacked in literacy and culturally-determined sociolinguistic norms, they made up in overall intelligence, humor, and determination in their quest to become English-speaking members of this society. Sometimes I wondered how they managed to be so good-hearted in the face of so many concurrent challenges and obstacles.

I always tried to be a serious practitioner, who tried to simplify, but never "water down" activities. I believed that by using a myriad of purposeful interactions requiring appropriate registers as well as

meaningful writing activities that culminated in published works to be shared and be proud of; students could make great progress - and most of them did.

Other objectives that I hoped to achieve, but were beyond my ability to realize included the integration of advanced and native-speaking students in Mini-School projects on an ongoing way, the use of technology to excite and stimulate even greater learning, and, as noted above, more community and parental input in all phases of school and class life. I hope to see these objectives become reality at LHS in the near future.

References

- Altwerger, B., Edelsky, C., & Flores, B. M. (1987). Whole language: What's new? *The Reading Teacher*, 41, 144-154.
- Blanton, L. L. (1992) Talking students into writing: Using oral fluency to develop literacy: *TESOL Journal*, 4, 23-26.
- Cummins, J. (1981). The role of primary language development in promoting educational success for language minority students. In *Schooling and language minority students* (pp. 3-49). Sacramento, CA: California Department of Education.
- Eisenstein, M. (1983). *Language variation and the ESL curriculum*. Washington, DC: Eric No. 51.
- Freeman, Y. S., & Freeman, D. E. (1992). *Whole language for second language learners*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Hakuta, K. (1990) *Bilingualism and bilingual education: A research perspective*. Washington, DC: NCBE.
- Krashen, S., & Terrell, T. (1983). *The natural approach*. San Francisco: Alemany.
- Marsh, L. (1987). *It comes from inside/De adentro sale: Code switching in a Dominican household in New York City*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, New York University, New York City.

- Peregoy, S. F. & Boyle, O. F. (1993). *Reading, writing & learning in ESL: A resource book for K-8 teachers*. White Plains, NY: Longman.
- Poplack, S. (1978). *Syntactic structure and social function of codeswitching* (Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños). New York: City University of New York.
- Rathet, I. (1994). English by drawing: Making the language lab a center of active learning. *TESOL Journal*, 3, 22-25.
- Samway, K. (1992). *Writers workshop and children acquiring English as a non-native language*. Washington, D.C.: NCBE.
- Zemach, M. (1990). *It could always be worse*. New York City: Gerrard, Strauss & Giroux.
- Zubizarreta-Ada, R. (1991). *The woman who outshone the sun*. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Rena Deutsch and Robert Ball for providing me with background information and for reading the first draft of this paper. I would also like to thank Beti Leone for guiding my writing, Veronica Fern for her support, and Miriam Eisenstein Ebsworth for her helpful corrections. But most of all, I want to thank my Mini-School students for coming to LHS.

Appendix
The World Around Us

	Trips	Subtopics
A. Home	1. The Tenement Museum (lower east side of NYC)	1.family members 2.my apartment address 3.my autobiography
B. School	1. Tour of school neighborhood (theaters, stores, housing)	1.schedules/classes 2.school staff 3.community services
C. Home Community	1. The library 2. Alianza Dominicana (Dominican community org.)	1.special places 2.after-school activities 3.filling out forms
D. The City	1. The Circle Line (commercial boat tours) 2. Museum of Natural History 3. City Hall	1.map skills-the burroughs 2.how to use the subway 3.demographics of NYC 4.history and culture/NYC 5.jobs in NYC
E. The USA	1.Ellis Island 2.Museum of Native American	1.New York State 2.other states 3.US history 4.demographics of USA