Strengthening Transitional Bilingual Education Programs

From Language Support to Academic Success

Altagracia H. Delgado

Why We're Here

Ground in Research

Connect TBE programs to evidence-based practices and Texas policy expectations

Learn from the Field

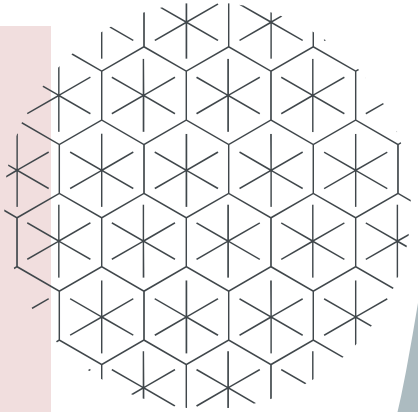
Draw on implementation insights from real Texas districts

Take Action

Leave with practical recommendations to improve outcomes for multilingual students

What the Research Tells Us

- **Primary Language as a Bridge**
  - The home language is used strategically to support content access while students develop English proficiency. (Goldenberg, 2013)
- **Literacy Transfers Across Languages**
  - Skills built in Spanish directly support English literacy development; this is Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis in action.
- **Intentional Transition is Non-Negotiable**
  - Effective TBE programs clearly define when and how students move to English, and never by default.



What We've Seen in Texas Districts

Across Texas districts, TBE implementation varies widely, and those differences have real consequences for students.

- **Inconsistent Language Use**
  - Spanish and English ratios shifted unpredictably across grade levels and classrooms.
- **Premature Transitions**
  - Some students were moved to English-dominant instruction before they had the academic foundation to succeed.
- **Stronger Programs Stood Out**
  - Clear transition timelines, intentional Spanish use, and teacher clarity on language of instruction made a measurable difference.

Transitional Bilingual Education is not just about transitioning students; it's about ensuring they are academically prepared when that transition happens.

Successes & Challenges

Successes

- Spanish-use improved comprehension and participation in early grades.
- Clear transition plans boosted student confidence and outcomes.
- Strong programs maintained grade-level rigor throughout.

Challenges

- Transition is treated as a timeline and not a readiness-based process.
- Inconsistent language use across classrooms and campuses.
- Limited teacher preparation in biliteracy and strategic language use.

Lessons Learned

Implementation Insights

1. **Intentional & Gradual**
    a. Transition must be planned, gradual, and driven by data, not the calendar.
2. **Language is a Planned Resource**
    a. Language of instruction should be deliberately structured, not left to individual teacher discretion.
3. **Rigor Throughout**
    a. Academic expectations must remain high before, during, and after transition.

Practical Recommendations

1	**Define a Clear TBE Model**	Specify when, how, and based on what criteria students transition, in writing, districtwide.
2	**Use Spanish Strategically**	Ensure full content comprehension in the primary language before increasing English instructional demands.
3	**Train Teachers in Biliteracy**	Build capacity in language transfer, biliteracy development, and sheltered instruction techniques.
4	**Align Across Campuses**	Create consistency in language use, pacing, and transition practices across all schools and classrooms.
5	**Monitor Language & Academic Readiness**	Use multiple data points, including ELP levels, content assessments, and classroom performance, before transitioning students.

Where to Learn More

Texas Education Agency

Bilingual/ESL Program Guidance, state requirements and expectations for TBE implementation under TAC §89

txel.org/ProgramImplementation

Colorín Colorado

Practical, classroom-ready strategies for supporting emergent bilingual students across content areas

colorincolorado.org

NABE

National Association for Bilingual Education; professional resources, research, and advocacy tools

nabe.org/resources

OELA / NCELA

Office of English Language Acquisition; federal toolkit and research base for English Learner program design

English Learner Toolkit (PDF)

The Goal Is Not Just Transition; It's Preparation

Solid Academic Foundation: Students master content in their home language before shifting to English instruction.

Intentional Language Development: Every instructional decision about language is purposeful, planned, and monitored.

Thoughtful, Data-Informed Transitions: Students leave Transitional Bilingual Education is not just proficiency in English, but fully prepared for academic success.

Thank You

Altagracia H. Delgado

altagraciadelgao94@gmail