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ABSTRACT

The evaluation conduct factor involves matters such as whether correct methodology is being used, whether the measurements used are philosophically consistent with the goals of the program, timeliness, and format of the evaluation report, and whether recommendations provided in the report are usable. This study analyzed the conduct factor in the use of student data for decision making in Texas bilingual education programs. Surveys were completed by 93 directors of bilingual education programs, and survey data were merged with district data from the states information management system. Texas bilingual program directors reported that they do use data to improve education practices within their school districts. However, they do not use the wealth of data collected for reports to the state, but concentrate on a single component, Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) data. Examination of district practices shows that the use of only one source of data is not a sound educational practice, but the valuing of TAAS data over any other data type may actually be quite rational because these data are the only ones used by the state to determine school ratings. Survey results do show the importance of three components of the conduct factor: (1) a strong belief in using Spanish for instruction associated with higher levels of use of Spanish norm-referenced testing data; (2) correlation between data use and data availability; and (3) the great emphasis on TAAS data. (Contains 27 references.) (SLD)

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Use of accountability data for decision-making in Texas bilingual education programs:

An examination of the conduct factor

Introduction

During the past decade Texas public schools have implemented several accountability initiatives, incurring significant cost in terms of human and financial resources. A primary component of these accountability initiatives is data pertaining to student academic performance. For example, students participate in the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills, Texas Primary Reading Inventory, end-of-course tests, and in some districts, norm-reference tests. In addition, the State requires schools to collect data on student attendance, dropout, and graduation rates. Together these pieces of information are used by the State in its Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), which ranks and rewards schools and districts according to specified standards of performance. The data source for AEIS is the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS).

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) states, “The goal of the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) assessment program in Texas is to measure student progress toward achieving academic excellence” (on-line <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/techdig/chapt1.htm>). Elsewhere TEA states, “One of the basic goals of PEIMS, as adopted by the State Board of Education in 1986, is to improve education practices of local school districts” (online <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/aeis/about.aeis.html>). Thus, an expected outcome of these accountability systems is to provide decision-makers information for the purposes of assessing and improving educational practices in Texas schools.

Informed decision-making and improved educational practice are two key purposes advanced by the program evaluation movement (Patton, 1997). Weiss (1967), in a seminal paper on evaluation utilization, explains

The basic rationale for evaluation is that it provides information for action. Its primary justification is that it contributes to the rationalization of decision-making. Although it can serve such other functions as knowledge-building and theory-testing, unless it gains serious hearing when program decisions are made, it fails in its major purpose. (p. 318)

Alkin, Daillak , and White (1979) reiterate these purposes, “evaluation is distinctly practical and utilitarian, and to succeed, or to ‘work,’ it must have influence upon the decision-making process in its target programs” (p. 14). However, the literature on program evaluation is saturated with references to the difficulties of achieving these purposes, which may appear on the surface to be both simple and sensible (Cook, Leviton, & Shadish, 1985), but are made complicated by political, social, cultural, and economical factors among others.

Indeed, so concerned were scholars with the lack of utilization of evaluation results in decision making that calls were made for the “systematic study of conditions associated with utilization of evaluation results” (Weiss, 1972, p. 321).). In a related course, Alkin and Stecher (1983) asked that further studies examine the difference in types of decisions made with evaluation data. And even more recent is Alkin’s (1990) call for studies on the characteristics of those who use and disseminate information.

Research that was initiated to address these calls suggest that contrary to the beliefs of the mid-70’s, when it was thought that the only necessary ingredient for an effective evaluation was accurate and reliable data, it is now known that many factors affect the extent of evaluation use. Burry, et.al. (1984) identified three key factors that contribute to program evaluation use: the human factor, the evaluation context factor, and the evaluation procedures or conduct factor. The human factor includes matters such as the personal characteristics of the evaluation user, the user’s autonomy, whether or not the user perceives the data to be relevant to decisions being

made, and whether or not the user perceives the data as validating or threatening. The evaluation context factor relates to issues such as whether or not the program is new and whether or not the program is highly politicized. The evaluation conduct factor involves matters such as whether or not correct methodology is being used, whether or not the measurements used are philosophically consistent with the goals of the program, the timeliness and format of the evaluation report, and whether or not recommendations provided in the report are useable.

Problem and Purpose of the Study

While school, district, and state employees in Texas go about the task of administering, collecting, and reporting student assessment and other kinds of information prescribed by the State's accountability systems, questions remain pertaining to the use of such data for the purposes of informing decision making and of improving educational practice. An extensive search of the literature reveals no study to date has been published that attempts to address this issue. Given the significant investment of public monies and human time required to carry out these accountability systems, a study focused on describing and analyzing the use of student data for such purposes is warranted. To narrow the scope of this investigation, this study is confined to an analysis of the conduct factor in the use of student data for decision-making in Texas bilingual education programs.

Of particular interest to Texas educators is the academic progress of limited English proficient (LEP) students. These students, who comprise over 12% of the total population of Texas students, the majority of whom are Spanish speaking, come to school without the necessary skills to participate fully in general education programs. They are "at-risk" because of their lack of English skills and are often at-risk for additional factors, including having a low socio-economic status, lack of consistent schooling prior to coming to the U.S., and being overage in their classrooms (Rumberger & Larson, 1998). Evidence from research in bilingual education suggests that students

typically enter school at or below the 20th percentile of the general education population on norm-reference tests (Thomas & Collier, 1995).

When students are already behind in school, time devoted to assessment is a significant investment of instructional time (Gándara & Merino, 1993). LEP students participate in an even greater number of required tests than their English proficient peers, including annual oral language proficiency tests, the Reading Proficiency Test in English, and often Spanish norm-reference and criterion-reference tests. In order to justify this testing, bilingual program directors must utilize the data for selecting appropriate program models and guiding the implementation of these models. In his 1992, *Review of Practices and Problems in the Evaluation of Bilingual Education*, Lam concludes, “For the promotion of quality of educational and economic opportunities for LEP children, evaluation of bilingual education must be taken seriously for the instrumental purposes that it is designed to serve—program accountability and improvement”(p. 199).

Leaders of educational programs may realize that sharing information within the district is critically important. However, accountability data may not have the intended impact on educational programs. For a variety of reasons, educators may not use such data in decision-making. This is double loss because not only are resources such as time and money wasted, instructional programs are not improved as a result (Thompson, 1994, p. 57). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the nature of the conduct factor in the use of student accountability data by Texas bilingual education program directors to make decisions about the implementation of quality programs for limited English proficient students.

The Conduct Factor and Texas Bilingual Education

Burry, et.al., (1984) describes the conduct or procedures factor in evaluation use, as “the actual conduct of the evaluation . . . how the evaluator and users work together, the procedures

used in the evaluation, and the quality of the information it provides” (p. 15). Building on the explanation of the earlier factors, context and human, Burry writes that evaluation procedures and the perceptions of the methodology also affect use. The educational leader must believe that the appropriate evaluation procedures have been used to gather and analyze data before the results of evaluations will be used in decision making.

In considering this factor as it relates to bilingual education, bilingual program directors may have well-founded doubts that assessment data are a result of valid and reliable procedures. Lam (1992) writes that “although data have been accumulated for many years, the poor quality of the evaluation efforts have severely hampered attempts to draw conclusions about the impact of educational instruction designed to serve LEP students” (p. 182). Currently, guidelines are available that can improve efforts to conduct methodologically sound evaluations (Berk & Rossi, 1999, *Thinking about program evaluation*, 2nd ed.; Boulmetis & Dutwin, 2000, *The ABCs of Evaluation*; Chelimsky & Sadish, 1997, *Evaluation for the 21st century: A handbook*). However, few resources target the evaluation of programs for limited English proficient (LEP) students in second language programs.

Although validity of the assessment data, or perceptions of its validity, may be a major obstacle for educators, it is only one component of a well-developed program evaluation. Rumberger and Larson (1988) have identified a number of key indicators that should be considered in the evaluation of programs for LEP students in addition to standardized testing data. These indicators include: classroom grades, attendance information, student discipline information, student mobility information, student status of being “on track to graduate,” retention rates, student study habits as reported on report cards, and student socioeconomic status. Thus, besides using assessment data, bilingual program directors should use other types of

data to inform program selection, implementation, monitoring, and improvement. These indicators provide a more comprehensive analysis of student progress in second language programs.

Dickey (1980) reports that instructional leaders who do not use evaluation data often believe the evaluation procedures are inappropriate, using “inadequate instruments, procedures that were disruptive and time consuming and procedures that were philosophically inconsistent with the project goals” (p. 73). Thus, one could hypothesize that bilingual directors would report a higher level of usage for measurements that were consistent with their personal philosophy of education. Thus, the question arises: Do bilingual program directors who believe in using the student’s native language for instruction report higher levels of use of Spanish norm-referenced tests than bilingual program directors who believe in English immersion programs?

In addition to beliefs about evaluation procedures, the presentation of evaluation data is a component of evaluation conduct that has received attention. The timeliness of the evaluation report, the overall quality of the report, and the treatment of report recommendations impact whether or not evaluation data will be used. Each of these elements will be addressed in the following paragraphs.

First, the timing of the report is critical to whether or not the data will be used. “The timing of an evaluation can by itself restrict the potential utility by not meshing with the timing of the program planning (Alkin, 1985, p. 134). Although the data may have been useful if available on time, the data are not relevant after the decision has been made. Dickey (1980) asserts, “timely information for decision making should be the primary focus” (p. 76). Decision-makers must be able to identify the needed data early enough to request a timely report. Systems within the district must be in place to facilitate gathering and report the data to the decision

maker. Thus, the following question emerges concerning the timeliness of data according to bilingual program directors: Do bilingual program directors who report data are available to them when needed report higher levels of data usage than bilingual program directors who report the data are not available to them when needed?

Finally, the overall quality of the evaluation report itself contributes to whether or not the data are used. Alkin, Kosecoff, Fitz-Gibbon, and Seligman (1974), found that “no matter how high the quality of an actual evaluation, it will be of little worth if the results are not well presented” (p. 17). Leviton and Hughes (1981) write, “The way evaluation is presented to users affects their comprehension and thus the extent of use” (p. 537). Educational decision makers have reported they prefer narrative data in oral and written reports (Leviton & Hughes, 1981; Thompson, 1994). Educators have also emphasized the importance of familiar report formats (Burry, et.al., 1984). Because the State of Texas has been implementing the TAAS test for several years, Texas educators are now familiar with the format of the results. Therefore, the question can be asked: Do bilingual program directors report greater usage of TAAS data than any other type of data? The deductions of any findings for this question are problematic due to the nature of the Texas accountability system. Because the TAAS results are used to rate districts, district personnel might be more likely to use the data regardless of the format of the report.

Methodology

Design and Subjects

Survey methodology following Dillman’s *Tailored Design Method* (2001) was utilized to achieve the purpose of the study. The study began in May 2000 with the electronic mailing of prenotice letters and ended in October 2000 with the final letter contact. Time of year was a

consideration in determining when to begin the study. The decision was made to contact participants at the end of the school year, when the likelihood of evaluation data availability would be the greatest. While some directors work through the summer, others leave for the summer break in early June. Ultimately, the survey was conducted through the summer and into the fall in order to achieve the necessary rate of participation.

Subjects were identified from the 218 districts with bilingual education programs in Texas at the time of the study, Spring 2000. In order to have results that could be generalized to this population, a random sample of 140 subjects was needed (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970, p. 608-609). Subjects were sent the *Bilingual Program Director Survey*. Sixty-six percent or 93 subjects responded to the survey. Survey data were merged with district data provided by the Public Information Management System (PEIMS).

Comparisons were made between respondents and nonrespondents using PEIMS data to assess the possibility of response bias. Specifically, the t test case II independent was performed using 11 student demographic variables (e.g., total student enrollment, LEP enrollment, number students tested, LEP exemption rate, percent students passing, and percent LEP passing). No significant differences between the respondents and the non-respondents on these variables were identified. Thus, it can be assumed that response bias possesses little threat to the external validity of the study's findings.

Instrumentation

The *Bilingual Program Director Survey* is composed of four sections that pertain to the following areas: (1) accountability data, (2) student characteristics, (3) evaluation practices, and (4) demographic information. The first section of the survey lists five types of accountability data required to be collected by Texas bilingual programs: oral language proficiency level of LEP

students, English norm-referenced testing, Spanish language norm-referenced testing, TAAS criterion-referenced testing, and LEP student attendance data. For each type of accountability data, there are six statements with response options of “yes” or “no.” The statements reflect a variety of uses that program directors could have for the data. The statements were: (a) This data are collected for individual students, (b) This data are aggregated for district-wide reports, (c) I am responsible for the collection of this data, (d) I analyze this data, (e) I receive a report on this data from another department in the district, and (f) I am responsible for reporting this data to decision-makers in my district.

The second section of the survey pertaining to student characteristics has four questions. The first question includes the same five types of accountability data as in section one: oral language proficiency level of LEP students, English norm-referenced testing, Spanish language norm-referenced testing, TAAS criterion-referenced testing, and LEP student attendance data. Only this time program directors were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statement, “I believe this measurement provides valid information regarding the academic progress of limited English proficient students.” The second question in section two asked program directors to respond to the degree of impact for the following data: number of LEP students involved in special education, number of LEP students identified for gifted and/or talented programs, number of LEP students participating in extra-curricular activities, and number of secondary LEP students taking honors/AP classes. The third question in section two asked participants to indicate the type of usage they have with each of seven types of accountability data: (1) oral language testing district-wide results, (2) English norm-referenced testing district-wide results, (3) Spanish language norm-referenced testing district-wide results, (4) TAAS district-wide LEP student results, (5) LEP student attendance data, (6) LEP student

mobility information, and (7) LEP student grade information (i.e., report card grades). The fourth question in section two asked participants to look at the same seven indicators as in the third question and select the response they believed to be most accurate. Subjects were given five choices: (1) I believe this measurement provides valid information regarding the academic progress of limited English proficient students, (2) I have access to this data when I need it, (3) This data is reported to decision-makers in my district, (4) I believe this data is critical to the effective implementation of bilingual programs, and (5) I believe this data is taken into account in programmatic decisions made in my district.

The third section of the survey is made up of six questions. Each question is intended to provide insight as to the dynamics of data collection, evaluation, and reporting in the program. The first question asked, “As a whole, how do you typically analyze student data?” The responses were: (1) I analyze data for students who are participating in bilingual/ESL programs, (2) I analyze data for students who are not participating in bilingual/ESL programs, (3) I analyze both groups individually, (4) I analyze both groups comparatively, or (5) None of the above. The second question asked subjects to identify, if any, the barriers to having access to student data in decision-making. If the participant selected “yes,” he/she was asked to identify the greatest barrier. The third question asked subjects whether or not they believed that evaluation data are taken into account by decision-makers in their district. The fourth question asked program directors to estimate the percentage of their total program evaluation that is State-required student assessment data. The fifth question asked subjects to identify the philosophy of bilingual education that most closely approximated their own: the immersion model, the transitional model, and the maintenance model. The sixth question asked directors to identify who in the district was responsible for collecting the data listed above, if it was not collected by the director,

the question asked directors to identify which of the three philosophies of bilingual education most closely matched that of the person or department who collected the data. The final question in this section asked subjects whether or not they believed that student data are equally available for LEP students and non-LEP students.

The fourth section of the *Bilingual Program Director Survey* asked subjects for demographic information. Questions of age, gender, ethnicity, highest degree held, certifications held, years experience in education, job title, and years in current position, were asked of directors. Program directors were also asked questions about their program. Specifically, they were asked about the number of administrators in the bilingual department, Title VII grants, and student distribution in various programs.

Each section of the instrument was developed from the literature. Participants from a national roundtable discussion group were asked to analyze the instrument for content validity. Instrument stability was established by examining overlapping questions within the survey. Cronbach's alpha was calculated for each subsection of the survey and for all survey data but demographic information. An overall alpha coefficient of .96 was found, with each subsection possessing coefficients that ranged from .72 to .97. Nunnally (1978) reports that coefficients .70 or higher indicate an acceptable level of internal consistency reliability.

Data Analysis

To address the problem and purpose of the study, analysis of responses focused on the following sections of the survey: (a) the types of data used for decision-making, (b) the types of decisions made, (c) evaluation activities conducted by bilingual departments, and (d) access to or availability of data. A descriptive analysis was conducted with the generation measures of central tendency and variability for the types of data used for decision making, types of decisions made

with data, evaluation activities conducted by the bilingual department, and availability of data for decision making. Further, responses to questions of use for specific data types were combined to create a factor score, “level of usage”(LOU), for each of data type. These factor scores were then summed to generate an overall LOU score pertaining to directors’ use of accountability data. The highest possible overall LOU score was 139 and the lowest was 0.

An overall availability of data score was also generated for the eleven data types for directors. A new variable was computed, which was labeled overall data accessibility, with responses grouped into three levels of access to data: no restrictions, minor restrictions, and major restrictions.

The descriptive analysis of the data provides the basis for further examination of the conduct factor. Specifically, the three questions that emerged from the review of literature on the conduct factor and Texas bilingual education were transformed into hypotheses. The first question identified in the review became the hypothesis: Bilingual program directors who believe in using the student’s native language for instruction will report higher levels of use of Spanish norm-referenced tests than bilingual program directors who believe in English immersion programs. To test this hypothesis, program directors were classified into categories: those who believe in using the students’ native language for instruction and those who do not. The question pertaining to the director’s philosophy of bilingual education was used for this determination. Next, the LOU score that was created for use of Spanish norm-referenced tests was defined as the dependent variable and the statistical procedure of t test case II independent was performed.

The second question offered in the literature was transformed into the hypothesis: There is a relationship between the availability of data and usage of data as reported by bilingual

program directors. Spearman's rho was calculated using the overall data accessibility and the overall LOU. The assumptions of linearity for this test were examined using a scattergram.

The third question pertaining to differences between use of TAAS and other student data was transformed into 10 hypotheses, each pertaining to testing differences in the LOU scores between TAAS and the other 10 student data sources. The statistical procedure of matched samples was used to determine whether bilingual program directors reported greater usage of TAAS data than any other type of data.

Results

The analysis of the data begins by examining the kinds of decisions and the type of student data bilingual program directors use for decision making. Following this examination the analysis of responses by the directors on the types of evaluation activities conducted in their districts will be presented. Availability of data is the third topic to be offered in this section. Finally, the analysis of the data for testing the conduct factor hypotheses will be offered. Following the results is a statement of conclusion and significance of the study.

Decisions and Student Data

There were nine decisions that were listed and were taken from the work of Alkin et al. (1974) and eleven types of student data on the *Bilingual Program Director Survey*. The responses by the bilingual education program directors to these questions were found to fall out into four categories when the percentages of directors responding to the decision by data categories were ranked. These decision categories were labeled: informal, formal, instructional, and non-instructional.

One kind of decision, identify problems, composes the first category labeled as informal decision making. Identifying problems emerged as the most frequently engaged in decision

making process for which directors used student data. Specifically, 99% of directors reported using TAAS data for identifying problems and 89% used oral language data. These were the most frequently cited student data sources used for most of the nine decisions, however the use of TAAS and oral language was particularly high for identifying problems.

Eighty-one percent of directors also reported using retention rates, 73% high school “on track to graduate,” 71% English norm-reference testing, and 71% attendance data for identifying problems. Such data uses communicate an attention the “flow” of students through the various programs, which culminates in an exiting of students into the general education program and monitoring of the data to identify the potential threat of students dropping out of school. Hispanic students, while not the only recipients of bilingual services, compose a large percentage of the students who receive services and their “at-riskness” for dropping out is well known in the literature (Rumberger & Larson, 1998) and by practitioners.

Student mobility was used to identify problems by 64% of directors, Spanish norm-referenced tests by 62%, report card grades by 57%, student discipline by 56%, and student SES by 52%. It is important to note that not all of these data are readily available to directors, a point that will be discussed in greater detail later. Availability may be influencing some of the use patterns presented here. However, the general picture that develops given the above responses is one of directors constantly, informally, vigilantly, always-in-the-back-of-their-minds attending to student data to assess or identify current or future problems that will need to be addressed; particularly highly charged public and political issues that revolve around accountability ratings and the acquisition of English, Spanish, or both languages for limited English proficient students. It is as if directors gage plans, actions, and events within a program, department, or the district according to impact—whether real or perceived—on these measures. And in particular, they

judge to be problems those incidents that may negatively impact student TAAS scores.

Two of Alkin's decision topics were found closely connected with each other and are associated with formal decision making activities by bilingual directors: preparing reports and recommending program changes. Table 1 titled *Percent of Directors Who Selected Each Student Data Type for Formal Decisions*, provides the data. Preparing reports and recommending program changes are formal procedures that are performed for entities outside the department such as district, state, and federal agencies. Such activities occur on a schedule established by others and would include mandated information made by the report requesting entity.

Table 1.

Percent of Directors Who Selected Each Student Data Type for Formal Decisions

Data type	Reports	Recommendations
TAAS	97%	97%
Oral Language Testing	82%	75%
Retention Rates	61%	58%
English Norm-Referenced Testing	71%	64%
Spanish Norm-Referenced Testing	63%	55%
High School Status of "On track to graduate"	43%	59%
Student SES Data	56%	43%
Attendance Data	57%	41%
Student Mobility	40%	43%
Student Discipline Data	29%	28%
Report Card Grades	37%	38%

Again, TAAS and oral language testing receive the highest frequency of responses. The frequency for each of the data sources for recommending program changes are slightly lower

than those for preparing reports, except for high school status “on track to graduate” and student mobility. What appears most interesting is the “low” use of oral language testing data for recommending program changes compared to TAAS data. It is also a drop from the level of its use compared to the informal, identifying problems, discussed earlier.

Additionally, student discipline and report card grades are not used frequently in the formal decision making process. Student grades are different from norm-referenced data in that grades are a closer reflection of the nature of the student and teacher interaction. Teacher affect is perceived to influence these ratings, among other things, and thus student grades by teachers are considered less reliable than norm or criterion-reference data. Thus, program directors may not attend to this data because they do not feel that it is useful or that it is not important. Program directors may also not use this information because they do not have access to it. Whatever the reasons, discipline and grades, which are two measures from and about the context of the classroom, are noticeably ignored by program directors in their formal decision making processes.

Making staff development changes, changing instructional delivery, and changing instructional materials emerged as a decision making area in the analysis of the frequency pattern of director use of student data. Table 2 presents this information. Unsurprisingly, testing data, including TAAS, oral language, English norm-referenced, and Spanish norm-reference data receive attention and less so other student data except for student SES. That 52% of directors reported using student SES in instructional decision making is understandable given Ruby Payne’s (1995) recent influence on Texas staff development. The frequency with which directors attend to student discipline and report cards is higher for instructional than for formal decisions. However, they are still at levels that could be considered low.

Of the eleven data sources, report card grades appeared to receive the lowest level of attention by directors. Given that grades are given to parents on a regular basis throughout the year, in some districts as frequently as every three weeks, but in most every six weeks, it would seem that they are considered of value. However the use pattern for directors would indicate that that they do not find this data useful, that they do not considered this data important, or they do not have access to this data. The contradiction of making such data available to parents for understanding student progress and learning from teacher instruction but not directors is revealing, as well as the other possible explanations for the identified use patterns.

Table 2.

Percent of Directors Who Selected Each Student Data Type for Instructional Decisions

Data type	Staff Develop.	Instr. Delivery	Instr. Materials
TAAS	96%	94%	98%
Oral Language Testing	73%	77%	77%
Retention Rates	60%	53%	58%
English Norm-Referenced Testing	62%	63%	64%
Spanish Norm-Referenced Testing	54%	59%	57%
High School Status of "On track to graduate"	43%	61%	54%
Student SES Data	52%	38%	34%
Attendance Data	33%	33%	25%
Student Mobility	33%	38%	27%
Student Discipline Data	49%	32%	28%
Report Card Grades	44%	41%	36%

The remaining three decisions—changing community relations, changing program management, and making personnel changes—were found to share certain characteristics. These

three decision types were labeled non-instructional decisions and their data is presented in Table 3. Several aspects of the data in the table stand out. Most noticeably, student academic performance data received significantly lower levels of responses for changing community relations (e.g., 51% TAAS, 26% oral language, and 21% and 22% for norm-referenced tests). Several explanations could account for these findings. First, public reporting of student performance and the community relations' issues that follow could be considered in Texas districts the "jurisdiction" of others (i.e., school principals or the superintendent). Another explanation could be that directors do not feel that the parents of their students understand or desire to understand student performance data. Another explanation could be that directors are not completely comfortable with the data themselves and might not know how to go about explaining these data to parents. No matter the reason, a clear void in the connection is evident between the bilingual department leadership and parent/community constituents on this critical topic of student performance.

Interestingly, responses by directors indicate that they attend in changing community relations to student data (i.e., attendance, mobility, student SES, and discipline) at levels comparable to TAAS. The attention to these data suggests that directors are attempting to understand the home lives of their students through such data. Given these findings the picture that develops is of limited or one-way attention to community relations.

Limited attention also appears to be given to changing program management and making personnel change. Or rather the use of student data for these non-instruction decisions appears rather limited compared to usage levels for the other decision types previously discussed. It may be that other data (e.g., classroom observations, teacher evaluations, and other informal measures of morale) receive more attention and thus the lower response for student data. However, such

reasons suggest less attention or priority of student data for decision making on issues not directly connected to instruction.

Table 3.

Percent of Directors Who Selected Each Student Data Type for Non-Instructional Decisions

Data type	Community	Management	Personnel
TAAS	51%	71%	78%
Oral Language Testing	26%	47%	42%
Retention Rates	46%	45%	49%
English Norm-Referenced Testing	21%	44%	40%
Spanish Norm-Referenced Testing	22%	39%	38%
High School Status of "On track to graduate"	29%	34%	41%
Student SES Data	46%	28%	21%
Attendance Data	49%	26%	21%
Student Mobility	49%	31%	20%
Student Discipline Data	46%	36%	38%
Report Card Grades	34%	15%	24%

A level of usage (LOU) score was calculated for each type of student data discussed above by combining the responses for all decision types. The LOU score for each type of student data is reflected in the ordering of the variables in Tables 1-3 and thus has already been discussed. These scores were then summed to calculate an overall LOU score. An average overall LOU score for participants of 73.44 (SD = 24.86) was found. The distribution of scores was normal. With a potential value range of 0 to 139, the average overall LOU score reveals that bilingual program directors generally do use data for decision-making. However, Tables 1-3 demonstrated that some types of data are used more than others.

Evaluation Activities Conducted by Bilingual Departments

Bilingual program directors were asked to report on the types of evaluation activities conducted in their districts. Specifically, directors were prompted to indicate whether or not certain statements about individual students, aggregated data for district-wide reports, responsibility for data collection, data analysis, and responsibility for reporting data to district decision-makers were true for the five types of data: oral language proficiency level of LEP students, English norm-referenced testing, Spanish norm-referenced testing, TAAS criterion-referenced testing for LEP students, and LEP high school attendance data. From the responses to these questions the following analysis emerged.

All bilingual program directors (i.e., 100%) reported conducting oral language proficiency tests, 99% TAAS testing, 79% English norm-referenced testing, and 70% Spanish norm-referenced testing. When asked if they collect LEP high school student attendance data for individual students, 79% responded positively.

All directors report conducting oral language proficiency testing, however, only 76% report the data are aggregated for district-wide reports. On the other hand, all those reporting TAAS testing is conducted for LEP students also report the data are aggregated for district-wide reports. It is questionable, however, that both English and Spanish LEP student TAAS results are aggregated for district-wide reports. At this time, the Texas Education Agency provides separate district wide reports for TAAS results in English and TAAS results in Spanish. This is particularly problematic for bilingual programs because many students are tested in English. Yet when TAAS scores are returned to districts, Spanish TAAS scores are often associated with the success or failure of bilingual education programs. Of the 79% of bilingual program directors who reported English norm-referenced testing is used in their districts, 82% report the data are

aggregated for district-wide reports. Similarly, 83% of those who report using native language/Spanish norm-referenced testing report the data are aggregated for district-wide reports. Of those who report LEP high school student attendance data are collected for individual students, 88% report the data are available in district-wide reports. With the exception of TAAS results, an average of 19% of bilingual program directors report that only individual student data are collected for these data types. No district-wide analysis can be conducted for students at certain grade levels or for students with various amounts of time in the program.

In response to questions pertaining to the collection of data, 77% report they are responsible for collecting oral language proficiency testing data, 58% Spanish norm-referenced testing, 52% English norm-referenced testing data, 46% TAAS testing data, and 20% LEP high school student attendance data.

When asked if they are responsible for analyzing the types of data, 86% of the bilingual program directors report they analyze TAAS data, 85% oral language proficiency testing data, 83% Spanish norm-referenced testing, 79% English norm-referenced testing data, and 53% LEP high school student attendance data.

Directors were asked a further question about how they analyze student data. Of those who analyze data, 54% of directors reported that they most often analyze student data by comparing data for students who are participating in bilingual/ESL programs with students who are not participating. The second most frequent type of analysis is analyzing data only for students who are participating in a program reported by 29% of directors. Twelve percent reported they analyze both groups of students individually, and one percent reported they analyze only data for students who are not participating.

When asked if they are responsible for reporting data to decision-makers in their districts,

77% of the bilingual program directors indicate they report oral language proficiency testing data to decision-makers, 69% report Spanish norm-referenced testing, 67% report TAAS data, 60% report English norm-referenced testing data, and 33% report LEP high school student attendance data. It is interesting to note that the data most highly valued among districts—TAAS data—are not frequently reported to decision-makers by the bilingual program director. Because the directors report elsewhere that TAAS data are reported to decision-makers, it is supposed that another person/department is responsible for reporting LEP TAAS data to decision-makers in 31% of the districts.

Elsewhere, program directors were asked about the impact of various reports. Fourteen percent of the bilingual program directors reported they have seen a report regarding the number of LEP students involved in special education but that it did not have a major impact on them. Similarly, 13% reported the same for the number of LEP students identified for gifted and/or talented programs and 13% for the number of LEP students participating in extra-curricular activities. Only 7% reported they had seen a report on the number of secondary LEP students taking honors/AP classes but again that the data did not have a major impact on them. Such responses lead into the responses by directors about the availability of data for decision making.

Availability of Data.

The following percentages of program directors report data are available when they need it: TAAS by 97%, oral language testing by 95%, retention rates by 85%, attendance data by 82%, high school status of “on track to graduate” by 81%, student socio-economic status data by 79%, English norm-referenced testing data by 78%, student discipline data by 73%, Spanish norm-referenced testing data by 71%, student mobility information by 68%, and report card grades by

65% of directors. Thus, only 3% reported they do not have access to TAAS data when they need it, while 35% claim they do not have access to report card grades when needed.

When the overall data accessibility was calculated by summing each directors responses to these nine questions a clearer picture of director accessibility to student data is gained. Thirty seven percent of directors reported unrestricted accessibility to all data, while 29% reports some restrictions to data, and 34% reported major problems with accessing student data. Given that this data “should” be available to directors, the label of major was applied when directors reported being unable to access a third or more of the data for their students.

In triangulating responses, directors were also asked whether or not they experienced barriers in having access to student data for decision-making. Not having enough staff was identified by 27% of directors. Others reported not having enough time by 16%, and a lack of evaluation knowledge and skills by 9% of directors.

Finally, directors were asked to indicate whether or not student data are equally available for LEP students and non-LEP students. Seventy-four percent of the program directors reported student data are equally available for LEP students and non-LEP students. Nineteen percent (almost one-fifth) reported non-LEP student data are more available than LEP student data, and four percent reported LEP student data are more available than non-LEP student data.

Conduct Factor

The conduct factor questions and resulting hypotheses that emerged from the literature were tested to enhance the understanding about evaluation use of bilingual directors. Specifically, the data was analyzed to test the hypothesis: Bilingual program directors who are more committed to using the student’s native language for instruction will report higher levels of use of Spanish norm-referenced tests than bilingual program directors who are less committed to

using the student's native language for instruction. Seventy-one percent of directors were found to embrace a maintenance model (i.e., students should receive instruction in both languages so that they can be bilingual), while the remaining 28% embraced an immersion or transitional model. A t-test case II for independent means was performed and resulted in a $t(78, -2.274 = .026$ (2-tailed), which is statistically significant at the .05 alpha level. The mean LOU for Spanish norm-reference testing for directors who embraced the maintenance model was 5 ($SD = 3.4$); on a scale of one to seven. For directors who embraced the other two models the mean LOU was 3 ($SD = 3.4$). This finding supports the conclusion that beliefs in using Spanish for instruction by program directors are associated with higher levels of usage of Spanish norm-referenced testing data.

The second hypothesis that stated, there is a relationship between the availability of data and usage of data as reported by bilingual program director, was tested using Spearman's rho. This correlation coefficient was calculated to be 0.49 for the variables overall data accessibility and overall LOU. Therefore, slightly less than 25% of the variance in overall LOU is shared with overall data accessibility. These results support the conclusion that when directors have access to data when needed, they use the data for decision-making. However, such findings also support the argument that when directors perceive that they need data, they gain access to the data.

The final component of the conduct factor to be examined pertains to the level of use given the familiarity of the evaluation. It was hypothesized that given the implementation and high visibility of TAAS, program directors would report significantly higher LOU scores for this data than for any of the other student data sources. A one-sample t-test was performed once using the directors' average LOU score for TAAS data as the constant. The LOU scores for the other 10 ten data types were compared with the mean LOU score for TAAS data.

The average LOU score for TAAS data was 7.83 ($SD = 1.47$). Other data types had the following average LOU scores: oral language testing 5.93 ($SD = 2.57$), English norm-referenced testing 5.05 ($SD = 3.30$), Spanish norm-referenced testing 4.53 ($SD = 3.53$), attendance data 3.54 ($SD = 2.72$), report card grades 3.25 ($SD = 2.70$), student mobility information 3.52 ($SD = 2.74$), high school status of “on track to graduate” 4.43 ($SD = 3.04$), student discipline data 3.40 ($SD = 2.87$), student SES data 3.84 ($SD = 3.03$), and retention rates 5.17 ($SD = 3.07$). As displayed in Table 4; the results of one-sample t-tests comparing the LOU score for each type of data with the LOU of TAAS data resulted in t-scores all significant at the .001 alpha level. The results led to the conclusion that bilingual program directors report significantly greater usage of TAAS data than any other type of data.

Table 4.

One Sample t Test Comparing LOU of TAAS Data and Other Data Types

Data Type	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	Significance (2-t)
Oral language testing	84	-6.81	.000**
English norm-referenced testing	87	-7.92	.000**
Spanish norm-referenced testing	80	-8.42	.000**
Attendance data	87	-14.97	.000**
Report card grades	15	-6.80	.000**
Student mobility information	86	-14.66	.000**
High school status of “on track to graduate”	90	-10.66	.000**
Student discipline data	88	-14.54	.000**
Student SES data	86	-12.27	.000**
Retention rates	86	-8.07	.000**

** $p < .001$.

Conclusions

Texas bilingual program directors reported that they do use data to improve education practices within their school districts. Unfortunately, they do not utilize the wealth of data collected for reports to the State, but concentrate on a singular component of student data: TAAS scores. This raises serious issues about the comprehensiveness of program decision-making. Considering that the majority of Texas bilingual programs are transitional bilingual education program models and that this model calls for students to transition to all-English instruction by the 3rd or 4th grade, it seems incongruous that the primary source of data used is data that is not collected for students until they are in the 3rd grade. Presumably this would be very late to begin using student data to measure student progress. Earlier test data would seem critical to the administration of Texas bilingual programs. In fact, due to additional testing requirements for LEP students, bilingual directors could potentially access annual oral language testing data, English norm-referenced testing data, and native language norm-referenced testing data from the time students enter the district. But Texas bilingual education directors do not appear to use these data sources for instructional decision-making. At first this may seem illogical, but a closer examination of district practices reveals that although it is not a sound educational practice, the valuing of TAAS data over any other data type may actually be quite rational.

TAAS data are the only assessment data that are used by the State to determine school ratings (*Low Performing, Acceptable, Recognized, or Exemplary*). School ratings affect annual personnel evaluations for district administrators, campus principals, and teachers. Ratings are published in newspapers and magazines. In reporting their areas of responsibility, bilingual program directors overwhelmingly reported their greatest area of responsibility is ensuring their districts are following state and federal guidelines. Because of the emphasis places on TAAS data by the state, it is reasonable that bilingual program directors reported great attention to TAAS data for informal,

formal, and instructional decision-making. But this does not fully explain a lack of attention to other types of data.

A study of the evaluation activities conducted by bilingual departments reveals several important insights that may partly explain such findings. First, some types of data are more widely collected than others. While oral language proficiency testing and TAAS testing is conducted among virtually all bilingual programs, there is greater variance among districts regarding the other types of data collected. Secondly, much of the data are not reported to decision makers by the bilingual program director. In many cases the data are reported by another person/department in the district or not reported at all. Third, some types of data are more available than others. While TAAS and oral language testing data are widely available, other types of data are not available when needed in 15% - 35% of the cases. Fourthly, there are barriers to accessing student data including not having enough staff, not having enough time, and a lack of evaluation knowledge and skills. In one out of five cases, non-LEP student data are more available than LEP student data. Fifthly, state-required assessment is a primary source of evaluation data among bilingual programs. Finally, while some types of data are more widely used than others, bilingual program directors were found to generally use data for decision-making. The average program director reported using data on more than half of the questions on the survey.

The examination of the hypotheses revealed the importance of three components of the conduct factor. First, a strong belief in using Spanish for instruction was found associated with higher levels of usage of Spanish norm-referenced testing data. Second, a correlation was found to exist on data usage and data availability. These results lead to the conclusion that the availability of data has an important relationship with the use of data. Third, the results of the last

hypotheses showed that bilingual program directors did report significantly greater usage of TAAS data than any other type of data. The emphasis on TAAS data usage is tremendous, especially in light of the lack of use of other types of student data.

The two primary goals of the AEIS and PEIMS programs in Texas are to measure student progress toward achieving academic excellence and to improve education practices of local school districts. These systems require districts to conduct state-mandated testing and to submit a variety of student data such as attendance, dropout, and graduation rates, ethnicity, SES, gender, mobility rates, and student discipline data. Evidence from Texas bilingual program directors indicates that Texas educators do, in fact, use student data to measure student progress toward achieving academic excellence and to improve education practices within their school districts. Unfortunately, they do not access and utilize the wealth of data collected for reports to the State, but concentrate instead on a singular component of student data: TAAS scores. This raises serious concern that bilingual directors do not appear to value a wide range of data for decision-making and therefore do not have a comprehensive perspective of the academic achievement of students in their programs.

However, the results of the study show that this situation can be changed, but in order to do so data must be made accessible to educational decision-makers. Bilingual program directors do use assessment data for decision-making. The scope of this study was limited to bilingual program directors, but certainly similar issues exist among other educational leaders. The issue of data availability must be approached at multiple levels.

The State has a role in the availability of data. As indicated in this study, Texas educators use data that comes to them in familiar formats. The state provides a wealth of TAAS data to educators across the State. The State disaggregates data by student gender, ethnicity, SES,

campus, grade level, and special program participation. But other data types are not as widely available. The findings of this study suggest that Texas educators would be likely to use data such as student SES, student attendance rates, student mobility rates, and student discipline data if the data were available. The State has begun a noble quest to monitor student achievement and improve educational programs. Funding and systems are in place to develop, conduct, score, and report TAAS testing. Additional efforts must be made to provide similar funding and systematic support in order that other types of student data are equally available.

Districts have a role in making data available to decision makers within the district. The superintendent must realize the importance of data availability in measuring the academic progress of students and improving instruction programs. Until the State makes data more accessible, districts will likely have to assume responsibility for doing so. A key individual in the district who is responsible for data dissemination could facilitate this task. This key individual would have the authority to access all Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) and Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) data, have the data available in electronic formats (text files) that could be analyzed through tools such as SPSS, and disseminate data to decision makers within each department and campus. As long as there is not one single point of contact for data flowing to and from the state, the data will be fragmented.

Finally, bilingual education leaders must assume responsibility in accessing and utilizing a wide variety of student data for measuring academic achievement and improving instructional programs. Many reasons for non-use may be overcome when one person in the organization becomes an advocate for data use. This person contextualizes information by interpreting the data in terms of the current situation and by defining what the data mean to decisions at hand. Alkin (1985) found that many times the most appropriate person to advocate for the use of data

is the program director. In his studies of bilingual education, program directors were the key to data usage. If they validated the information and demonstrated they would use the data, other educators within the organization also used the data for decision-making, thus monitoring and improving bilingual education programs in their districts. Lam (1992) asserts, “The controversial nature of bilingual education is partly due to political squabbling and partly due to the inadequate practices in the evaluation of the implementation and effects of bilingual education” (p. 183). Collier and Thomas, (1998), emphasize the importance of assessment and evaluation among teachers and leaders of educational programs for limited English proficient students. “We educators—teachers and administrators—must understand assessment, keep informed of the constantly changing policy framework, and use assessment well to inform our practice” (p. 240). With the huge commitment of resources to conduct assessment and gather data on Texas school children, it is imperative that bilingual directors use data to monitor and improve the variety of bilingual program models, particularly at this critical time in educational history when external student academic achievement requirements are being imposed in a highly political climate.

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