

The Central Valley Dual Language Consortium and the *Stanislaus Asociación de Investigación Latina*

A Map of Our Journey

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Introduction and Background

California's Proposition 227, or the Unz Initiative, had as its main focus the requirement that English learners be taught only in English, based on the belief that these children could learn English in one year. This led to the dismantling of many bilingual programs in K-12 schools across California.

Approved by the voters of California in 1998, Proposition 227 "is based on an English-only ideology that denounces the use of any language other than English as a medium of instruction in the public schools and includes a provision that allows parents to sue teachers and school administrators for using Spanish as a means of instruction" (Montaño, Ulanoff, Quintanar-Sarellana, & Aoki, 2005, pg. 103).

One of many assumptions of Proposition 227 was that there would not be a need for bilingual/dual language programs, so this led to the wholesale elimination of bilingual/dual language programs. School districts that were not committed to bilingual education saw this as an opportunity to remove those programs, and the surviving programs in the state's Central Valley felt isolated and threatened by this new anti-bilingual education environment.

Many advocates of bilingual education fought at many levels and in many

ways to assure that parents knew about the options available in Proposition 227 for alternative programs. Many parents were not aware that Proposition 227 had options that permitted parent selection, and many educators and parents felt that the districts were not permitting them to exercise this option.

A team of faculty from California State University, Stanislaus (CSU Stanislaus), a public university campus in the Central Valley, was attending the National Two Way California Association of Bilingual Education (CABE) Conference in Monterey in 2006 when a chance meeting occurred in the hotel lobby with teachers and principals from dual language schools from the university's service area.

The group commiserated about the hostile environment relative to bilingual education, and agreed on the need to establish what became the Central Valley Dual Language Consortium (CVDLC). The purpose of the Consortium was to create a community of support for dual language programs in the area.

Education, Like Politics, Is Local

Those involved in this chance meeting agreed that the National Two Way CABE Conference served a valuable purpose, but most teachers did not have the resources to attend the conferences, and often school districts did not sufficiently support or understand dual language education enough to send significant numbers of their teachers to the Conference.

Thus, if we were going to impact dual language education in the Central Valley, we needed to establish our own local Consortium and organize our own local conference. This was the beginning of the CVDLC.

We also realized that organizations come and go, and teachers and administrators would only participate in an organization on a regular basis if it met their professional needs. We agreed that

the Consortium should focus on the needs of the dual language programs of the Central Valley in order to assure that the participants remained active and returned to ongoing meetings.

We appreciated that people and organizations enter into a relationship with certain needs in mind. Such was the case with our Consortium, and it was important that we be clear about the needs of our dual language community.

Needs of Dual Language Programs

Our dual language schools came into this new partnership sensing the need to create a community that would be supportive of their efforts to build and improve their dual language programs. They needed assistance in educating their dual language teachers with regard to research related to the effectiveness and value of dual language education.

We also recognized the importance of encouraging and motivating our dual language teachers regarding the value of their work. A great many of them had been buffeted by the English-only, anti minority rhetoric in the media, and they were in need of affirmation that they were doing the right thing.

The teachers also needed assistance in educating parents regarding the value and benefits of having their kids in dual language education. The parents had been similarly buffeted by the same English-only, anti-minority rhetoric. Because many of the parents came from English learner, immigrant backgrounds with limited education, they did not have access to the same research as the teachers, so they needed an opportunity to learn about this research in a language and form that was accessible to them. The parents also had a need to understand their rights under Proposition 227. Indeed, many of the teachers did not understand the rights and options available in the new law.

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Finally, everyone involved needed assistance from our growing community of dual language educators to develop and improve their dual language programs. Some of the teachers and administrators were from school districts that were not supportive of their efforts to create and develop dual language programs. They needed to join a community that shared their commitment to dual language education and that would support them in developing their programs.

Needs of the University

The Bilingual Credential Program at CSU Stanislaus also entered this relationship with certain expectations. We needed the dual language schools to serve as laboratories in which to prepare effective dual language teachers. Recent findings from the major national educational accrediting body underscore the urgency for such collaboration. The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) 2010 report of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Clinical Preparation and Partnerships for Improved Learning calls for two major transformations for effective teacher preparation.

First, colleges and universities and other teacher preparation programs are being required to provide data-driven evidence on teacher effectiveness in the field. This involves higher demands for verification of the effect of the teacher education program by following pre-service teachers into their in-service teaching roles and gathering data on the success of those teachers' students.

Second, the report calls for greater and use of collaborative training, such as in-service teachers working in proven effective classrooms settings, and for joint accountability in the recruitment, placement, and professional development of in-service teachers.

The CVDLC provides an opportunity for participating programs to meet and extend these NCATE recommendations by engaging administrators and parents in our partnership. CVDLC's purposeful collaboration across all relevant decision-makers increases the likelihood for better problem identification and resolution in preparing dual language teachers capable of closing the achievement gap of English learners.

As a corollary to the NCATE recommendations, we needed effective cooperating dual language teachers to mentor and support the development of our bilingual

credential candidates, and we needed access to effective dual language classrooms where our credential candidates could succeed in their student teaching experiences and other field experiences such as observing effective initial and intermediate first and second language reading instruction.

Consortium Members

The initial schools participating in the CVDLC were:

Elim Elementary School in the Hilmar Unified School District

Harmony Elementary School in the Delhi School District

Joe Serna, Jr. Charter School in the Lodi Unified School District
Riverbank Charter Language Academy in the Riverbank Unified School District

Grayson Charter Language Academy in the Patterson School District

Selma Herndon School, Yamato Colony School, and Campus Park School in the Livingston Union School District

Osborn Elementary School and Dutcher Middle School in the Turlock Joint Elementary School District

Hollister Dual Language Academy in the Hollister School District

Our First Project

As a Consortium, we organized and presented our First Annual Central Valley Dual Language Conference in 2006. Fifty-plus teachers and parents attended. This first attempt at developing a regional conference was very successful, and we received valuable feedback on how to improve our efforts.

We have since offered a regional dual language conference every year and we are now preparing for our Seventh Annual Central Valley Dual Language Conference in fall of 2013 with an anticipated attendance of 120 professional educators.

Our Second Project

After analyzing the feedback from our initial conference, we realized that we needed to develop a separate conference for parents of dual language students. Even though we had attempted to offer workshops in both English and Spanish, those sessions were still geared to teachers. We had good evaluations, but many parents requested workshops focused more on their needs. In reviewing the conference evaluations, we realized that parents have

very different needs that can best be met through their own conference.

Thus was born our First Annual Central Valley Dual Language Parent Conference, which we held in the spring of 2008. Our attendance was 60-plus parents and, of course, the evaluations were very positive, with great recommendations for future conferences. We have offered a regional dual language parent conference every year since that first one, and we just completed our sixth Annual Central Valley Dual Language Parent Conference in the spring of 2013. We had 260 parent attendees representing the many dual language schools in our university's service area.

Our Third Project

Our dual language programs have important challenges related to program evaluation and assessment. Our current assessment environment requires educators and administrators to be knowledgeable about program assessment procedures and outcomes. In addition to that, dual language programs require additional assessments in order to capture the specific dynamics of dual language instruction.

After consulting with our Consortium partners, we established the Central Valley Dual Language Assessment Institute, and first offered it to our Consortium dual language schools in November of 2007. The goals, objectives and outcomes of the institute were as follows:

- ◆ Developing a better understanding of how to manipulate and interpret data.
- ◆ Recognizing how to use the Toolkit and its resources.
- ◆ Using EXCEL to develop a spreadsheet.
- ◆ Using SPSS to develop a dataset.
- ◆ Using SPSS to analyze data, including frequencies, cross-tabulations, lists, select cases, and split file.
- ◆ Interpreting findings from SPSS analyses.
- ◆ Using PowerPoint to develop charts to present data.

The Institute speaker/facilitator was Kathryn Lindholm-Leary, a highly respected researcher and evaluator in the field of dual language education. Based on evaluations from our Institute participants, we determined that the Institute was a significant success, and we identified recommendations for improvement of our future efforts.

Subsequent Projects

Our Consortium has been synergistic and has spawned additional dual language initiatives led by our various partners. Inspired by the work of Californians Together, a statewide bilingual education advocacy group, the Stanislaus County Office of Education (SCOE) has championed a program to establish the Seal of Multiliteracy, which permits high school students to earn a seal that would be affixed to their high school diploma attesting to their biliteracy. This initiative was led by Martin Macias, coordinator of English-learner services at SCOE.

Another synergistic initiative was the Spanish Spelling Bee, patterned after the National Spanish Spelling Bee. Led by James Mendonca of Hilmar School District, this program took place for the first time at CSU Stanislaus in the spring of 2012 and involved students from all of the 14 dual language schools in the Central Valley. We are now in the process of organizing the second annual Spanish Spelling Bee and look forward to an enhanced participation from our dual language schools.

Initiatives such as these represent different points in the Pathway to Biliteracy that we have created for our k-12 students.

Search for External Funding

Since those of us involved in CVDLC do not have resources of our own other than our time, external funds are necessary for us to carry out our work. We submitted a proposal, entitled *Stanislaus Asociación de Investigación Latina* (SAIL) to the Fund for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education (FIPSE) on behalf of the University and the Consortium.

Our proposal was selected for funding by FIPSE in 2009 in the amount of \$229,000 for a two-year grant. The focus of SAIL was to establish a doctoral studies culture focused on Hispanic education issues. The SAIL Program had three broad goals:

- ◆ To establish a learning community that will provide an academic and social support structure for our university students.
- ◆ To develop research capacities within our graduate students
- ◆ To establish a collaborative to study key issues in the education of Hispanic students and other underserved students.

We Keep Trying...

We have applied for other external

grants to support our development efforts. In 2011, we submitted a proposal entitled "Central California Dual Language Consortium Professional Development Program" to the U.S. Department of Education National Professional Development Program. In the same year, we also submitted a proposal entitled "Dual Language Consortium: Scalable Innovation for Effective Teachers of English Learners" to the U.S. Department of Education Investment in Innovation.

Although we were not selected for funding in either case, the planning process that goes into developing a proposal has assisted us in better defining our goals as an organization and preparing us to seek future funding.

During fall semester of 2012, the CVDLC embarked on a strategic planning process to map out our future. As a result of this process, CVDLC has established and embraced three overarching goals and objectives.

To Establish a Research and Development Component We Will

- ◆ Conduct research for the improvement of dual language education.
- ◆ Share University bilingual faculty expertise related to developing dual language programs.
- ◆ Support the development of student MA theses and projects, and doctoral dissertations focusing on the research and program needs of area dual language programs.

To Disseminate Research and Effective Practices of Dual Language Education We Will

- ◆ Support and facilitate the Annual Central Valley Dual Language Conference.
- ◆ Support and facilitate the Annual Central Valley Dual Language Parent Conference.
- ◆ Support and facilitate targeted Central Valley Dual Language Program Institutes.
- ◆ Seek external funding to develop our University service area's dual language programs.

To Increase the Number of Highly Prepared Dual Language Teachers We Will

- ◆ Support the improvement of the preparation of in-service dual language educators.
- ◆ Increase the quantity and quality of

dual language student teaching placements in dual language schools.

- ◆ Improve the preparation of bilingual/dual language pre-service teachers.
- ◆ Increase the recruitment of bilingual/dual language credential students.
- ◆ Support primary language reading instruction field experiences at dual language schools.

Conclusion

The Unz Initiative dealt a devastating blow to many of our bilingual and dual language programs all across California. Bilingual education has had a long history in California, with ebbs and flows of support that reflect the current political environment. Unfortunately, we are currently experiencing times of political retrenchment and xenophobia, with reactionary elements crying out for immigration restrictions.

In spite of this, our resilient dual language communities have responded with cries for activism and consciousness-raising. Ada and Campoy (2004) have written that whenever we ourselves experience oppression, and do not have any allies to offer us support and affirmation, we also become silenced.

We therefore decided to write this article describing the journey of the CVDLC as a way to share our experiences with other immigrant and dual language communities in hopes of assisting them in developing their own regional consortia.

We continue to move forward in our advocacy for dual language education and stand ready to assist other communities in providing dual language education for their children.

To learn more about the CVDLC, access our website at:

www.cvdcl.wordpress.com

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