

## **Two-Way Bilingual Immersion: A Portrait of Quality Schooling**

Barbara V. Kirk Senesac  
Central Michigan University

### **Abstract**

An increasing number of schools are offering two-way bilingual immersion programs as educational options to meet the needs of both language minority and language majority students. Given the variability in program design and delivery of such programs, it is useful to examine individual programs to identify factors that may contribute to the effectiveness of this model. This article provides a description of the Inter-American Magnet School in Chicago, the oldest two-way bilingual immersion school in the Midwest. Student achievement scores, particularly those of a cohort of low-income limited English proficient (LEP) students, provide evidence that students consistently attain high levels of achievement in English reading and writing, math, science, and social studies despite receiving instruction in English for no more than 50% of the time.

### **Introduction**

Demographic data indicate a tremendous increase in language minority students, and that pattern is projected to continue. Among this group of students, the number classified as limited English proficient (LEP) has doubled since 1989, from about 2 million to over 4 million (NCBE, 1999). Not only do these students lack the English language skills necessary for academic success, they are overwhelmingly from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, further placing them at risk (Moss & Puma, 1995). The most prevalent model of bilingual education provided for LEP students has been transitional bilingual education. Subject matter is taught in the students' home language (L1) while they are learning English, and only until they have gained enough English proficiency to be placed in the mainstream classroom, usually

limited to a maximum of three years. Instruction in the students' L1 ceases at that time, with no efforts to maintain that language (Ovando & Collier, 1998).

Paradoxically, while language minority students have received little encouragement to develop their home language, leaders in business, industry, and government decry the lack of linguistic and cultural literacy among the U.S. workforce necessary for a global economy (CPC, 1994; Fradd & Lee, 1998). Even language teachers and administrators who are generally satisfied with their elementary grades through high school foreign language programs do not expect language majority students (monolingual English speakers) to attain a high level of proficiency in the target language (Oxford, 1998). For majority language students, the immersion model, in which the content areas are taught through the minority language (L2), has been most successful for reaching a high level of L2 fluency and literacy (Cohen, 1975; Genesee, 1987; Lambert & Tucker, 1972).

### Two-Way Bilingual Immersion

In order to provide educational opportunities to both language minority and language majority students, an increasing number of schools are offering two-way bilingual immersion programs (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2000). A variety of terms to describe these programs include two-way bilingual education, two-way maintenance bilingual education, developmental bilingual education, enrichment bilingual education, and dual language programs (Christian, 1996). Language minority and language majority students are integrated in classes and provided grade-level instruction in and through two languages, English and the non-English language of the language minority students. The curriculum is taught for a significant amount of the instructional time through the non-English language. Importantly, only one language is used at a given time in the classroom.

As the students receive instruction in what is the second language for each group, immersion in learning content in their second language provides natural contexts for language acquisition. Students of each language group serve as models for the other, shifting from being the expert to the novice as they interact in negotiating the curriculum. By regarding language as a resource to be developed and integrating language minority and language majority students for most content instruction, an instructional environment is created to promote positive cross-cultural attitudes and enhanced self-esteem. The major goals of two-way bilingual immersion are (a) high levels bilingualism and biliteracy, (b) grade appropriate levels of academic achievement, and (c) positive cross-cultural attitudes and self-esteem (Christian, 1996; Lindholm, 1990).

In the implementation of these programs there is considerable variability, including the population of students to be served, allocation of languages for instruction, integration of students, staffing, and instructional approaches

(Christian, 1996; Thomas & Collier, 1997). Therefore, it is important to consider what factors are essential for a quality two-way bilingual immersion program. According to Lindholm (1990), these include: (a) a minimum of four to six years of bilingual instruction; (b) a focus on the same core curriculum that students in other programs experience; (c) quality language arts in both languages; (d) use of the target language for a minimum of 50% of the time to a maximum of 90% in the early years; (e) an additive bilingual environment for all students to learn a second language while developing their first language; (f) a balanced ratio of students who speak each language; (g) positive interdependence among students promoted by the use of strategies such as cooperative learning; and (h) characteristics of effective schools such as qualified personnel and parent-school collaboration. These features have also been identified in descriptions and evaluations of successful two-way bilingual immersion programs (Cazabon, Lambert, & Hall, 1993; Freeman, 1998) and in a series of studies focusing on the length of time needed to be academically successful in a second language (Thomas & Collier, 1997). Although related to quality personnel, another feature worth emphasizing as critical for effective two-way immersion is reflective teaching. Reflective teachers utilize a repertoire of assessment techniques such as observations, conferencing, dialogue journals, and portfolios to obtain feedback on their instruction and student learning. Based on these results, teaching is modified according to students' curricular and language needs respecting their cultural orientations and sensitivities (Cloud, Genesee, & Hamayan, 2000).

Because these variations in program design and delivery occur within a particular sociopolitical context, it is useful to look at individual programs to identify factors which may contribute to the effectiveness of this model in providing equitable and enriching education for language minority and language majority students (Freeman, 1998). The purpose of this article is to present a case study of two-way bilingual immersion at the Inter-American Magnet School, which is the oldest, comprehensive two-way bilingual immersion school in the Midwest. Student performance is examined as well as sociopolitical, cultural, and pedagogical factors affecting the development and implementation of this model.

### **Method**

This case study is based on data collected over a 10-year period from 1991 to the present. Observations of classrooms included language use, cultural focus, teaching strategies, and parent and/or community involvement. Staff meetings, committee meetings, and parent advisory council meetings were observed as well as a review of minutes from these meetings, parent newsletters, and other documents and reports provided for or by the district. Teachers and administrators completed the Connecticut School Effectiveness Questionnaire. They were also interviewed regarding their philosophy of

bilingual education and their view of the development and implementation of the Inter-American program. In addition, parents were interviewed, and student focus groups provided information on their perspectives and involvement in the development of Inter-American. Achievement data were collected for a cohort of students, and the Inter-American's *School Report Card* provided demographic, school attendance, and achievement data.

### School Characteristics

Inter-American Magnet School, located in a northside neighborhood of Chicago, is a preschool through eighth-grade public school. In 1975, Inter-American was founded through the grassroots initiative of parents who wanted their children to become bilingual and biliterate in Spanish and experience two cultures. Opening as a preschool, the school operated as a school within a school, adding one grade level each year. By 1983, Inter-American moved into its own present building, enrolling preschool-eighth grade students.

Designated as a magnet school for voluntary desegregation, it attracts students from throughout the Chicago School District. For the 1999–2000 academic year, Inter-American enrolled 651 students (64.2% Hispanic, 18.8% European-American, 15.5% African-American, 1.7% Asian/Pacific Islander, and .5% Native American). Of this population, 26.1% were limited English proficient (LEP). In addition, 43 students identified as learning disabled received instruction in the mainstream classroom and some pull-out support from special education teachers. As determined by free and reduced-price lunch, 53.6% came from low-income households. Since 1990, enrollment has ranged from 573 to 650 students with the percentages of ethnic representation and income level relatively stable. At 26.1%, the number of LEP students appears to have dropped considerably as it has ranged from a high of 48.7% in 1990 to a low of 30.2% in 1991, with most years at 34% to 36%. However, Inter-American administrators and teachers believe that recent changes in Chicago School District criteria seriously underestimates the number of LEP students.

To maintain the diversity according to federal desegregation guidelines and the minimum of about 60% Hispanic students (half LEP) for language interaction, students are selected by a computer lottery based on ethnicity and gender. While academic achievement or test scores are not factors in student selection, siblings of current students enrolled at Inter-American are given preference to keep families together contributing to its family atmosphere. Parents must apply to send their child to Inter-American, and due to its popularity, approximately 600 applications are received yearly for the 60 vacancies at the preschool level. Further attesting to the high regard for Inter-American was a comment made by a parent helping at a fundraiser who stated that, although family economics allowed her the choice of private bilingual schools, she felt this was the best bilingual school in the Chicago area for her children. Admission to the program is generally at the preschool level and a

waiting list is maintained to replace students according to ethnicity and gender when vacancies do occur. Because Inter-American has always emphasized a family atmosphere, the principal has two/three discretionary slots yearly for the children of teachers and staff at Inter-American.

For 1999–2000, the school attendance rate at 95.8% is higher than that of the Chicago School District (91.6%) and the State of Illinois (93.9%). In addition, student mobility at 7.6% is substantially lower than that of the district (26.6%) and state (17.5%). The majority of the students enter at the preschool level and remain through eighth grade. Parents are so committed to the Inter-American program that when moving, they choose to remain within the attendance area.

### Teachers and Administrative Staff

At Inter-American, it is considered essential for the faculty and staff to be bilingual and committed to the school's vision of two-way bilingual immersion. For the 1999–2000 academic year, there were 39 bilingual teachers, 64% were of Hispanic heritage (Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Peruvian). Some of the teachers had completed their student teaching at Inter-American. One teacher who had been a teacher aide as well as the parent of a child attending Inter-American was encouraged to pursue teacher training as she worked at Inter-American. This program also attracts experienced teachers who support the school's philosophy and goals and who are advocates for language minority children. Some of these teachers have substituted at Inter-American hoping for a position to become available for which they might be considered. Most teachers possess master's degrees and many Inter-American teachers have received special recognition for outstanding teaching. A teacher and founding parent of Inter-American was named Illinois Teacher of the Year (1993), and five teachers were awarded the Golden Apple in Teaching (1991, 1994, two in 1999, and 2000) from the Chicago Foundation on Excellence. Also, one teacher has been awarded the prestigious Kohl-McCormick Award for early childhood education.

The administrative staff includes a bilingual principal, two bilingual assistant principals, and a bilingual counselor. When hired in 1985, the current principal was multilingual in English, Hungarian, and German. Although she did not speak Spanish, the parents and teachers felt that her experiences as a Hungarian living in Nazi Germany, immigrating to this country at the age of 13, and attending school in a language she did not yet understand, provided important insight and sensitivity to challenges faced by language minority children in learning the majority language. Committed to this type of educational program, she offered to learn Spanish as a condition of her employment and has since become fluent enough in Spanish to conduct school business in Spanish. Her leadership has been recognized numerous times by the Chicago Public Schools as exemplary in fostering a climate of parent and

teacher empowerment and collaboration based on mutual respect. She is very visible in the school and might be found in a classroom tutoring or reading to a child and managing by “walking around” (Peters & Waterman, 1982).

The faculty and staff consider themselves family. There is not only a strong sense of professional collegiality and collaboration but they also celebrate birthdays, ethnic holidays with special luncheons, and teach each other’s children. During the 1999–2000 academic year, 19 children of teachers, teacher aides, and secretarial staff attended Inter-American. The teachers and staff are concerned with providing a caring and secure environment for the students who seem known to all on a first-name basis. Students echoed this with comments that they feel very safe and protected in this school as compared to their neighborhood school.

Permeating the school climate at Inter-American is the teachers’ expectation of high achievement for all students and a caring, academic press to realize that goal. Teachers’ anonymous responses to statements related to expectations for student learning on Connecticut School Effectiveness Questionnaire demonstrate their high expectations and their responsibility for ensuring that students do learn (Table 1). This was supported by a six-month period of classroom observations and interviews with all Inter-American teachers. In a focus group discussion, students unanimously agreed that what they liked best about Inter-American was that the teachers cared about them and showed this by “making us work hard” and “not letting us get away with being lazy.”

Table 1

*Expectations for Student Learning Results from the Connecticut School Effectiveness Questionnaire (n = 32)*

Statement	Positive Agreement (%)
1. Teachers in this school hold consistently high expectations for all students.	94
2. Almost all students are expected to master basic skills at each grade level.	91
3. Teachers believe that all students in this school can master basic skills as a direct result of the instructional program.	88
4. Teachers in this school believe they are responsible for all students mastering all basic skills at each grade level.	88

## Instructional Program

The goals of the two-way bilingual immersion program at Inter-American are bilingualism and biliteracy for all students while they are learning subject matter, high academic achievement, and positive attitudes toward themselves and other cultural groups. Central to these goals is the Inter-American Magnet School (IAMS) philosophy, which states that an "integrated, multicultural bilingual setting fosters second language acquisition and the appreciation of other cultures and prepares students to live in a pluralistic world" (IAMS, 1986). Furthermore, the staff adheres to the research-driven Inter-American philosophy that "the best time to learn a second language is as early in life as possible; that given appropriate exposure and motivation, children can learn another language; and that given appropriate instruction and the necessary home/school support, all children can achieve their fullest potential in all areas of the curriculum" (IAMS, 1986).

English-dominant and Spanish-dominant students are mixed in classrooms at each grade level without regard for gender, ethnicity, or academic ability. From preschool through third grade, an 80/20 ratio of Spanish to English model is followed. All core subjects, other than English reading for English-dominant students and English as a second language (ESL) for Spanish-dominant students, are taught in Spanish. Students learn to read in their dominant language and are separated by language dominance for language arts classes just through third grade. At fourth grade, the ratio of Spanish/English becomes 60/40 and, by sixth grade, both languages are used equally for instruction. Beginning then at fourth grade, students receive all content instruction together, including English language arts and Spanish language arts. Pull-out instruction in ESL is provided for those students, especially recent immigrants from Latin America, who need additional support to learn English.

At sixth grade, students begin to move to a middle school structure. Each of the three sixth-grade teachers instruct in two subject areas: Spanish social studies and language arts, English reading and language arts, and science and math in English and Spanish. Students begin the day in their homeroom with instruction in the specific subjects of their homeroom teacher and then change classrooms for the other subjects. These teachers generally teach in two-hour blocks of time. For grades 7 and 8, teachers are more departmentalized and instruct in specific content areas such as science, mathematics, social studies, Spanish, and English. Students are assigned to homerooms and move from class to class. Although the usual class period is 55 minutes, these teachers also collaborate to adjust the time length depending on instructional needs, often using two-hour blocks.

To facilitate teacher collaboration for planning and implementing the curriculum, teachers are organized into “cycles” consisting of two grade levels: pre-primary (preschool–K), primary (1–2), middle (3–4), intermediate (5–6), and upper (7–8). The teachers for each cycle meet regularly to plan together, develop thematic units, share instructional strategies and materials, and mentor new teachers. Importantly, they are concerned with articulation of the curriculum within and across the grade levels. Also, they may team for certain subjects or topics, and exchange students across grade levels and classrooms. The school day has been lengthened by 10 minutes to provide about two hours on a Friday afternoon every three weeks for collaboration and staff development. The atmosphere in these meetings, and other informal exchanges among teachers, is one of mutual support, enthusiasm to learn from one another, and encouragement for creativity and invention.

The Inter-American curriculum can be described as an enriched and integrated double curriculum. In addition to the district’s goals and objectives, the curriculum is organized around the history, contributions, and cultures of the peoples of the Americas. In 1978, teachers, administrators, and parents together developed the Curriculum of the Americas to integrate the heritages of the students into the common core curriculum. At kindergarten, students focus on families of cultures of the Americas. First graders learn about Native Americans, second graders study the Caribbean, third graders learn of the Incas and South America, and fourth and fifth graders focus on the Mayan and Aztec cultures. Sixth through eighth graders study the European influences on the Americas, the history of the United States, and literature from Latin American and Spain. Included throughout this curriculum is how African history and culture have influenced the Americas, especially the Caribbean. Teachers at each grade level or cycle plan together to integrate their theme across the curriculum.

Throughout the year, for example, the fourth-grade rooms focusing on the Mayan culture were studying such topics as comparative mathematics using Mayan and Arabic numbers, scientific knowledge of astronomy, and the growing seasons for major crops, religion, daily life, and other cultural patterns. These topics on the Mayan culture were interwoven with the Chicago standards for fourth graders in language arts, math, and science. When studying plant life for science, this was an opportunity to study the growing season as reflected in the Mayan calendar and their contributions to modern-day crops. Heterogeneously grouped students were involved in research projects related to these topics. A trip to a special museum exhibit was made to gather additional information, each group having prepared a list of questions they wished to answer on their topic organized from a K-W-L (What do I KNOW? What do I WANT to know? and What do I LEARN) activity. Students list what they know about a topic, what they want to learn, and what they have learned. Classroom activities on the Mayan culture along with these projects engaged the students in all of the language arts. Informative and creative writing in Spanish and English culture were found outside as well as inside classrooms.

The writing workshop approach was used as students created informational and fictional books about some aspect of Mayan culture. Students proudly shared with their classmates, family, and other grade levels their books and a variety of informational reports which included creative artwork, demonstrations, dioramas, and dramatizations.

The faculty and staff believe that learning is a constructive process, that students must be actively engaged to learn and, therefore, must take responsibility for their own learning. Instructional approaches observed throughout the school to facilitate this process include hands-on mathematics and science, literature based reading, and cooperative learning. Approaches to biliteracy included reading/writing workshop, journals, cross-age reading buddies, and literature circles emphasizing meaningful and purposeful language use in contexts which reflect the students' interests and needs. All classrooms made extensive use of cooperative learning groups heterogeneously structured to increase opportunities for language acquisition, understanding of content, and cross-cultural communication skills. The use of manipulatives and experiential learning observed in mathematics and science not only encouraged active engagement and higher order thinking skills through discovery learning but also provided a supportive context for integrating students of different levels of English/Spanish proficiency for content instruction. Teachers at Inter-American view all of these strategies as opportunities for meaningful language use in negotiating meaning and making content comprehensible thereby providing a challenging, grade-level curriculum for all students, regardless of their English language proficiency. Additionally, teachers believed that these approaches or strategies were conducive to developing enthusiasm for learning in the process of helping students become lifelong learners as well as a context for developing respect for individual and cultural diversity.

### Student Outcomes

In Illinois, every school must administer the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) to measure student achievement of state goals in reading, writing, mathematics, social science, and science. Before 2000, the ISAT was known as the Illinois Goal Assessment Program (IGAP) measuring these same skill areas. The only LEP students exempt from this test are those from other countries who have not yet completed three years of schooling in this country. Reading, writing, and mathematics are presently tested in grades 3, 5, and 8. However, previous to 2000 these areas were tested in grades 3, 6, and 8. The 1998–2000 test results for Inter-American (IAMS), the Chicago School District, and the state of Illinois are presented in Table 2. Science and social studies, tested in grades 4 and 7, are presented in Table 3. The results of the ISAT/IGAP show that Inter-American students consistently surpass the achievement levels of students within the district. While there is considerable variability when compared to state results, Inter-American students achieve at nearly equivalent levels and, in many cases, exceed that of students statewide.

Table 2

*Percentage of Third, Fifth (2000) and Sixth (1997–98), and Eighth Grade Students Who Meet and Exceed State Goals on the ISAT in Reading, Writing, and Mathematics for 1998–2000*

Subject		Reading			Writing			Mathematics		
Level	Grades	3	5/6	8	3	5/6	8	3	5/6	8
IAMS	1998	87	73	84	95	100	100	89	96	94
	1999	66	60	81	71	70	75	81	60	50
	2000	76	63	81	47	70	88	81	64	61
Chicago School District	1998	45	46	50	76	86	71	80	74	50
	1999	33	37	57	31	50	35	41	29	19
	2000	33	33	57	32	50	52	38	28	20
State of Illinois	1998	72	70	70	85	94	88	85	89	70
	1999	61	61	72	56	75	59	68	56	43
	2000	62	59	71	55	71	70	69	57	47

Table 3

*Percentage of Fourth and Seventh Grade Students Who Meet and Exceed State Goals on the ISAT in Social Science and Science for 1998–2000*

Subject		Social Science		Science	
Level	Grades	4	7	4	7
IAMS	1998	79	87	80	95
	1999	60	89	92	85
	2000	38	51	53	67
Chicago School District	1998	64	71	80	77
	1999	53	65	74	64
	2000	28	34	33	47
State of Illinois	1998	83	85	90	88
	1999	98	81	88	81
	2000	59	58	64	72

In addition to testing for Illinois State Goals, Inter-American also administers the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) from grades 3–8. To examine the impact of this two-way bilingual immersion program on achievement of LEP children of low-income status (determined by free or reduced-price lunch), the ITBS scores of all students of an eighth-grade class ( $n = 49$ ) who had attended Inter-American for a minimum of five years were disaggregated for comparison. Thirty-seven of these eighth graders had attended Inter-American for a minimum of five years and, of this number, 24 were low-income LEP students, all of Hispanic heritage. Of this cohort of students, two were receiving special education services. Illinois Test of Basic Skills Reading scores are presented in Figure 1 and ITBS Mathematics scores are presented in Figure 2. The range, mean with its numerical score, and median are presented.

Figure 1. ITBS reading scores for low-income, LEP students attending IAMS for at least five years ( $n$  varies from 17–24 for each grade level)

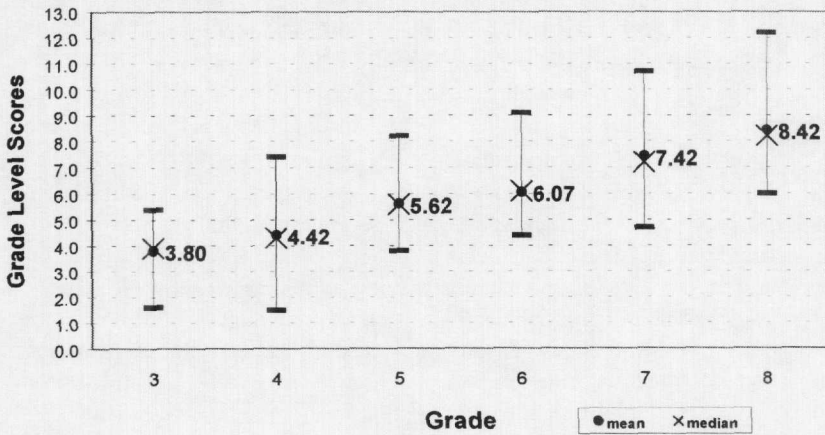
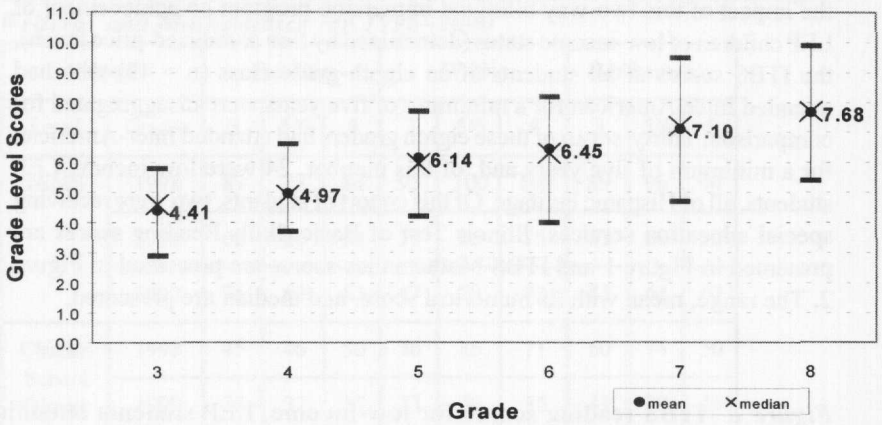


Figure 2. ITBS mathematics scores for low-income, LEP students attending IAMS for at least five years (n varies from 17–24 for each grade level)



The pattern of ITBS scores for reading and math reveals that contrary to expectations, the achievement of the low-income, LEP students is what would be expected for students achieving at grade level. Importantly, this pattern indicates that they continue to progress at grade level from third through eighth grade.

Inter-American also administers the reading and writing subtests of *La Prueba Riverside de Realización en Español* to determine literacy achievement in Spanish. All third- through eighth-grade students take this test, except those monolingual English students who have received less than three years of Spanish reading instruction. Spanish reading achievement for 1998–2000 is presented in Table 4 and Spanish writing achievement for 1998–2000 is presented in Table 5. These results suggest that limited English proficient students, bilingual students, and former monolingual English students are developing a functional level of reading and writing skills in Spanish.

Table 4

*IAMS Spanish Reading Achievement Scores in National Percentile Rank of Average NCE for Grades 3–8, 1998–2000*

	Grade					
	3	4	5	6	7	8
1998	57	48	53	64	63	61
1999	51	61	54	70	64	68
2000	50	53	60	72	65	58

Table 5

*IAMS Spanish Writing Achievement Scores in National Percentile Rank of Average NCE for Grades 3–8, 1998–2000*

	Grade					
	3	4	5	6	7	8
1998	69	67	67	67	80	68
1999	61	72	57	43	82	83
2000	56	67	78	56	69	78

### Parent and Community Collaboration

From the beginning, there has been a strong collaborative relationship between the home, community, and Inter-American. Two mothers (and teachers), one a first-language speaker of Spanish and one a second-language speaker of Spanish, envisioned a school where their children could become bilingual and biliterate and where the students' cultures would be respected and nurtured. They also felt that the school should be a public school. Early in 1974, these two mothers discussed their ideas with community leaders, Head Start, Hispanic parents, and teachers to form a group of parents and community members who would support such a bilingual school. By October of 1975, the Chicago Board of Education approved a preschool for Spanish-speaking children only, and one of the parents became a teacher for this preschool and the other became the coordinator. Although the board wanted to close the school by the end of the school year, primarily due to lack of support for the concept, the parents persuaded the board to add a kindergarten the next year and, by 1977, to allow English-speaking children to take part in the program. Each year the parents returned to the Board again having to lobby for keeping the school open, adding another grade, and moving twice to larger facilities. At the first and second school site, the school operated as a school-within-a-school. In 1983, at its third and present site, Inter-American became a magnet school for desegregation and had to absorb about 250 students although they were given the option of transferring to other schools. The parents felt that the principal was not supportive of their philosophy and so they campaigned fiercely and successfully for the removal of that principal and the right to select the next principal and teachers. While the Chicago School District administration continued to hire and assign teachers for all other schools in the district, Inter-American selected its teachers by a committee made up of teachers, parents, and the principal.

Parents and community members have been involved in all aspects of Inter-American including shaping the vision for the education of their children, assisting in classrooms and extracurricular activities, tutoring, sharing their talents with the students, raising money for school projects, collaborating with teachers in developing and revising curriculum, student assessment, and participating on finance and teacher selection committees. So many parents were involved that a parent volunteer coordinator was hired, and when funding was not available, volunteers assisted in the coordination of these activities. Exemplifying their level of involvement in school policy, the Parent Advisory Council will not allow administration of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills earlier than third grade although the district requires it each year beginning at second grade. They steadfastly hold to their refusal because they believe that students have not yet experienced enough of the curriculum in English to be tested in English before third grade. When Chicago moved to site-based management in 1988 to empower local schools, the parents and teachers alike at Inter-American felt that they had always had site-based management through the advocacy of their Parent Advisory Council.

This tradition of parent collaboration in decision-making continues through the Local School Council mandated by the state for site-based management and the redefined Parent Advisory Council. The Local School Council (LSC) is comprised of 11 elected members: six parents, two teachers, two community members, and the principal. The role of the LSC includes setting goals and priorities for the school, developing and implementing a school improvement plan, selecting personnel (including the hiring and annual evaluation of the principal), budgeting funds from discretionary and categorical state and federal programs, fundraising, and setting school policies. The Parent Advisory Council (PAC) is a voluntary organization of parents who contribute to the LSC decision-making, organize workshops for parents, raise funds for projects, and provide volunteer support for school activities. Reflective of Inter-American's goals of bilingualism and biliteracy, all meetings for both the PAC and LSC are held in Spanish and English, and newsletters and other print materials are produced in both languages.

### **Conclusion**

Characteristic of effective bilingual programs (Carter & Chatfield, 1986; Garcia, 1988), Inter-American has a vision of excellence through a bilingual, bicultural environment that has guided all decision-making for the school. Foremost to achieving that vision has been careful planning to ensure that the educational environment reflects additive bilingualism with equal regard for English and Spanish and the cultures of the students. In this way, the two-way bilingual immersion model serves to level the playing field by elevating the status of the minority language and culture, which is a decisive variable for minority students in promoting equal educational opportunities (Skutnabb-

Kangas, 1988; Cummins, 1989; Cummins, 2000; Freeman, 1998). In contrast to the larger society, the school thus becomes a social context in which the language minority students' language and culture is "legimatized," and these students gain the "right to participate" on a level equal to the majority language students (Freeman, 1998). Honed by this evolving vision, many features of Inter-American interact in synergistic manner contributing to the success of Inter-American. These features include: (a) a challenging core curriculum with students heterogeneously grouped for instruction; (b) a nurturing, family atmosphere with high expectations for learning and personal development; (c) a dedicated, collegial and highly trained staff; (d) pedagogical approaches and strategies that are student-centered, fostering interaction and active engagement in learning; (e) a thematic curriculum reflecting the culture of the students; and (f) parent and community collaboration.

Despite receiving instruction in English for no more than 50% of class time, Inter-American students consistently attain high levels of achievement in English reading and writing, math, science, and social studies. Especially compelling is the continued high achievement of low-income LEP students in English reading and writing as they progress through the grade levels. In addition, all students develop proficiency in Spanish. These results reflect additive bilingualism (Lambert, 1974), as both English-dominant and Spanish-dominant students learn another language with no negative consequences for their academic, linguistic, or intellectual development (Cummins, 1988; Harley, Allen, Cummins, & Swain, 1990). Other indicators of success are the very high attendance rates and parent satisfaction demonstrated by their strong advocacy for the program and volunteer participation in all components of the school. Through two-way immersion, Inter-American demonstrates that it is possible to provide a challenging, equitable, educational environment supportive of the linguistic, academic, and social goals of language minority and language majority students.

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### **Alex Housen**

Alex Housen is a postdoctoral research fellow of the National Fund for Scientific Research, Flanders (Belgium), at the Center for Linguistics of the University of Brussels (V.U.B.). He also teaches linguistics and second language acquisition at the same institution. His research interests include second language acquisition, second/foreign language teaching, and bilingual education.

### **Tricia A. Kelly**

Tricia A. Kelly works as a consultant to newly implemented dual language programs and teaches ESL and SSL to program parents. She recently completed her doctoral work at Teachers College, Columbia University, where she focused her research on cross-cultural integration within bilingual programs.

### **Barbara V. Kirk-Senesac**

Barbara V. Kirk-Senesac is an associate professor in the Department of Teacher Education and Professional Education at Central Michigan University where she teaches courses related to bilingual education and literacy. She has been a bilingual classroom teacher, curriculum and materials developer, program evaluator, and director of bilingual/ bicultural teacher training programs for Spanish and Ojibwe. Her interests include two-way immersion programs, mentoring models, and literacy for linguistically and culturally diverse populations. She may be contacted at [barbara.senesac@cmich.edu](mailto:barbara.senesac@cmich.edu).

### **Liliana Minaya-Rowe**

Liliana Minaya-Rowe (professor emeritus, University of Connecticut) engages in research on bilingual education, specifically professional development, classroom discourse, biliteracy, and content-based instruction. She is associate editor of the Position Papers Section of the *NABE Annual Journal of Research and Practice*. Current publications include *Teacher Training and Effective Pedagogy in the Context of Student Diversity*, and, *Sheltered Spanish Instruction: Teachers of English Language Learners Learning in their Students' First Language*.