

Summer 6-2014

# Balancing Climate, Culture and Achievement in a New Bilingual Program

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BALANCING CLIMATE, CULTURE AND ACHIEVEMENT IN A NEW  
BILINGUAL PROGRAM

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Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

## NLU Digital Commons Document Origination Statement

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This document was created as *one* part of the three-part dissertation requirement of the National Louis University (NLU) Educational Leadership (EDL) Doctoral Program. The National Louis Educational Leadership EdD is a professional practice degree program (Shulman et al., 2006).

For the dissertation requirement, doctoral candidates are required to plan, research, and implement three major projects, one each year, within their school or district with a focus on professional practice. The three projects are:

- Program Evaluation
- Change Leadership Plan
- Policy Advocacy Document

For the **Program Evaluation** candidates are required to identify and evaluate a program or practice within their school or district. The “program” can be a current initiative; a grant project; a common practice; or a movement. Focused on utilization, the evaluation can be formative, summative, or developmental (Patton, 2008). The candidate must demonstrate how the evaluation directly relates to student learning.

In the **Change Leadership Plan** candidates develop a plan that considers organizational possibilities for renewal. The plan for organizational change may be at the building or district level. It must be related to an area in need of improvement, and have a clear target in mind. The candidate must be able to identify noticeable and feasible differences that should exist as a result of the change plan (Wagner et al., 2006).

In the **Policy Advocacy Document** candidates develop and advocate for a policy at the local, state or national level using reflective practice and research as a means for supporting and promoting reforms in education. Policy advocacy dissertations use critical theory to address moral and ethical issues of policy formation and administrative decision making (i.e., what ought to be). The purpose is to develop reflective, humane and social critics, moral leaders, and competent professionals, guided by a critical practical rational model (Browder, 1995).

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## ABSTRACT

Interviews with bilingual teachers, focus groups with general education teachers, and surveys translated into Spanish for the bilingual parents at a small kindergarten through eighth grade school in a northern suburb of a large Midwestern city reveal the thoughts, concerns and excitement about the addition of a bilingual program to the school. This study outlines the need to diversify the school of study and identifies concerns each stakeholder group has about the transition of bilingual students and families to a new school as well as possible solutions to the concerns. Through the data collected in this study, a Change Plan is developed to aid in a smooth transition of nearly 35 families, their children and their teachers.

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## SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

### Statement of the Problem

*Great School District* is a medium sized school district located in a northern suburb of a large Midwestern city. Like many school districts throughout the country *Great School District* has experienced a shift in demographics. In this school district the Hispanic population has tripled since 2000 (Illinois Interactive Report Card, 2012). This change in population has required the district and its schools to provide bilingual education for the Hispanic children needing instruction in their primary language, Spanish. In 2004, *Great School District* – in response to a boom in all populations - reopened the once-shuttered *Guilford Great School (GGS)*. As a means of enticing families to move their children to this older, flood-prone school, the district engaged in a huge public relations campaign, providing families with an option to attend GGS, a K-8 grade school. This option allowed all children of the same family to attend the same school rather than moving to different buildings based on grade levels. GGS also provided full-day kindergarten and multi-age classes for 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grades and 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades. In later years, the multi-age classes transitioned to looping classes – that is groups of students remaining together with the same teacher for two consecutive years. Due to limited funds and limited physical space, GGS had previously not provided bilingual education; therefore, students who required primary instruction in Spanish attended one of the other three schools in the district. Over time *Great School District* had developed a divide between ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’. As the other three schools in the district struggled to make Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) under No Child Left Behind and at the same time keep up with the needs of the changing population, GGS was

thriving, becoming one of the top schools in the county. Parents of upper-class white and Asian families were clamoring to have their children attend GGS. Hispanic families wanted to keep their children with the teachers they love and who speak their language. All of these factors continued to contribute to the characterization of GGS as the ‘white school’ in the district.

In January of 2013, the students and staff of *Guilford Great School* moved from their older, flood prone structure to a larger, newer building and was renamed *JT Hayner School*. This move created an opportunity for the *Great School District* to balance the demographics of race and ethnicity. Starting with the 2013-2014 school year, *Hayner School* began offering bilingual classes. However, bilingual families and teachers who were affected by this move did not have a choice of attending *Hayner School*, which could lead to feelings of upset and disenfranchisement. While the district’s administrative team members and the Board of Education believed that this move was necessary and the right thing to do, it has caused hard feelings for some who were forced to move without choice. The worst-case scenario for the climate and culture of *Hayner School* was the potential for an ‘us versus them’ mentality to develop between former and newer stakeholder groups. The overall goal to prevent this situation was for every stakeholder to have enough information to feel comfortable with the transition, and for the GGS staff and students to embrace the new members of their school family.

#### Rationale

This problem was chosen because it is a real issue that will over time change the culture of a district. While the balancing of demographics throughout the district is of critical importance, the redistribution of population will also upset the internal balance

that includes day-to-day functioning of many. As the principal of *GGS/Hayner School*, I want to assure the transition for all stakeholders goes as smoothly as possible. It is very important that we maintain the positive direction of our school while embracing our new students, families, and staff. I want them to be fully integrated into everything we do, not just a program within our four walls.

The success of the new bilingual program in our school is of tremendous importance to me as well. For many years, my colleagues in other buildings have told me that *GGS/Hayner* students do so well on state assessments because we do not have the same population as the other schools – code for “we have all the good, white kids”. This has been very frustrating, because demographic changes have impacted not just some, but all schools across the district. Despite these shifts, the achievement at *GGS/Hayner* has not decreased but rather has continued to rise. I want to confirm that children can learn -- regardless the differences in their background – with a supportive environment. This is a fight I, as principal, am not willing to lose, as it is too important for the students involved.

### Goals

The following are the intended goals of this Change Plan:

1. Bilingual students, staff and families will experience a smooth, positive transition to *Hayner School*.
2. The bilingual program will be fully integrated into the fabric of *Hayner School* and in so doing create a “new normal.”
3. The bilingual program will have high achievement results.

Each of these goals addresses a specific component of the overall change plan. This study will focus on the bilingual students, families and staff and their comfort level with

the transition to a new school. This study will also consider the existing staff at *GGS/Hayner School* and their perceptions and capacity to include the new members of the school and support high academic expectations for the bilingual program. This is a comprehensive approach to not only transitioning smoothly to new processes, but also to sustain a successful bilingual program for the long-term.

### Demographics

*Great School District* is a medium-sized elementary district with roughly 2100 students who attend four schools: a primary (Pre-K-2<sup>nd</sup> grade) school, an intermediate (3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade) school, a middle (6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade) school, and the *Guilford Great* (K-8<sup>th</sup> grade) *School*. *Great School District* has a rich history dating back to 1841 as the original school for this part of the county. In fact, GGS was built on the exact site of that original school. Long-time residents of this suburb do not move away; they stay and have families. It is not uncommon for several cousins to attend the same school. At GGS we often have to consider extended family when creating classes as we do with siblings or twins. We avoid, for example, placing cousins in the same class. This familiarity among students, parents, and staff adds to the small-town feel that we enjoy in this large suburb. The residents of the *Great School District* have typically been white and middle class. Over the last 10 years, however, the Hispanic population has increased to the point that the majority population throughout the school district is now Hispanic. The low-income population has also increased in the district from 2% in 1992 to 21% in 2011, while GGS's low-income population was only at 10% in that same year (IIRC, 2011).

To clearly understand the need to balance the demographics throughout the *Great School District*, the graphic below from the Illinois Interactive Report Card 2011 shows the disparity between the single school and the district as a whole.

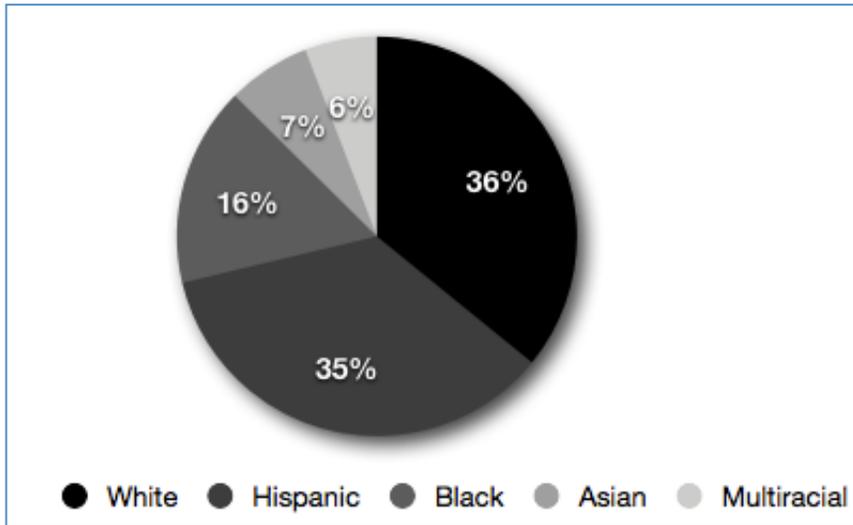


Figure 1 *Great school district* – demographics 2011

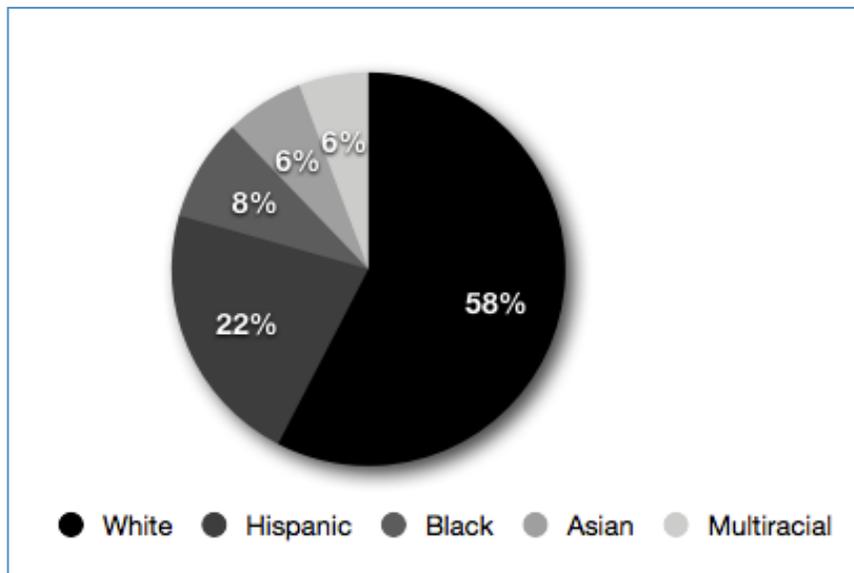


Figure 2 *Guilford great school* – demographics 2011

In 2007, the white population at GGS was 72%, and in 2011 has decreased to 57.3%. In those same five years achievement at GGS continued to rise: 89% of the students having met or exceeded standards on the state's assessments to an impressive 92% in 2011. This level of achievement from 2009-2012 earned GGS the State's Academic Excellence Award in both 2011 and 2012. "The Academic Excellence Awards recognize sustained excellence in elementary schools where a minimum of 90% of students pass the state tests for at least three successive years..." (IIRC, 2011).

## SECTION TWO: ASSESSING THE 4 Cs

Like all schools, *Guilford Great School* has both its strengths and its challenges. To create a meaningful change plan, it is critical to begin by identifying our current status. For the purpose of this research, Tony Wagner's Change Leadership framework was used to structure the Change Plan. Wagner is a widely published author and educator whose focus is on school innovation and change leadership, presents a framework consisting of elements that he calls the 4 Cs, - context, culture, conditions, and competencies (p. 98-109). Examining one's current reality in each of these four areas helps to identify specific needs that must be addressed to create the change necessary to move to an ideal situation as a school.

### Context

To truly know *Guilford Great School*, one must understand the context of the school and community. Parents, students and staff at GGS have always placed a high priority on student achievement. Students set achievement goals with their teachers at the beginning of each year and reflect on those goals throughout the year. Similarly, parents are taught how to evaluate the extent to which their children are making the appropriate amount of academic growth each year: this involvement provides parents the opportunity to support their children at home. Parent participation in school and the relationships built with families have been important to the success of GGS students and for the school as a whole.

At the start of this research, *Guilford Great School's* racial demographics differed considerably from those of the other three schools in the *Great School District*. This disparity has caused a good deal of animosity across stakeholder groups (students,

parents, staff) of each of the four district schools. District administrators therefore decided that bilingual classes would be added to the offerings at GGS to allow for a demographic balance between all the schools.

### Culture

*Guilford Great School* prides itself on a culture of high expectations for all stakeholders -- students, teachers and families. There is an expectation that less than full effort is not acceptable for anyone. GGS teachers work tirelessly to ensure that students are learning, giving their time in and out of school to support each individual student as needed. It is commonplace for teachers to work with groups of students during lunch or after school to review or re-teach a concept. Some teachers even give their time, unpaid, during the summer to meet with students in small group sessions and book clubs to ensure that they do not experience the summer “loss” when they return in the fall. None of this could occur if the staff of GGS did not have strong and deep relationships with their students and families. Over the years the staff has found that maintaining these relationships is the best way for the staff to foster trust with students, which results in high levels of learning.

Teachers and building administrators maintain strong relationships with students and families, they have also worked hard to create honest and trusting relationships among the staff. GGS teachers are not afraid to talk about difficult topics, because they know that student learning is at the center of every discussion held. There was a time, however, when teachers felt they had to protect their time and content area. When this dynamic had been identified as an area of concern, the GGS staff agreed to make a conscious effort to work more collaboratively to keep students at the center of their

discussions and decision-making. As evidence of this commitment, teachers meet frequently to discuss curriculum, assessment and individual student needs.

As with all schools, GGS faces some challenges within the school culture. There is a definite competitive mentality among teachers in the district. The GGS staff members tend to see themselves as martyrs because of fewer resources available to them, whereas other schools in the district have had added additional reading and math teachers due to their Title I status. Logically, GGS teachers understand that the other schools have many more students with learning and life challenges. However, when emotions come into play, teachers become frustrated with the lack of human and material resources as compared to the other schools in the district. The staff at GGS has learned to be creative to address specific support needs, but the outcome has left some teachers feeling resentful and frustrated.

### Conditions

A number of regulatory conditions concerning time, space and resources have made difficult the task of balancing demographics at GGS. Bilingual education laws in Illinois, for example, mandate that schools with 20 or more students who speak the same language other than English and are limited in English proficiency must be provided Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) instruction for every grade level in that school (ISBE, 2011). Since GGS is a K-8 school, this law would require nine additional classrooms at GGS. The physical space available at GGS did not allow for even one bilingual classroom to be added. Therefore the administration had to be very cautious about the students enrolled at GGS to make certain that the student population in the program did not exceed the available classroom space. The ethnicity of every new

student was scrutinized to ensure that any Hispanic child enrolled at GGS did not need a TBE program. The consequence of the enrollment process distorted GGS's racial demographics.

When GGS moved to *Hayner School* in 2013, more classrooms were available to add bilingual classes. The *Great School District* superintendent did not budget to hire additional staff to bring bilingual classes to *Hayner School*, but rather existing district bilingual staff transferred schools to start the new program at *Hayner School*. Since the district does not have enough funding to operate a full TBE program at every school, it was decided that the district would run a looping<sup>1</sup> bilingual program at three of the four schools. Having the bilingual classes at *Hayner School* loop together was considered to be an ideal solution, because all 2<sup>nd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> grade regular education classes follow this practice this is supported well by the existing school philosophy.

The bilingual staff is highly invested in the success of the bilingual program and its students and wanted to explore as many programming options as possible prior to the actual transition of the program. They put together several proposals for consideration by the administration, but none met the primary criteria set by the superintendent to hire no additional staff. As the superintendent dismissed these ideas presented, the district's bilingual teachers felt ignored and frustrated. The teachers continued to work on proposals within the parameters given to them by the district and ultimately came to see that the looping proposal was the best option given the parameters in place.

This plan did not give bilingual families the opportunity to decide where their children would go to school. At the time, GGS was an option school where parents applied for their children to attend and there was usually a waiting list to get into the

school. This plan took away that option for a specific population in our district, which was not well accepted by staff members across the district. The staff was concerned that the parents would feel even more disenfranchised when they are moved from the schools they love to a new school, especially without having been given the choice to move or not. To the teachers, this forced move had characteristics of bussing and racial segregation of the 1950s and 1960s, when students were moved to and from particular schools due to the color of their skin.

### Competencies

The *Great School District* has an amazing teaching staff that does its best to stay current on best practices for instruction and assessment. The GGS staff prides itself in its “kids at the center” approach to decision-making, and uses data to guide those decisions. Throughout the process of devising a “repopulation plan” for GGS/*Hayner* the staff has had productive disagreements and felt forced into a plan they did not necessarily agree with. Understanding the political drive behind the plan has helped them to refocus on what they can do to help the transition for students and staff and to remain as positive as possible. They understand the tremendous pressure for the superintendent from the staff and community as he works to balance the demographics throughout the district.

Acknowledging the need to communicate with the bilingual students and families the staff at GGS voted to use money given to the school by the Parent-Teacher Organization to purchase several copies of Rosetta Stone. The specials teachers in areas of art, music, technology, and physical education have felt this need to be able to communicate with parents on a daily basis. The desire to learn Spanish and initiative

show a great level of dedication on the part of the GGS staff toward making the transition to a bilingual program that works regardless of what plan is created in the end.

### SECTION THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research focuses on finding ways to create a smooth and positive transition for all our bilingual students, staff and families from the previous school configurations to the new configuration, which includes bilingual classes at each school. It is important that all stakeholders are a strong part of the climate and culture that we build at *Hayner School*. The research has been designed to ensure that the proposed change plan includes the needs of every stakeholder.

#### Research Design

To gain a deeper understanding of our As-Is or our current reality, data have been gathered to examine the hopes and fears of the bilingual staff and parents. As the school's principal, I wanted to know what the adults were worried about with the transition, what they needed from their new school, and what they hoped *Hayner School* would do for them and their children in the end. I also investigated the views of the existing *GGS/Hayner* staff to see what insights they could bring to the planning for a smooth transition. By asking the adults involved in this transition, we gained valuable information about how to design the best program for each stakeholder.

#### Participants

The key participants for this research were the bilingual parents whose children began attendance at *Hayner School* starting in the 2013-2014 school year, the district bilingual teachers who transferred to *Hayner School* starting with the 2013-2014 school year, and the teachers who worked at *GGS/Hayner School* prior to the transition. This data collection included approximately 30 bilingual parents, two bilingual teachers, and 30 current *GGS/Hayner School* teachers.

## Data Collection Techniques

Several different data collection techniques were used to gather the desired information. One-on-one interviews with the bilingual teachers were conducted to document their hopes and fears, how they envisioned a successful transition to the school, and what they worried about. This is a particularly important group as we move forward with the transition plan -- they know how the district bilingual program works and they intimately know their students, parents and the Hispanic culture. These teachers can tell us what we need to do within the four walls of the school to help the bilingual students feel welcome and become a part of the greater school community. It was my hope that meeting with teachers individually would help me to build relationships with them and gain their trust. I wanted them to know that we really want this transition to be an outstanding success.

Focus groups were conducted with the current *GGs/Hayner School* staff to gather their opinions about the transition and what they see as valuable to the process. It was also important to find out what they anticipated as their role throughout the transition.

Finally a survey was sent to the parents of the bilingual students to gauge what their hopes and fears for their children and themselves through the transition and at their new school. The goal was to get a sense of if their hopes about moving schools and what they might be worried about that we could not do for their children. The survey was given in Spanish to provide an opportunity for parents to give input, as their participation would be a critical piece to the success of the entire program. The parents were able to articulate their desires for their children as well as their needs as a parent.

Students were purposefully not included in the data collection process, due to the fact that the vast majority of the bilingual students are in kindergarten, first or second grade. They likely have not had enough school experience to know what they hope for or fear about moving to a new school. If, during the data collection process, it was determined that the students should be included in the research, I planned to meet with a small focus group and would have had informal conversations with them. I knew, however, that due to my lack of proficiency in speaking Spanish, I would need to ask a bilingual teacher or another staff member to ask the questions in Spanish about their thoughts about their new school and what they hoped it will be like to go to school there.

#### Data Analysis Techniques

To gather data about the hopes and fears of our new bilingual programs, tools were developed: 1) to survey parents of bilingual students for and about the addition of bilingual classes to *Hayner School*, 2) to interview the bilingual teachers who transferred to our school, and 3) to conduct a focus group with current GGS/*Hayner School* staff.

Surveys were sent to bilingual parents in the mail with a return addressed stamped envelope. The surveys were written in Spanish and posed questions that focused on their and their child's attitudes about switching schools, what they needed for this to be a successful transition, what they hoped for their child's learning and education, and what they were worried about with the transition to Hayner School. The survey should have taken parents 5-10 minutes to complete.

As principal and researcher, I met with both bilingual teachers individually for 45-60 minutes during a time that was acceptable for them. I traveled to the schools where they had previously taught at to minimize any inconvenience for them. I asked

interview questions that were asked during the interviews were similar to the questions asked of the GGS teaching staff in the hope of providing comparison of wants and needs, hopes and fears.

The focus group was held with volunteers from the current GGS/*Hayner* teaching staff. The focus group took place at the school and lasted approximately one hour, due to the depth of the conversation. Notes were taken by the interviewer and audio recorded for the purpose of accuracy in transcribing the conversation. The format and line of questioning used paralleled the questions asked of the bilingual teachers. There was initial hesitation about undertaking this focus group. I did not want to ask the teachers for more time, as they already give so much to the school and their students every day. Luckily, I decided it would be worthwhile to find what the teachers thought about this new program coming to their school. From the outcomes of this focus group, I was able to identify very specific ideas and activities that contributed to large portions of this change plan.

#### Limitations of the Study

I am the principal of the school for which this change plan is the focus. Having been the principal for seven of the eleven years that it has been in existence, I have great interest in the plan's success. When I support any type of change, I conduct research, talk with people to get their opinions, and try to garner their support for that change. This particular plan has personal importance to me to show, not only myself, but also my colleagues, other district staff members, and the community that English Language Learners can be successful in any school with the proper social and academic supports in place. My feelings are strong about this change plan, because I have always been a

person to be on the side of the underdog, the one no one thinks can meet the given challenge. There are people in our school community who have verbalized that they hope the transition of the bilingual program fails to demonstrate that we are not as good as we claim to be. I wonder how anyone can actually advocate against the success of children.

A possible challenge to thorough data collection was the possibility that parents might not complete and return the survey. Because *Hayner School* had no relationship with the bilingual parents we went on faith that they trusted us enough to share their thoughts. Ideally a 30% or higher return rate would help gather the information needed to create a plan to ensure a successful transition. Once all data was gathered, themes in the responses were identified. I knew it was possible that I may have found the same hopes or fears within each of the three groups. It would have been obvious then that topic was something that should be considered or addressed through the transition plan.

## SECTION FOUR: RELEVANT LITERATURE

### Introduction

Helping students and families identify themselves as important parts of a school is often critical to the success of those students and the school. Poplin and Weeres completed an exhaustive study on the identity of multi-cultural students in schools. A student interviewed for this research made a statement of clear despair, “This place hurts my spirit” (1992). Teachers in the schools in this study acknowledged that they connected with students and were able to help them in some way. Nevertheless they also reported that they did not always identify with students who are culturally different from themselves. Students and families should not feel that they have to leave their culture at the door when they come into a school; nor should they feel that they have to assimilate into the majority culture to be successful in school. Is it necessary to have schools where there is a balance of a traditional American education and a new multi-cultural education? Or can students bring their culture with them to school and still be a part of the larger school culture that invites everyone to be a part of it. According to Jim Cummins, an author and advocate for empowering English language learners:

The interactions that take place between students and teachers and among students are more central to student success than any method for teaching literacy, or science or math. When powerful relationships are established between teachers and students, these relationships can frequently transcend the economic and social disadvantages that affect communities and schools alike in inner city and rural areas (2001).

More and more schools are finding that their role is more than just to educate children in reading, writing and arithmetic but also to educate them in the wider cultural sense. They have additionally been charged with teaching acceptance, understanding and tolerance of each other's cultures. Essentially schools and teachers have to build strong lasting relationships with their students and families and embrace the uniqueness each one of them brings to the school.

### *Bilingual Education*

When a non-English speaking child enters the public school system, the schools have to decide how that child will be educated, either in an English immersion classroom or a bilingual education classroom. To explain the difference between the two approaches, Slavin and Cheung state that immersion strategies require the student to learn English from the start and their native language plays no role in their school life, and that bilingual education gives substantial amounts of instruction in the child's native language (2005). According to the National Center for Education Statistics and the Institute of Education Sciences, the number of children ages 5-17 in America who speak a language other than English in the home increased from 10% in 1980 to 21% in 2009 (NCES, 2012). The difference represents 6.5 million children in a nearly 30-year span entering the American education system. As this demographic shift occurred, many schools, districts and states have worked to find how to best educate children whose primary language is not English. Thomas and Collier define "success" when students learning English reach full educational parity with native English speaking peers in all subject areas after 5-6 years in school (1997).

The state of Illinois outlines three levels of service for English Language Learners (ELL students). 1) English as a Second Language (ESL), 2) Transitional Program of Instruction (TPI), and 3) Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) (2011). These levels of service increase in their intensity as students move from ESL to TPI to TBE. The ESL program is the least restrictive in that students are most often in general education English speaking classes and receive academic support from a teacher who specializes in second language acquisition. TBE, as the most restrictive program, delivers educational services in students' native languages away from classrooms of their English speaking peers. The state of Illinois uses the TBE model that supports a child in their native language first if they need it, but then increases the English language support as they grow in their acquisition of English.

Bilingual education has seen its fair share of controversy. Perspectives on the subject vary from the view that students who live in America should be taught in English, to the perspective that students need to be proficient in their native language before they can become proficient in English. In her book that synthesizes research on successful quality bilingual education, Maria Brisk states:

Proponents of bilingual education prefer long-term programs in which both languages are used extensively and in which English speakers and language minority students can learn together. TBE has been a mixed blessing. Such programs have recruited motivated bilingual teachers and created a supportive bilingual environment in schools (2010).

While Brisk finds the benefits of a long-term bilingual program, some school districts across the country favor a bilingual program that exits student quickly from the native

language instruction into English instruction simply due to the cost of the program. Research shows that quick-exit may not be the best practice to ensure future success. A federally funded study completed by Ramirez, Yuen, Ramey & Pasta, followed the progress of more than 2,000 Spanish-speaking ELL students in nine school districts in five states over a four-year period. The study found that students in developmental bilingual programs, with a gradual transition to English such as TBE, significantly outperformed their peers in quick-exit, transitional bilingual programs and in all-English immersion programs when all three groups were tested in English (1991). Schools have to determine, based on their state's school codes and local school board policies how they will deliver services to their bilingual students to maximize English language acquisition.

It is becoming more prevalent for bilingual families to legally advocate for their children's education. In 2009, a group of ELL students and their families filed a class action lawsuit against the Arizona State Board of Education and the Superintendent of Public Instruction (Horne v. Flores) stating the students were given a less than adequate ELL instruction which was in violation of the Equal Educational Opportunities Act (EEOA) in the Nogales School District. This lawsuit stated that funds that were proportioned for ELL students were not being used for their instruction. The court found that the grant stated "appropriate action" must be taken for ELL students was not clear, and asked for more specificity when determining how funds are spent to educate ELL students.

Cummins cautions us to not ignore the gifts a child brings to the classroom. "When students' language, culture and experience are ignored or excluded in classroom interactions, students are immediately starting from a disadvantage. Everything they

have learned about life and the world up to this point is being dismissed as irrelevant to school learning” (2001). It is up to the schools and teachers to embrace their life experiences as supports for their education.

### *Helping Bilingual Families Feel Welcome*

There is a belief among some educators that parents of culturally diverse children somehow care less than they should about their child’s education, basing this perception on parents’ rare attendance at Parent-Teacher Conferences or field trips. However, educators who take the time to communicate and build relationships with parents find most often that the opposite to be true. “When educators and culturally diverse parents become genuine partners in children’s education, this partnership repudiates the myth that culturally diverse parents are apathetic and don’t care about their child’s education” (Cummins, 2001). The value of a child’s culture is immeasurable. It is important for schools to create programs that embrace different cultures and welcome all school families into the school. As Cummins states, “It is a program that begins with the assumption that children and their parents want and deserve the best education that can be provided” (2001). Fisher, Frey and Pumpian, experts in the field of literacy and student achievement, state that schools need a “specified set of purposeful language, actions, and routines designed to help students and other stakeholders feel welcome, comfortable, important, and understood” (2012). When a school employs easily understandable language and routines it encourages students and parents to become active members of the school community.

As schools in America become more culturally diverse, they have to find new ways to welcome students and their families and to engage them in school activities.

“The daily experiences that come from a welcoming environment and a commitment to consistency that builds the school community all influence the choices that students and their families make” (Fisher, et. al., 2012). While there is an apprehension to communicate directly with bilingual (or possibly even monolingual) parents due to the language barrier, it is vital that all parents receive information about their child’s progress in school. Cheng-Ting, Kyle and McIntye -- professors whose work has included literacy, curriculum and language acquisition -- conducted a study that focused on helping teachers work effectively with ELL students and their families. Their study found that teachers clearly identified personal communication with their students’ families as one of the best strategies to help each child succeed in school (2008). Culturally, Latino bilingual families have the highest regard for education. A strategy that has shone great success for parental involvement in schools is a support group of sorts that is comprised of families with similar backgrounds and culture. Orozco relays anecdotally that a Spanish-speaking radio program, which held frequent call-in sessions on parenting, became so popular that panel discussions with Latino parents soon became a standard part of the program. (2008). These discussions helped all the participants and listeners to understand how they can contribute to their child’s education and the greater school community. “When families feel welcome in schools and participate actively in children’s education, children’s attendance, interest, motivation, general achievement, and reading achievement improve” (Padak & Rasinaki, 2003). Parents must see themselves as partners in their child’s education and welcomed in the school.

*Positive Culture and Climate in School*

When thinking about climate and culture, it is important to differentiate between the two. Climate is the feeling you get when you enter the school. Is it warm and welcoming or is it cold and isolating? Culture is expressed with more tangible or observable parts of a school. What are the acceptable ways of acting and reacting? What traditions are in place that seem untouchable? What do the staff and students do to make the school special?

The culture and climate of a school sets the tone that every day is one of learning. A positive school culture “is largely defined by what is important to the student body. It encompasses their principles, outlook, and behaviors. It includes the traditions of the school, what and how the school celebrates, and what is accepted by the majority as the norm” (Kuntz, 2012). Watson warns us (as cited in MacNeil, Prater & Busch, 2009) that if culture is not hospitable to learning then student achievement could suffer (2001).

MacNeil, Prater & Busch, researchers in the area of school climate and culture state that,

Strong school cultures have better motivated teachers. Highly motivated teachers have greater success in terms of student performance and student outcomes.

School principals seeking to improve student performance should focus on improving the school’s culture by getting the relationships right between

themselves, their teachers, students and parents (2009).

High student achievement is the ultimate goal of every school. School leaders continuously look for the idea, method or strategy that will yield great academic results. Something as simple as a relationship can boost one’s desire to work hard and achieve more. Habegger’s research on positive school climates examines specific examples of how school leaders can create a positive school culture. “... a culture that empowered and

instilled confidence in teachers as they prepared for achievement testing, solicited professional dialogue and research, valued their students and teachers, and sought the help of parents and community members to enhance the school's effectiveness" (2008). If teachers, students and parents feel valued in the school setting, its trickle down effect can be exponential for increased student achievement.

Positive school climate and culture have a great impact on the students and their motivations at school. Nurturing relationships between teachers and their students encourage children who would otherwise not want to come to school. Additionally, the positive relationships developed with teachers encourage students to set goals, monitor their progress and create action plans to achieve their goals (Habegger, 2008)

## SECTION FIVE: DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

As stated above, this research focuses on finding ways to create a smooth and positive transition for all our bilingual students, staff and families from their previous schools to the new configuration, which includes bilingual classes at each school. The data analysis and interpretation of this research has been designed to ensure that the proposed change plan includes the needs of every stakeholder – bilingual families, bilingual teachers and *Hayner School* teachers.

### *Analysis of Family Survey Data*

In March of 2013 surveys were sent to 32 families whose children would be moving to *Hayner School* for the 2013-2014 school year. The surveys were translated from English to Spanish and mailed with a return addressed stamped envelope. Eleven surveys (34%) were returned, making the results acceptable for use in this change plan.

Parents were asked if they and their child were happy that their child would be attending *Hayner School* starting the next school year. One hundred percent of those parents responding to the survey said both they and their child were happy about the move to *Hayner*. The same response was given when the parents were asked about their satisfaction with their child's education in the *Great School District* in the bilingual program. Again, all respondents reported that their child was getting a good education in the district's bilingual program.

Parents were then asked for specific feedback about what they, as parents, needed from *Hayner* to feel a part of the school family and what their child needed to feel a part of the school family. In response to an open-ended question, many of the parents stated that their greatest need was communication. Some parents stated that they wanted to

speaking more English so they can communicate with the school, while others wanted communication from the teacher in order to know what is going on in the school. Another theme in the parent responses was that they wanted opportunities for their family to participate in whole-school activities that will boost their children's confidence in interacting with their peers. Parents also expressed that their children would take part in all activities necessary to help them feel a part of the *Hayner School* family and that they had already felt very welcomed. One parent stated that they would like their child "to be treated the same as we were at the other school, and (they want) to receive the same education."

Parents were asked about what they hoped their child would learn or do as a student at *Hayner School*. The overwhelming response to this question was that they wanted their child to be a good student and show a lot of progress. One parent stated that he/she hopes "that my child obtains the understanding and skills necessary to have an integral education and that they will have the ability to speak in both languages." Two parents mentioned that they hoped their child would focus and pay attention in school and that they would not neglect their studies.

When parents were asked about what they were worried about as their child moves to *Hayner School*, most parents stated they had no worries and were happy about the move. After that the overwhelming concern was with safety. One parent simply hoped the school was safe, while another parent said, "I am concerned that there are older students (6-8 grade) and that there may be abuse or bullying."

To end the survey, we asked the parents what *Hayner School* could do to serve them as parents and their children better as a school. Communication and collaboration

were the major themes in their responses. Parents want to know what is happening at the school and in the classroom on a frequent basis. One parent stated, “that with parents and teachers united always, and that we participate in what we can to make our child better.” Another parent said, “that (they would like) a school atmosphere that is created through harmony and confidence between the students and teachers so that the students can attend school with enthusiasm.”

#### *Analysis of Teacher Interview Data*

Two bilingual teachers were interviewed in February of 2013. Ms. Hermoso was assigned to teach Kindergarten and first grade, and Ms. Blanco second and third grade, looping with each class from the lower grade to the upper grade. Neither teacher had looped or taught both grades of their assignment. Both teachers provided valuable information regarding their specific program needs such as books and materials, and information about their student population.

Responding to questions about their wants and needs for this transition, Ms. Hermoso and Ms. Blanco reported that they were happy about moving to *Hayner School* and that although they love their current schools, they are looking forward to trying something new with looping. Ms. Blanco stated, “It’s a good thing that the bilingual classes will be looping the same as the English-speaking classes. That way they won’t be different, and I’ll get to be a part of a team. We have always been an afterthought.”

Both Ms. Hermoso and Ms. Blanco were concerned about a lack of materials in both English and Spanish at *Hayner School*. They will bring the materials they currently have for the grade they teach but are concerned about how they will get materials for the other grade. They will both have colleagues who are looping opposite them at the other

schools and they are concerned about the logistics of sharing textbooks, teacher's manuals and supplemental materials between the schools. Ms. Blanco stated that she "wants to balance English and Spanish in reading and writing", but will need curriculum materials the English speaking classes are using such as the program *Step up to Writing*. Ms. Blanco also expressed a concern about the lack of Spanish language and culture books in our library. She will teach second and third grade students and will want them reading fiction and non-fiction in both Spanish and English and wants them to do research about their native countries. The library at *Hayner School* does not have a wide variety of books to accomplish this task.

When Ms. Hermoso and Ms. Blanco were asked about their ideas and concerns for the transition to our school and for themselves and their students, their primary focus was on the students and our current teachers. Ms. Hermoso stated, "The age my students are, they don't know that this is an unusual change. They are very excited about moving to your school and that makes me excited too." Ms. Blanco said, "Here (her current school), teachers will make comments about the kids who speak Spanish. They will sit in the teacher's lounge and let their opinions be known about immigration. It does not create a very comfortable environment for me. I hope those kinds of conversations don't happen at *Hayner*." She commented about the level of knowledge some of her students have about deportation and that many of them have had family members deported. She stated that many of her students live in fear of losing one or both parents through deportation. Ms. Blanco also spoke about the increased level of poverty that comes with her student population. She's afraid "they'll stand out." Her students often come to school without jackets, boots, school supplies, etc. She stated that, "three quarters of her

class qualifies for free and reduced lunch, but only half take it.” Ms. Blanco was concerned that *Hayner School* does not have a breakfast program and that was the only way some of her students get any food in the mornings.

#### *Analysis of Teacher Focus Group Data*

The entire *Hayner School* staff of 33 teachers and teacher assistants was invited to a focus group meeting to discuss the addition of the bilingual program to the school and gather information about their hopes and fears for the program. Nine staff members attended; several who had other obligations offered to meet again if needed. The staff members who took part in the focus group were representative of the entire staff – a middle school language arts teacher, a middle school math and science teacher, two 4/5 teachers, one 2/3 teacher, one first grade teacher, a physical education teacher, a special education teacher and a special education assistant. The focus group was voluntary on one of the first days of summer break. The teachers and staff who did not participate had other obligations such as family and summer jobs to attend to. It should be noted that none of the teachers who were unable to attend had expressed negative feelings about the bilingual program transitioning to the school prior to or after the focus group meeting.

The focus group conversation was concentrated around questions about their personal needs and the school’s needs prior to the bilingual classes starting at *Hayner*. In addition, the teachers were asked about their hopes and fears with the transition and addition of new students and staff. The teachers were asked what they needed prior to the start of the school year, and a teacher asked for clarification about what bilingual was versus English as a Second Language (ESL). She said, “I feel like I’m supposed to know what bilingual is, but I don’t, and I was afraid to ask because I was supposed to know.”

This statement opened up a lot of dialog about the differences between the two programs: Bilingual education is where the students start off being taught predominantly in their primary language (Spanish), and slowly transition to English over a number of years. ESL is where the student receives resource support in the areas of language acquisition, but the instruction is done fully in English. Teachers also had confusion about how looping worked for the bilingual classes and thought that the students would go between schools each school year. It was clarified that once students were at *Hayner* they would stay at *Hayner*. A pictorial representation was shown to help visualize the process of the bilingual classes looping.

Additionally, teachers were asked what the school could do for the families and students to help them with the transition. One teacher stated, “The district has always done things in Spanish for the families, but they make them go to a separate area for that. We need to not separate them and do things as a whole school to help them feel comfortable.” Another teacher thought about giving each new bilingual family a “buddy family” to help them with information. “The buddy family, one of our parents who speaks Spanish, could call the bilingual family and help them with information. They could remind them about Curriculum Night and conferences. They could call them once a month so the bilingual family feels welcome and that they know what is going on in the school.” This spurred a conversation about nighttime family events such as ice cream socials and events to highlight the many cultures in the school. The teachers started a conversation about doing several events throughout the school year to celebrate cultures. For example, they discussed having a display that changes monthly that highlights a particular family and their culture, labeling locations throughout the school in our 3-4

main languages, holding a Culture Fair, and hosting a fashion show where families can show off their cultural clothing, music and food. Additionally the teachers talked about the need for us to have culturally based assemblies that bring in groups who showcase music, dance and clothing of different cultures.

When teachers were asked about any concerns or fears they have one teacher said, “When I found out about us getting bilingual classes I was nervous because I want to communicate with the students and families and I don’t speak Spanish. I’m excited now though and less anxious.” Another teacher expressed concern about our ability to meet the basic needs of our new students such as food and clothing because *Hayner* does not have a formal breakfast program. A teacher responded, “We can’t make assumptions because of their culture. We can’t assume that just because they are Hispanic that they haven’t had breakfast. Poor does not equal not eaten.” This comment started a conversation about *Hayner’s* lack of breakfast program and what we would do to help those students who may come to school hungry. Members of the group cautioned others about being sensitive to the pride the families have. It was stated that unless there is a relationship, the families might be offended by being given handouts. Another concern brought up was that the first contact with all parents is made in the office, and we have to be cognizant of how we interact with our bilingual parents. Our office clerk speaks Spanish so parents will be able to communicate directly with the office, but if she is not available we need to make sure that we speak slowly and not assume that they can understand what we are saying in English.

*Interpretation of Family Survey Data*

The families who returned their surveys report being happy about their children moving to *Hayner School* (Appendix G). This was a big first step in the successful transition of the bilingual program to *Hayner*. The parents are willing to be a part of the *Hayner School* family and report they are looking forward to doing their part to make this happen. It will be crucial that the school and teachers are very intentional in their communication with the bilingual families. It will require additional work and time on the part of the school and teachers to translate all communications, but will pay large dividends in trust and relationships in the end.

Parents also reported their desire for their children to be successful in school. This may need additional investigation to find the parents' definition of success and determine if the students are already experiencing the success they are referring to. The bilingual teachers along with the district's Bilingual Coordinator could work with *Hayner School's* teachers to clearly articulate how language acquisition occurs and share best practices in teaching bilingual students.

Additional inquiry into the general topic of safety will be helpful to identify more specific examples from this area of concern. One parent who articulated a concern about older students attending the same school as younger ones could have her mind eased by receiving information on how the grade levels are separated through out the school and day. However, it should not be assumed that the ages of the students at *Hayner* is the primary safety concern as there could be other environmental and social concerns that are more pressing for the parents.

*Interpretation of Teacher Interview Data*

Overall both bilingual teachers report being happy about their move to *Hayner School*, and believe their students are excited as well. It will be important to use the momentum from this positive energy and provide the bilingual teachers with opportunities to feel a part of the *Hayner School* family and to see they are valued as such. These opportunities could take the form of informal gathering, and formal staff and team meetings to meet both their social and professional needs.

The greatest concern both teachers expressed about their move involves the lack of instructional materials. Since providing Spanish language materials for the school had not been previously considered, school administration will need to work with the Director of Pupil Services to determine if there are funds available to purchase new materials or if the staff will need to develop a plan to share materials from year to year between buildings. We will need to rely on the knowledge and expertise of the bilingual teachers in the area of curriculum materials, as our knowledge is limited.

Ms. Blanco talked about tones of racism and prejudice that teachers in her school openly expressed. To ensure that the staff at *Hayner School* has a clear understanding of cultural differences, a committee of teachers should develop a plan to educate all staff about many of the cultures we service and the negative stereotypes that follow them. This plan can focus on the Hispanic culture, but should include many of the other cultures served at *Hayner School* to give the staff a broad knowledge base. I must also clearly express to my staff that this type of behavior will not be accepted and that it is our job to educate every child regardless of our personal thoughts or feelings on their individual situations.

Ms. Blanco was very direct in her comment that *Hayner* will be dealing with a level of poverty that we have not before. While we do have free and reduced lunch, we have not formally served breakfast to the students who need that as well. We have provided breakfast to students who needed it, but that is on an as needed basis, not every day. A building wide plan should developed to help teachers identify and address the students' needs for school supplies, clothes and winter gear.

#### *Interpretation of Teacher Focus Group Data*

From this sampling of *Hayner* staff, it appears that the adults are excited about a new opportunity for them to explore and learn about other cultures. They provided many examples on how we could work as a school to be as inclusive as possible while learning about the many cultures in the school even non-Hispanic cultures. The ideas shared were global and included concepts that would celebrate all the cultures in the school.

Teachers expressed concerns similar to those expressed by the bilingual teachers and parents about their abilities to communicate with the Spanish speaking families and assumptions that have been made about the financial status of those families. All the while the teachers came up with possible plans or solutions to counteract those concerns. Additional concerns were about *Hayner's* lack of resources for low-income students such as breakfast and the availability of extra clothes.

The focus group did not report any negative feelings other than anxiety about not being able to communicate with students and families.

The general consensus of the focus group seemed to be that teachers are excited about having the bilingual students, teachers and families join our school. They just want to make sure that we have created a welcoming environment for all of them.

*Interpretation of Data Across Groups*

Below is a table that outlines the major themes identified through parent surveys (Appendix G), teacher interviews and focus groups. This table helps develop the Strategies and Action Steps for the Change Plan.

Table 1 – *Cross-reference of data collected from stakeholder groups*

	Parents	Bilingual teachers	GGS/Hayner teachers
Happy about the move to <i>Hayner</i>	✓	✓	✓
Parent participation	✓		
Communication about school events	✓		✓
Academic success	✓		
School safety	✓		
Available curriculum materials		✓	
Educate all staff about cultural differences		✓	
Poverty		✓	✓
Celebrate diversity			✓
Welcoming environment	✓		✓

Each group reported being happy about the bilingual program moving to *Hayner School*. The parents and *GGS/Hayner* teachers reported that communication between home and school are important for family involvement and student success. Both teacher groups expressed concern about *Hayner School's* lack of resources for children of poverty, both in the availability of food and supplies. Parents and *GGS/Hayner* teachers are looking

forward to a welcoming school environment for the new bilingual families. While only the bilingual teachers reported concern about the lack of bilingual materials, it is an area that must be addressed through the Change Plan.

## SECTION SIX: A VISION OF SUCCESS (TO BE)

Meaningful change can only occur if a plan is created that takes into account where one's current reality lies and where one wants it to be: the vision of success. In Section Two, Tony Wagner's 4 Cs, - context, culture, conditions, and competencies (p. 98-109) are discussed in relation to *Guilford Great School*, which has now become *Hayner School*. Information learned from *Hayner's* stakeholders -- bilingual parents, bilingual teachers, and current *Hayner* staff – will be used to determine our vision of success. The “To Be” format helps us to take what is known about *Hayner School* and what has been learned - through surveys of parents, interviews with bilingual teachers and focus groups of *Hayner* staff – to create the vision of a successful transition plan for the district's bilingual program into *Hayner School*. Information gained from each stakeholder group was placed into one or more of Wagner's 4Cs to organize the outcomes desired for this change plan.

### Context

Starting with the 2013-2014 school year, *Hayner School* will serve 40 additional students who are in the *Great School District's* bilingual education program. These students are in either 1<sup>st</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and will remain at *Hayner School* for as long as they live within the *Great School District* boundaries. The addition of these two bilingual classes has created a closer demographic balance throughout the school district. As time goes on and new bilingual classes are added, *Hayner* will ultimately have the largest bilingual population in the district.

Student achievement is the top priority at *Hayner*. Goal setting with students has become an even more integral part of the educational process over the years. Goal setting

involves a meeting between every student and their teacher three times per year. During these meetings the students and their teacher look at assessment results and determine how a student will improve in a particular deficit area by identifying specific skills and strategies the student will work on. The goals and accompanying skill-based activities are communicated with parents to foster a home-school partnership. To ensure the students are learning the skills and strategies that will help them achieve at high levels, the curriculum is reviewed frequently to guarantee alignment with the state's curriculum standards, including bilingual education standards and mandates.

*Hayner School* continues to focus on building strong relationships both inside the building with students and teachers and outside the building with parents and community members. Additional time and effort ensures that our Spanish speaking families have all the information they need, are aware of what is going on in the school, and are a part of the fabric of the school. This time and effort includes translating written and verbal communication as well as purposefully reaching out to those families to encourage their participation.

### Culture

The culture of *Hayner School* will experience the greatest impact through the addition of the bilingual program. Over the years we have had great pride in our ability to build and maintain strong relationships with our students, parents and each other. It is our hope this will continue through enhanced communication and efforts on our part to encourage our bilingual families and teachers to partake in the many activities we have as a school. Events will be held throughout the school year that highlight the diverse cultures we have in our school.

Now that our demographics more closely mirror the rest of the school district's demographics, we will be seen on equal footing. Talk amongst staff throughout the district will be more collaborative and positively focused on the students rather than who is dealing with the bigger issue. The "us versus them" mentality is gone. The teachers at *Hayner* are now getting the support and resources they always felt they were missing. The library is stocked with Spanish language books and non-fiction books about Hispanic countries. We have additional teachers and assistants to support our growing bilingual and English as a Second Language population.

#### Conditions

Many factors had to take place to make the conditions just right for this plan to work. First, we involved all stakeholders in the process. We involved teachers and parents in the decision making process about the bilingual programs. The entire process was transparent and inclusive. Everyone was able to bring their concerns and ideas to the table to make sure we had thought through all the possible scenarios for the transition. Through this process all demographic areas were considered including ethnicity and low income.

The bilingual classes at *Hayner School* complete three 2-year loops just as their grade level team does. Each bilingual teacher loops either from kindergarten to 1<sup>st</sup> grade, 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade or 4<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Looping has made the bilingual teachers feel more a part of the grade level team as they loop grades with two other teachers. Curriculum and assessment collaboration has increased on these teams due to the changes in these areas for all three teachers every year.

Another component that helped the transition of the bilingual program go smoothly was the removal of the choice process to attend *Hayner School*. *Hayner* is no longer an option school with an application process. Instead it is a regular attendance school like the other schools in the district where new enrolment is based on class size at individual grade levels. Removing the choice option has helped the parents, community and teachers see that *Hayner School* is the same as the other schools in the district. *Hayner* is no longer special or different in the eyes of others because students do not apply to attend. Also due to the elimination of the choice option, the concern about bilingual families not getting the same choice as other families is gone.

#### Competencies

*Hayner School* staff, and previously *Guilford Great School* staff, has been known for their ability to wrap their arms around anyone. The addition of bilingual students is no different. Through a thoughtful transition process all new students, teachers and families were welcomed as part of the *Hayner School* family. Families were invited to the school months before the start of the new school year. A presentation, in Spanish, about the school and the programs in place was delivered to the parents to aid in their understanding. Parents were also given the opportunity to ask questions about the school, curriculum and extra curricular activities. Parents were also introduced to their child's new teacher to promote an open line of communication from the start. All bilingual students who were transferring to *Hayner* were invited to the school for a tour and a chance to meet their new teacher and see their new classroom. The students were also introduced to their new art, music, technology, library and PE teachers.

Bilingual teachers throughout the district are communicating about the bilingual programs and collaborating about their curriculum and instruction. The bilingual teachers are also advocating for each other's needs. If they see an inconsistency or a problem that needs to be addressed they work together to find an appropriate solution.

## SECTION SEVEN: STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS FOR CHANGE

To bridge the starting reality at *Hayner School* of having no bilingual program to where we want to be of having a bilingual program, or in other words moving from our “As Is” to our “To Be”, has required a great deal of thought and planning. Several strategies and action steps needed to be put into place to ensure the success of this change plan. This change plan has five specific strategies, each contributing several specific action steps to accomplish that strategy. The strategies are not linear nor does one strategy require another to be achieved fully for that strategy to be realized. As the transition of the district bilingual classes occurs over the next six years this plan will be adjusted and possibly changed completely depending on the data and information we gather as we proceed.

### Strategy 1: Increase student population and diversity

In order to effectively increase *Hayner School's* student population and racial diversity it was determined by the superintendent that two bilingual classes would transfer from other schools in the district to *Hayner* starting with the 2013-14 school year, adding a new class at Kindergarten each year so that only these first two groups of students will have to transfer schools. Once a student starts in a school or pathway of schools they will remain there for the rest of their time in our district. It was also determined by the superintendent that the best way to achieve this increase in population and additional diversity at *Hayner School* was to create a looping bilingual program at all the schools so every school would share the load of bilingual education for the district's students. The district-wide looping plan outlined below shows that the grade levels

served at each building changes each year, but every grade level is present every year throughout the district.

Table 2 – *Great School District* bilingual looping plan through 2019

Year	Primary	Hayner	Intermediate	Middle
2013-14	K, 2	1, 3	4, 5	6, 7, 8
2014-15	1	K, 2, 4	3, 5	6, 7, 8
2015-16	K, 2	1, 3, 5	4	6, 7, 8
2016-17	1	K, 2, 4, 6	3, 5	7, 8
2017-18	K, 2	1, 3, 5, 7	4	6, 8
2018-19	1	K, 2, 4, 6, 8	3, 5	7

An example clarifies how this plan works for an individual student who starts at *Hayner* as a kindergartner in the 2014-15 school year. In 2015-16 she will have the same teacher at Hayner in 1<sup>st</sup> grade, then in 2016-17 she will become a 2<sup>nd</sup> grade student at Hayner who will have the same teacher again in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, and so on.

Table 3 – Example of individual student looping plan

Year	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-2018
Grade/Teacher	Kindergarten/Ms. Hermoso	1 <sup>st</sup> grade/Ms. Hermoso	2 <sup>nd</sup> grade/Ms. Blanco	3 <sup>rd</sup> grade/Ms. Blanco

The district bilingual teachers helped devise a plan to support the grade levels in the school that did not have a bilingual class in a particular year but may still have ESL students. As a group, the bilingual teachers also determined which of them would

transfer with the students to *Hayner School*. This helped the bilingual teachers to buy into the program and take ownership in the success of the program. The teachers showed appreciation that they were allowed some decision making power in the process of developing the final transition plan.

Once the bilingual transition plan was solidified at the district level, it needed to be communicated with the parents of the bilingual students this plan would affect. A letter was sent from their current school to the parents in both classrooms explaining that their child would be attending *Hayner School* starting with the next school year. A follow invitation was sent to the parents inviting them to an Open House to provide them with information about *Hayner School* and the bilingual program.

Increasing and diversifying the student population at *Hayner* should also remove the “us versus them” teacher mentality that had previously been present throughout the *Great School District*. The greatest negative feelings that had been expressed about *GGS/Hayner* by teachers throughout the district had been that the demographics were so different at *GGS/Hayner* and that was why our school had such a high level of achievement. Now that *Hayner* will have closer to the same, and in a few years more, diverse population teachers throughout the district should look at our school differently and not think of one as better than another.

Strategy 2: Help bilingual teachers feel a part of the *Hayner* staff

This strategy plays to the importance of climate and culture at *Hayner School*. We desperately want our new colleagues to feel welcomed and that we want them to be a part of our school, and not just a program that resides within our building. Both the existing *Hayner* staff and the new bilingual teachers were asked about their specific

wants and needs as we create a new normal at *Hayner School*. From the information garnered from the teachers, several opportunities have been provided for the entire staff to get together socially prior to the start of the school year. One was a summer gathering to say good-bye to a teacher who is moving to another state, another on the first day of teacher attendance. Both of these instances are purely social for teachers to get to know each other on a personal level and start building their relationships.

The bilingual teachers will be a part of a grade level team. Historically bilingual teachers in the district have met together and not necessarily with the team of teachers who teach their same grade. Due to the fact that we will have so few bilingual teachers and only have two general education classes at each grade level, building strong grade level teams will be important. Having the bilingual teachers as part of the grade level team will ensure that the students and teachers are included in any extra events and activities such as field trips and guest speakers.

It is important that the general education teachers understand how the bilingual program operates and how it could affect them and their classrooms. During the first institute day of the 2013-14 school year, the bilingual teachers and I will present information about the bilingual program. Even though the information had been shared over the course of the last two school years there is still a lack of understanding about how the program will work over time. We will share the long-term looping plan projected over six years until we are in full implementation. A visual representation will be necessary so teachers can get a clear picture of how it works. In addition, the bilingual teachers will define the difference between bilingual education and English as a second language (ESL) as it was discovered that teachers really did not have a strong grasp on

the differences. We will teach them about the assessments all English Language Learners (ELL), which includes bilingual and ESL students; need to take yearly to determine their English language acquisition. We will also help the teachers to see how the program may or may not affect them and their classrooms. As students are assessed as being proficient in speaking, reading, writing and listening in the English language they will no longer need bilingual education and will move into English only classrooms. In the end this could impact class sizes in grades that have a bilingual class and not other grades.

### Strategy 3: Build strong relationships among all staff

The action steps above should help build strong relationships among the entire *Hayner* staff. However, intentional opportunities must be created for all teachers to build their professional as well as their personal relationships. In addition to social gatherings and the bilingual teachers becoming members of the grade level teams, opportunities must be provided where instructional practices and philosophies can be discussed and developed. *Hayner School* has always been known to “think outside the box” and take risks. Because this has not been the case district wide, we will need to show our new teachers that this is acceptable and expected. It will be important for teachers to have philosophical conversations about what they see as their role in our school. Teachers who have taught at *GGS/Hayner School* have always shouldered a lot of responsibility when it comes to behavior management/discipline, frequent parent communication, research and implementation on best practices, etc. Teachers at other schools in the district do not see many of these things as part of their job. So we must be prepared to bring our new teachers on board philosophically with these.

Strategy 4: Ensure bilingual families feel a part of the school and understand the morays and folkways

The first and perhaps most important action to help our new bilingual families feel a part of *Hayner School* was to invite the parents to the school during our spring Open House. We had a meeting with bilingual parents prior to the start of the Open House to introduce all our specials teachers, their new classroom teachers and ourselves. The meeting was presented in Spanish, as *Hayner's* Assistant Principal is fluent in Spanish. This seemed to help the parents feel more comfortable and willing to ask questions about *Hayner* and how the new program would work. Some were confused and thought their child was going to have to move schools every year. We were able to clarify the process for them and help them to understand that their child would always be in our school as long as they lived in the *Great School District*. We welcomed the families to stay for the Open House and tour the building with their children. Many of them took advantage of the opportunity to tour the building; others continued to talk with the new bilingual teachers and Assistant Principal with their questions.

During the 2014-15 school year, each bilingual family will be assigned a mentor family that speaks Spanish fluently and has had children in *Hayner School* in the past. This idea is one that emerged from the teacher focus group. The teachers at *Hayner* feel strongly about the relationships that are developed among families as well as with the school. They want to foster those relationships in a helpful and meaningful way for our new bilingual families.

The goal of providing bilingual families with a mentor is to provide our new bilingual parents as much information as possible continuously throughout the school

year. The mentor families are to contact their assigned families minimally once a month to inform them of up coming events and to give the parents a meaningful context for the events. A good example of a school tradition is our annual Turkey Trot that takes place the Friday prior to Thanksgiving. Parents without strong connections in the school community may not understand that this event is a three-mile family run during the school day. Parents and other family members are encouraged to join their child during the run. The mentor family should contact their families a week or two in advance to give them information about the run and how they can get involved. *Hayner School* has many traditional events such as the Turkey Trot that we want all our new families to participate in therefore it is important that they are aware of them. The mentor family could also be someone the bilingual parent could call and ask questions they might not feel comfortable calling the school or teacher to ask. The ultimate goal is to build relationships.

To ensure that the bilingual parents feel a part of *Hayner School*, teachers and staff throughout the school will make frequent personal contacts. While some of the families speak no English at all, most speak a little English: staff can reach out to them individually with good news about their children. Whether the news is about how their children are doing in reading or about an art project they just completed, the school needs to make an effort to contact the parents. The more personal contact the parents have, the more comfortable they will be to partake in the variety of family activities *Hayner School* has available.

Strategy 5: Monitor the progress of the bilingual program

It will be extremely important that the teachers and students in the bilingual program experience success at *Hayner School* immediately. Unfortunately there are people in our school community that hope we fail, so we need to do everything in our power to make sure that doesn't happen. The first step is to make sure the bilingual teachers have all the materials they need to provide quality instruction. Since both bilingual teachers who will be transferring to us have only taught one of the two grade levels they will be teaching they will need a complete set of curriculum materials for the opposite grade, for which they may also need training. We will work with the Curriculum Coordinator and Bilingual Coordinator to set up appropriate training in the curriculum. It will also be important that our entire school has the materials necessary for the success of the bilingual students. To give students a variety of reading materials in Spanish to enhance their proficiency in their native language, Spanish language books and non-fiction books about Latino countries have been purchased for the library.

Once *Hayner* has all the proper materials and training in place, we need to intentionally monitor the progress of every bilingual student. Data should be gathered that compares the academic performance of the bilingual students to that of the general population. It will be critical that the bilingual students achieve at levels that are commensurate with their English-speaking peers. We will frequently analyze assessment data to measure their growth and learning. Through this analysis gaps in the students' learning may be identified. In which case the teachers will meet with their grade level teams to analyze the data and determine next steps for each individual student. The teachers will then meet with me to review their data and plans for each child. At that

point I will be able to provide them with any additional support they may need whether curriculum materials, training or additional classroom help.

The bilingual teachers at *Hayner School* will also meet periodically to discuss program topics and planning to ensure there is continuity in curriculum and learning. We want to minimize gaps and overlaps in the curriculum, and try to keep the bilingual curriculum as closely tied to the general education curriculum as possible. It will also be important that bilingual teachers across the district who teach the same grade levels meet to articulate their findings related to curriculum and assessment.

This Change Plan as been created with the input from, and reviewed by many stakeholders. All of who have a strong desire for this transition to not only be smooth, but extremely successful. We have a commitment from the current *Hayner* staff, the new bilingual teachers, and building and district administration to do whatever it takes to ensure the bilingual students, parents and teachers have everything they need for the bilingual program to be a great success at *Hayner School*.

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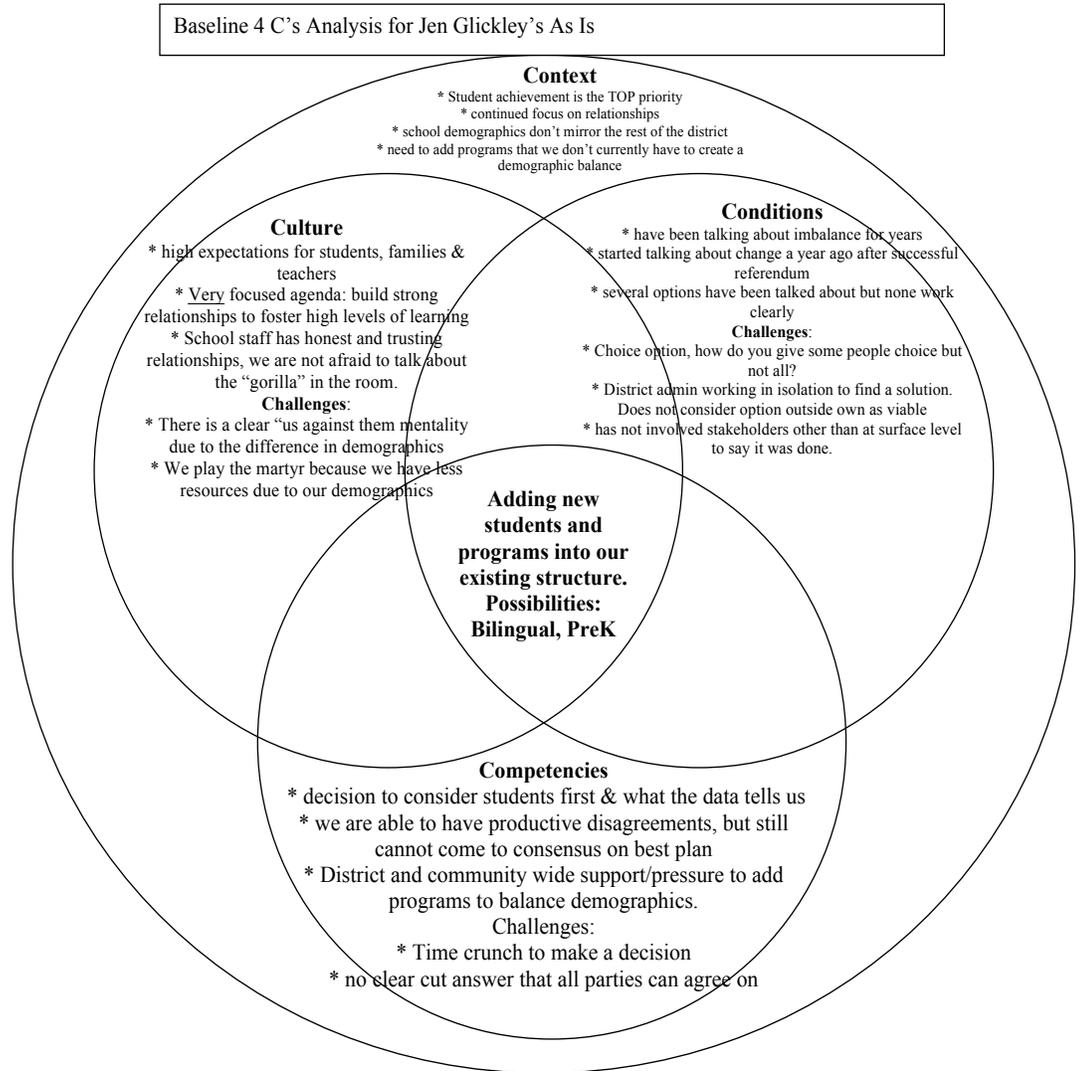
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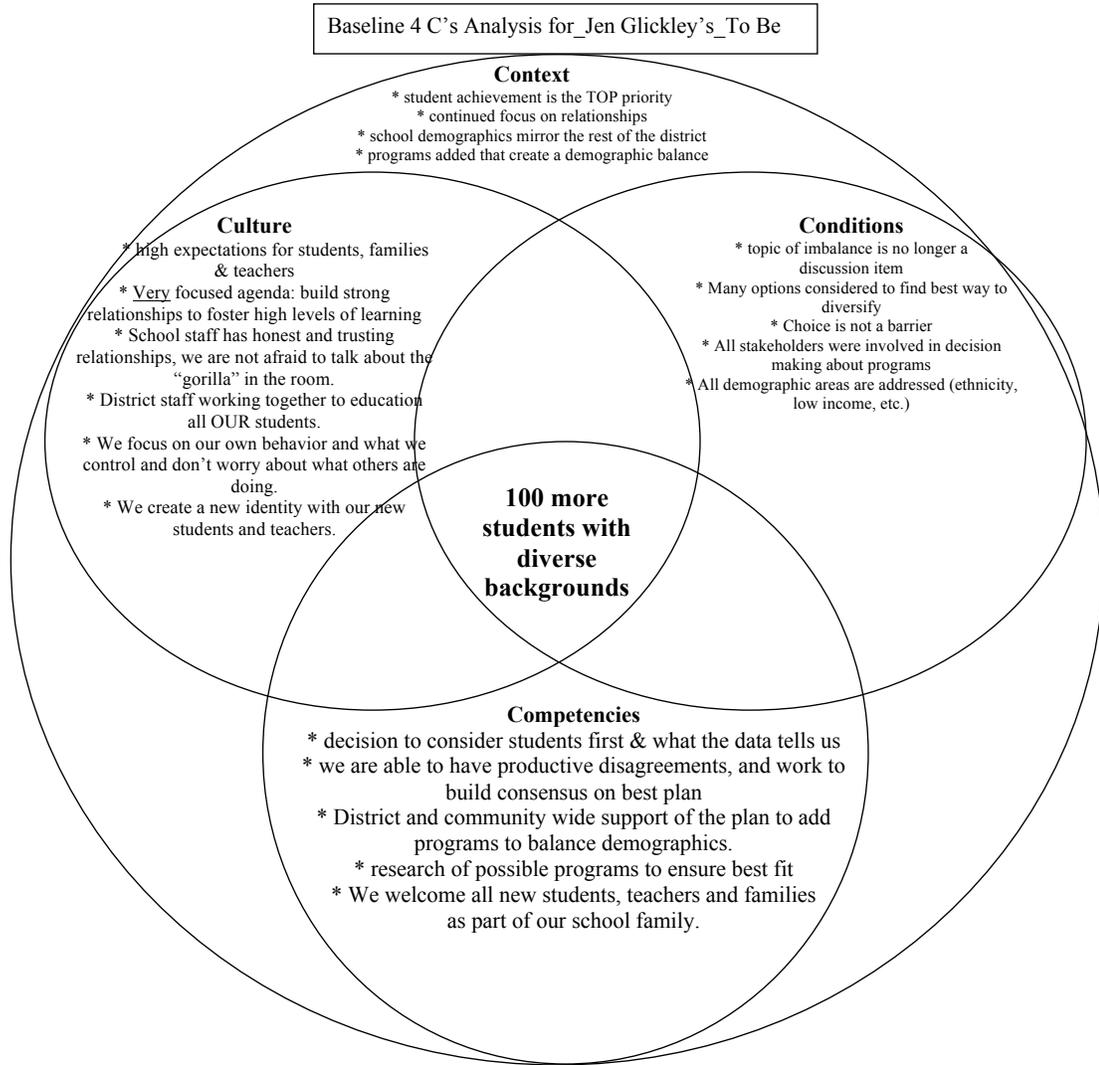
# APPENDIX A

## As – Is



# APPENDIX B

## To – Be



## APPENDIX C

### Strategies and Actions Chart

Strategy	Action
Increase student population and diversity.	<p>Add bilingual classes to our school</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involve bilingual staff in developing program</li> <li>• Communicate program changes to parents</li> </ul>
Help bilingual staff feel a part of the staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have individual, group and staff meetings with bilingual staff</li> <li>• Survey existing and new staff about their wants and needs for creating our “new normal”</li> <li>• Give bilingual staff the opportunity to educate the other teachers about their program and the mandates in the program</li> </ul>
Build strong relationships amongst all staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide opportunities for all staff to get to know each other</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for all staff to align instructional philosophies and practices</li> <li>• Grade level teams include bilingual staff to share information and strategies</li> </ul>
Ensure bilingual families feel a part of the school and understand the morays and folkways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold informational meetings prior to transferring students</li> <li>• Provide mentor families as a “welcome wagon” for new families to provide them with information</li> <li>• Have personal contact with families frequently</li> </ul>
Monitor progress of bilingual program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have frequent bilingual team meetings</li> <li>• Analyze data to measure growth of bilingual students</li> <li>• Provide materials as needed (same as regular classrooms)</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX D

### Teacher Focus Group Questions

What do you currently know about how bilingual classes will be added to our school?

What do you foresee as some things we need to do **prior** to the bilingual program coming to our school both for yourself and the program?

What are some things we'll need to do at the **start of next school year** once the bilingual program is in place for the school?

For bilingual students, teachers and families?

What are your hopes for the addition of this program?

Fears?

## APPENDIX E

### Teacher Interview Questions

What do you currently know about how bilingual classes will be added to our school?

What do you foresee as some things we need to do **prior** to the bilingual program coming to our school both for yourself and the program?

What are some things we'll need to do at the **start of next school year** once the bilingual program is in place for the school?

For bilingual students, teachers and families?

What are your hopes for the addition of this program?

Fears?

APPENDIX F

Parent Survey & Informed Consent – English

Dear District 56 Parent,

We are very happy that your child will be joining us at *Hayner School* for next school year. We work really hard to include our students' families into everything we do at school. We are one big school family! To help you and your child feel comfortable with coming to our school, we want to get your opinions, thoughts and ideas. Please answer the questions below and mail this paper to us in the envelope with included with this letter.

*Check the answers that best match your feelings:*

1. Are you happy your child will be going to *Hayner School* next year?

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure

2. Is your child happy that they will be going to *Hayner School* next year?

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure

3. Is your child getting a good education in the *Great School Distirct* Bilingual Program?

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure

*Please answer the following questions:*

4. What do YOU need as a parent from *Hayner School* to help you feel a part of our school family?

5. What does your CHILD need as a student from *Hayner School* to help them feel a part of our school family?

5. What do you hope your child will learn or do as a student at *Hayner School*?

6. What are you worried about for your child at *Hayner School*?

7. What ideas do you have to help us serve you and your child better as a school?

Thank you for answering these questions to help us make sure your child has a smooth move to *Hayner School*. We look forward to a strong relationship with your child and your family.

Thank you,

Mrs. Glickley  
Principal

Mrs. Moreano  
Assistant Principal

Dear Parent,

Thank you for agreeing to complete this survey and participate in my study. This form outlines the purposes of my study and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant.

I hope to document what you and your child need and want as he/she moves to *Hayner School* in the fall. The information gleaned from this study will assist us in the improvement of our bilingual program, the education of your child and to welcome you and your family to our school.

Please indicate your consent to the following statements:

- I understand the purposes of the study as described above.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and can be discontinued at any time without adverse consequences from anyone involved.
- I understand that my participation consists of the completion of a survey lasting 10-15 minutes.
- I understand that the survey is completed anonymously, but that I may provide my name if I so desire. Only the researcher, Jennifer Glickley, will have access to this data once it is translated.
- I understand that if I feel at risk at any time, or you may feel I'm at risk, we can stop the study and not use my data.
- I understand that the results for this study may be published or otherwise reported to the educational community, but that my identity will in no way be revealed.
- I understand that in the event I have questions or require additional information I may contact the researcher at the following email and phone numbers:

Jennifer Glickley  
[jennifer\\_glickley@yahoo.com](mailto:jennifer_glickley@yahoo.com)  
224-627-6508

If you have any concerns or questions before or during participation that you feel have not been addressed by me, you may contact my primary advisor and Dissertation Chair: Dr. MaryAnn Kahl, PhD, Assistant Professor, National-Louis University. Email address: [Mary.Kahl@nl.edu](mailto:Mary.Kahl@nl.edu) Phone: (414) 577-2658 Ext. 6203

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX G

### Parent Survey Data

Eleven surveys were returned of the 33 that were mailed to the homes of our bilingual students.

Question	Answer	Number of Responses	Percent
1. Are you happy your child will be going to <i>Hayner School</i> next year?	Yes	10	91%
	No	0	-
	Not Sure	1	9%
2. Is your child happy that they will be going to <i>Hayner School</i> next year?	Yes	11	100%
	No	0	-
	Not Sure	0	-
3. Is your child getting a good education in the <i>Great School District Bilingual Program</i> ?	Yes	11	100%
	No	0	-
	Not Sure	0	-

APPENDIX H

Informed Consent – Participant

Dear Teacher,

Thank you for agreeing to participated in my study. This form outlines the purposes of my study and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant.

I hope to document your hopes, fears, wants and needs for a smooth transition of the bilingual program into our school. The information gleaned from this study will assist us in creating a plan for a smooth transition of students, staff and families to our school.

Please indicate your consent to the following statements:

- I understand the purposes of the study as described above.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and can be discontinued at any time without adverse consequences from anyone involved.
- I understand that my participation consists of one focus group meeting that will last no more than 30 minutes which may be audio or video taped.
- I understand that only the researcher, Jennifer Glickley, will have access to the information collected. Data gathered will be secured by the researcher at all times.
- I understand that if I feel at risk at any time, or you may feel I’m at risk, we can stop the study and not use my data.
- I understand that the results for this study may be published or otherwise reported to the educational community, but that my identity will in no way be revealed.
- I understand that in the event I have questions or require additional information I may contact the researcher at the following email and phone numbers:

Jennifer Glickley  
[jennifer\\_glickley@yahoo.com](mailto:jennifer_glickley@yahoo.com)  
 224-627-6508

If you have any concerns or questions before or during participation that you feel have not been addressed by me, you may contact my primary advisor and Dissertation Chair: Dr. MaryAnn Kahl, PhD, Dissertation Chair, National-Louis University. Email address: [Mary.Kahl@nl.edu](mailto:Mary.Kahl@nl.edu) Phone: (262) 749-4408

Participant’s Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher’s Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX I

Informed Consent – Participant Interview

Dear Teacher,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study. This form outlines the purposes of my study and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant.

I hope to document your hopes, fears, wants and needs for a smooth transition of the bilingual program into our school. The information gleaned from this study will assist us in creating a plan for a smooth transition of students, staff and families to our school.

Please indicate your consent to the following statements:

- I understand the purposes of the study as described above.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and can be discontinued at any time without adverse consequences from anyone involved.
- I understand that my participation consists of one interview that will last no more than 30 minutes which may be audio or video taped.
- I understand that only the researcher, Jennifer Glickley, will have access to the information collected. Data gathered will be secured by the researcher at all times.
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Jennifer Glickley  
[jennifer\\_glickley@yahoo.com](mailto:jennifer_glickley@yahoo.com)  
224-627-6508

If you have any concerns or questions before or during participation that you feel have not been addressed by me, you may contact my primary advisor and Dissertation Chair: Dr. MaryAnn Kahl, PhD, Dissertation Chair, National-Louis University. Email address: [Mary.Kahl@nl.edu](mailto:Mary.Kahl@nl.edu) Phone: (262) 749-4408

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Looping is an educational term that refers to the same teacher teaching the same group of students for two consecutive school years, therefore the bilingual teachers will teach the same group of students for two years.