

Using Your Outside Voice:
The Politics of Bilingualism and School Leadership in Southern New Mexico

A case study of the Gadsden Independent School District

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Abstract

Historical considerations of bilingualism and multilingualism in schools have focused primarily on pedagogical questions related to the teaching of the English language in American classrooms. Review of this literature suggests that curricular decisions are impacted by larger political controversies, which necessitate further study of the diverse roles of teachers, leaders, and administrators. Through close analysis of one school district, this paper attempts to outline the various roles a school leader plays when representing a bilingual community, exploring how the actions of different principals and curriculum specialists reflect larger conversations about the link between language and ethnic identity in a diversifying national context.

Key Terminology

Bilingual education, dual language, English immersion, transition model, English Language Learners (ELLs), linguistic minority

Bilingual education: an umbrella term incorporating all manners of teaching students who do not initially demonstrate proficiency in the English language, referring in some cases to the teaching of English, and in other cases to general educative practices targeting multilingual individuals. Some early scholars (1940-1980) use this term to refer more specifically to a curricular model in which a second dominant language is continuously utilized alongside English as a means of delivering academic content. This style of instruction is comparable to the contemporary dual language model.

Dual language model: a curricular model that incorporates content courses taught in both the native language and in English. For more on this, see “The Dual Language Model: A Practical Approach to Bilingual Education” by Eileen Gonzales and Juan Lezama¹ and *The Two-Way*

¹ Eileen Gonzales and Juan Lezama, “The Dual Language Model: A Practical Approach to Bilingual Education,” *TESOL Quarterly* 8:2 (June 1974): 153-160.

Immersion Toolkit compiled by Elizabeth Howard, Julie Sugarman, Marleny Perdomo, and Carolyn Temple Adger.²

English immersion or transition model: a curricular model designed to expand English vocabulary while reducing and ultimately eliminating the presence of the native language.

English Language Learners (ELLs): also categorized as “Limited English Proficient (LEP) individuals.” According to the New Mexico Bilingual Multicultural Education and Title III Programs Technical Assistance Manual,³ the term “English Language Learner” includes any individual:

- (i) who was not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English;
- (ii) who is Native American or Alaska Native, or a native resident of the outlying areas and
 - a. who comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on the individual’s level of English language proficiency; or
 - b. who is migratory, whose native language is a language other than English, and who comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant; and
- (iii) whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the individual

² Elizabeth Howard, Julie Sugarman, et al, *The Two-Way Immersion Toolkit*, (Rhode Island: The Education Alliance at Brown University, 2005).

³ New Mexico Bilingual Multicultural Education and Title III Programs Technical Assistance Manual, Bilingual Multicultural Education Bureau, New Mexico Public Education Department, 2013-2014.

- a. the ability to meet the state's proficiency level of achievement on state assessments
- b. the ability to successfully achieve in classrooms where the language of instruction is English, or
- c. the opportunity to participate fully in society

For the purposes of this paper, I will use "English Language Learner" to refer predominantly to students who fall under categories (i) and (iii). There are several indigenous populations in southern New Mexico, but these children are primarily educated on reservation schools, rather than traditional public institutions, and so fall outside the purview of this study.

Linguistic minority: students who demonstrate native fluency in a language other than English. Some scholars prefer the term "linguistically diverse," explaining that students classified as "linguistic minorities" in a national context often represent a majority population in a local context. For the purpose of this analysis, I am choosing to continue using "linguistic minority," a phrase that best encapsulates the political framework within which I will analyze various schools and programs. While the students I observed were, in fact, representative of a community majority, they are still considered linguistic minorities in the demographic context of the United States. In addition, official materials published by the Gadsden Independent School District refer to students as "linguistic minorities" and "linguistic majorities." For consistency, I have chosen to remain faithful to their terminology.

Historical Review of Cogent Literature on Bilingual Practices (1950-2010)

Academic considerations of bilingual education programs depend largely on analyses of school accountability and "best practices," as well ideological attempts to codify the concept of

“Americanism.” English has long been considered “the language of school.”⁴ National and state exams are administered in English, and, while students designated as English Language Learners (ELLs) are, in some cases, able to complete these requirements in their native language,⁵ many non-classified linguistic minorities still struggle to meet standardized benchmarks.⁶ These disparities have generated extensive debate within the teaching community on “best practices” for language instruction, which are contextualized by broader conversations about bilingual identities. Programs designed to serve bilingual students have historically prompted extensive debate on both a practical *and* a political level. Questions of language acquisition are often conflated with conversations around race, class, immigration, and assimilation, augmenting the influence of politics on the development of classroom pedagogy.⁷ As a result, it is unsurprising that a brief survey of the literature covering the potential risks and payoffs of various bilingual programs reveals deep divisions within the research community. Despite this, several trends become evident, highlighting how public perception of multicultural identities impacts support for bilingual education initiatives.

Critics of dual language programs suggest that a bilingual instructional format introduces inessential challenges that preclude ELLs from developing proficiency in the English language. In particular, analyses of bilingual education programs conducted from the late 1950s through the mid-1970s posited that children learning in a multilingual environment demonstrated “handicaps...in speech development, overall language development, intellectual and educational progress, and emotional stability.”⁸ The handicaps articulated in these reviews included

⁴ Theodore Andersson, “Popular and Elite Bilingualism Reconciled,” *Hispania* 59:3 (September 1976): 497-499.

⁵ “NMSA statute 22-2C-4,” *Participation in Statewide Assessments*, NM Public Education Department.

⁶ Jamal Abedi, “Standardized Achievement Tests and English Language Learners: Psychometrics Issues,” *Educational Assessment* 8: 3 (2002): 231-257.

⁷ Jim Cummings, “The Politics of Paranoia: Reflections on the Bilingual Education Debate,” *Focus on Bilingual Education: Essays in honor of Joshua A. Fishman* 1 (1991): 183-202.

⁸ J. Vernon Jensen, “Effects of Childhood Bilingualism,” *Elementary English* 39:2 (February 1962): 132-143.

instances of “faulty articulation and inappropriate pronunciation,” as well as accounts of bilingual students who, struggling to master the nuances of foreign speech, resorted to cruder forms of communication dependent on physical signs and symbols.⁹ In addition, schools that rejected traditional bilingual transition models were criticized for saddling students with insurmountable social odds, augmenting the emotional strain of schooling through confusing processes of acculturation. According to these critics, bilingual expression served as a means of segregating linguistic minority students from their monolingual English peers by encouraging them to maintain separatist cultural practices outside of the classroom.¹⁰ As a result, encouraging bilingualism was thought to preclude students from establishing connections and feeling “at home” in the American school environment.

Linguists and developmental psychologists from this research era primarily considered the implications of bilingual education programs as they related to the attainment of “pure English.” In other words, critics of dual language methodology approached their research with a preexisting bias toward English as the “language of school,” and much of their work focused on how various pedagogical models might help students to attain an ambiguous linguistic paragon.¹¹ As a result, their studies failed to account for the dialectical diversity inherent in Anglicism as it developed throughout the United States over the course of the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries. While there are many cogent criticisms of these early analyses—including the intrinsic limitations of small data collections and the apparent influence of eugenic language theory¹² on

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ In the introduction to his article “Bilingualism and Separatism,” Joshua Fishman outlines a few examples of this argument, which he then goes on to deconstruct. James Crawford does similar work in his piece, “Language Politics in the U.S.A.: The Paradox of Bilingual Education.”

¹¹ Theodore Andersson, “Popular and Elite Bilingualism Reconciled,” *Hispania* 59:3 (September 1976): 497-499.

¹² I use this phrase to refer to efforts by academics to conceptualize and actualize a perfect form of language, which draws on both historical considerations of etymology and pronunciation and class and race based notions of “right speech.” This practice influenced the development of various bilingual studies, undermining their reliability in a contemporary academic context.

mid-century academics—it is primarily this idea of “true language” that undermines the main thrust of the argument against dual language education programs.

It is important to note that American English does not adhere to a national standard,¹³ nor is a particular dialect, in theory, considered normative by the general populace.¹⁴ Consequently, any studies of bilingual education programs that take the concept of “pure English” at face value are limited by an outdated understanding of what it means to speak the dominant language of the United States. In spite of this, critics of bilingual education have succeeded in augmenting a combined spoken and social stigma associated with “foreign” (non-English) languages. This phenomenon is due, in part, to the influence of the assimilation narrative promoted by Ronald Reagan during his tenure as president in the early 1980s, which argued that bilingualism augments linguistic and cultural separatism among immigrant populations.¹⁵ In North America, the ability to learn English indicates a particular scholastic achievement,¹⁶ signally that an individual is willing to assimilate into U.S. society to the best of his or her ability.¹⁷ By the same token, individuals who fail to become English proficient seem to resist the dominant narrative of immigrant assimilation. In addition, because bilingualism in the southern United States¹⁸ is most often associated with Hispanic communities, questions of language dominance are inextricably bound up in stereotypes related to immigration status, socioeconomic status, and “minority-

¹³ As a comparative example, according to Forgue’s article (cited below) “Britain has a national model to follow in matters of speech.”

¹⁴ Guy Jean Forgue, “The Norm in American English,” *Revue française d’études américaines* 18 (1983): 451-461.

¹⁵ Jim Cummings, “The Politics of Paranoia: Reflections on the Bilingual Education Debate,” *Focus on Bilingual Education: Essays in honor of Joshua A. Fishman* 1 (1991): 183-202.

¹⁶ Susan W. Parker, Luis Rubalcava, and Graciela Teruel, “Schooling Inequality and Language Barriers,” *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 54:1 (October 2005): 71-94.

¹⁷ Tanya Golash-Boza, “Assessing the Advantages of Bilingualism for the Children of Immigrants,” *The International Migration Review* 39:3 (Fall 2005): 721-753.

¹⁸ My research focuses on bilingual English-Spanish communities in the southwestern United States. For this reason, my consideration of stigma is directly related to this particular geographic region. In many ways, the literature I will go on to review in the following paragraphs is broadly applicable to linguistic minorities throughout the United States, regardless of national origin. However, there are specific stigmatizing nuances associated with communities located along the Mexican border, many of which are informed by the politics of immigration and the relationship between the United States and Latin America.

majority relations more broadly conceived.”¹⁹ For these reasons, the development of bilingualism for non-English speakers is often denigrated in favor of linguistic assimilation, which is conceptualized as a social and professional necessity. In comparison, for monolingual, English-speaking members of the upper class, non-Anglican tongues are considered extracurricular assets.²⁰

The unsubstantiated elevation of the English language has had marked effects on the development of school curricula and the direction of state and federal funds. Parents, teachers, and students affiliated with bilingual communities expend substantial energy on the development of pure English, which has been deemed the language of academic and professional success.²¹ Schools that prioritize the attainment of English proficiency over bilingual content-specific knowledge utilize “transition model” programs. As the name would suggest, these programs are inherently transitory, designed to prepare students to enter the “real” (English-dominant) classroom as quickly as possible. While students remain in the program, they are effectively cut off from the rest of the school community. As they are mainstreamed, they progressively lose access to bilingual support staff; they are “transitioned” out of their native language and into monolingual English classrooms. In spite of newer research demonstrating the benefits of alternative pedagogies,²² contemporary policy makers continue to play into the stigma amplified by the “true language” argument.²³ This approach augments the “burden narrative”²⁴ often

¹⁹ Golash-Boza 2005, Joshua A. Fishman, “Bilingualism and Separatism,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 487: Immigration and American Public Policy (September 1986): 169-180.

²⁰ Theodore Andersson, “Popular and Elite Bilingualism Reconciled,” *Hispania* 59:3 (September 1976): 497-499.

²¹ Gary A. Cziko, “The Evaluation of Bilingual Education: From Necessity and Probability to Possibility,” *Educational Researcher* 21: 2, Special Issue on Bilingual Education (March 1992): 10-15.

²² Virginia P. Collier and Wayne P. Thomas, *Educating English Learners for a Transformed World* (Albuquerque: Dual Language Education of New Mexico Fuente Press, 2009), 53.

²³ For more on this, see Joe Levitan’s “Bilingual Students Need Support in Their Native Language,” published in May of 2015.

associated with the teaching of ELLs, who require extra support and can compromise a school's performance on standardized tests.²⁵ This bias also impacts faculty relations; specialty language teachers often hold a lower status in transition model schools, when compared to their colleagues in content-based English classrooms.²⁶ For these reasons, among others, dual language programs have been continuously denigrated as “impractical,” despite the long history of critical research negating separatist theory²⁷ and affirming the life-long benefits of bilingualism.

More recently, researchers have begun to expand their understanding of bilingual education to consider the ways in which language interacts with ethnic identity,²⁸ local culture, and, most importantly, the social stigma discussed above. David López posits that the primary detriment of bilingual education is not any developmental disparity,²⁹ but rather the way in which bilingualism interacts with “extrinsic social forces, such as how others react to and discriminate against” non-English speakers. López suggest that it is “not bilingualism in itself,” but rather “the identity it conveys” that negatively impacts the experiences of ELLs in Chicano neighborhoods (the community under consideration in his particular study).³⁰ López posits that it is the stigma associated with bilingualism that presents the most substantial challenges for English Language Learners in American schools, aligning a cultural affinity for homogeneity with its inevitable social consequences.

²⁴ The “burden narrative” refers to how schools understand and describe bilingual students. This perception arises in part because of the added expense of bilingual programming, as well as the difficulties incurred by federally mandated testing for language acquisition.

²⁵ Maria Estela Brisk, “Toward Multilingual and Multicultural Mainstream Education,” *The Journal of Education* 173:2 (1991): 114-129.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Joshua A. Fishman, “Bilingualism and Separatism,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 487: Immigration and American Public Policy (September 1986): 169-180.

²⁸ Tanya Golash-Boza, “Assessing the Advantages of Bilingualism for the Children of Immigrants,” *The International Migration Review* 39:3 (Fall 2005): 721-753.

²⁹ J. Vernon Jensen, “Effects of Childhood Bilingualism,” *Elementary English* 39:2 (February 1962): 132-143.

³⁰ David E. López, “The Social Consequences of Chicano Home/School Bilingualism,” *Social Problems* 24:2 (December 1976): 234-246.

In order to adequately analyze the benefits and the challenges of bilingual education, it is imperative that researchers escape the limitations López describes. To do this, contemporary research on bilingual education must depart in many ways from 20th century conceptions of the American vernacular, which failed to take into account the linguistic diversity that is part and parcel of spoken English in the contemporary United States. Moving forward, scholars and educators must focus on the assets bilingual students offer to their school communities, rather than lamenting the burdens they are thought to represent.

Research Goals

While support for bilingualism and bilingual identities has grown in the public sphere following Johnson's war on poverty and the civil rights movement of the 1960s,³¹ it is only in the last two decades that linguistic minorities have become vocal representatives in the American public school system. As the literature demonstrates, true progress for bilingual learners requires that leaders in the field actively work to dismantle the various stigmas and biases associated with non-Anglican idioms.³² By acknowledging and promoting bilingual voices, these leaders have the opportunity to dismantle the disadvantages that result from the "variable extrinsic social forces" at play in American schools.³³

In the following pages, I will explore the implications of language dominance in the Gadsden Independent School District (GISD), a mid-sized public school system located in southern New Mexico. I will focus on how leaders in Gadsden are working to re-conceptualize

³¹ Gaynor Cohen, "The Politics of Bilingual Education," *Oxford Review of Education* 10: 2 (1984): 225-241.

³² David L. Leal and Frederick M. Hess, "The Politics of Bilingual Education Expenditures in Urban School Districts," *Social Science Quarterly* 81: 4 (December 2000): 1064-1072.

³³ David E. López, "The Social Consequences of Chicano Home/School Bilingualism," *Social Problems* 24:2 (December 1976): 234-246.

bilingual identities and to incorporate their vision for multilingual teaching and learning into their work as public administrators and community advocates.

It is worth noting up front that the GISD was at the center of a financial controversy in 2008. After conceding to community demands for a new high school in a remote portion of the district, Gadsden schools found themselves approximately \$3.9 million in debt, a shortfall that led to investigations by the state Auditor's Office.³⁴ While the Gadsden audit provides interesting opportunities for further investigation into school finance, for the purposes of this analysis, I plan to focus primarily on long-term leadership decisions and curricular developments, which are disconnected from district budgetary efforts. For this reason, Gadsden's fiscal troubles will not figure heavily in the following pages.

Instead, this analysis will primarily consider the relationship between educational practice and community advocacy, using the GISD as an example of the way in which school leaders, through their administrative and pedagogical decisions, work to elevate the status of bilingual students. The efforts of principals, curriculum developers, and support staff members in the GISD help on a local level to shift the definition of the modern American classroom, moving from a narrative of assimilation toward one of diversity and multilingual inclusion. In this way, their work contributes to national efforts to acknowledge the presence and the needs of linguistic minorities. Close examination of the GISD thus acts as a microcosmic example of more substantial developments in the understanding and promotion of bilingual identities throughout the country.

³⁴ Sun-News Report, "What happened with Gadsden funding shortfall?," *Las Cruces Sun News* (October 2008).

Methodology³⁵

The findings presented in this paper combine secondary reading on bilingual politics and pedagogy with original qualitative research accomplished through personal interviews, on-site observations, and primary source analysis. Before beginning this project, I spent several months reading back issues of the *Alamogordo Daily News* and the *Las Cruces Sun*, which both cover local politics in southern New Mexico. These journalistic sources provided crucial background information on the Gadsden area and helped me to hone my questioning. In addition, these sources helped inform my understanding of how community politics relate to expressions of leadership in the Gadsden Independent School District. Several of these articles are referenced throughout my paper, and links to the full texts can be found under “Works Consulted” in the appendices.

In March of 2016, I spent five days on the Texas-New Mexico border. During that time, I visited the central administrative complex for the Gadsden Independent School District, where I met with curriculum specialists and upper-division administrators. I then interviewed principals at various Gadsden schools, as well as bilingual instruction coaches working throughout the district. I used a combination of cold-calling³⁶ and snowball sampling methodology to identify potential interviewees. I primarily interviewed staff members who self-identified as career educators, and who had served as teachers in Gadsden schools before assuming administrative roles. In one case, I interviewed an administrator who had served in a neighboring school district for 32 years before moving over to the GISD after a brief sabbatical. All interviews were recorded on site and then transcribed. The names of all participants, as well as the schools they

³⁵ See appendices for protocol.

³⁶ Contact information for all employees of the GISD is available on the district website. I began by contacting the central administrative offices and, from there, began calling individual principals publically affiliated with Gadsden schools.

represent, have been changed to protect their anonymity. All geographical descriptions are accurate and truthful. I have retained true monikers for all administrators quoted in public newspapers, as their identities are revealed in published articles that are readily accessible.

In addition to the interviews I conducted on-site in Gadsden, I had the opportunity to speak with several state-level leaders whose expertise in bilingual education helped to frame my understanding of New Mexico state policies. These interviews were conducted by phone; all conversations were recorded and transcribed at a later date. All names have been changed to protect participant anonymity, to the best of my ability.

During my time in southern New Mexico, I conducted observations throughout the Gadsden district, as well as the neighboring town of El Paso, TX. Any maps included in the following analysis are my own (developed through Google Maps), unless otherwise specified, and all descriptions of the area surrounding Gadsden schools are based off of the time I spent exploring different neighborhoods and downtown areas.

In completing this case study, I attempted to recruit a representative sample of educational leaders in southern New Mexico, and to frame their thoughts and stories within the context established by the experiences of state-level actors. While several trends emerged through these conversations, the scope of this project precludes me from drawing any absolute conclusions, as this would require more extensive research than I was able to complete within the limitations of this project. Nevertheless, the information I gleaned over my time in the Gadsden area does gesture toward larger and more complicated questions related to the various responsibilities of a school leader. Ultimately, these conversations can serve as an introduction to topics related to school leadership and bilingual teaching practices that merit further research and exploration.

Playing Baseball in the Land of Enchantment (“Why Gadsden?”)

In April of 2013, the Gadsden Independent School District contacted the New Mexico Activities Association to file an official complaint against a local umpire named Cory Jones. According to reports in the *Las Cruces Sun* and the *Alamogordo Daily News*, Jones, a monolingual English speaker from Alamogordo, NM, overheard a Gadsden High School player speaking Spanish on the baseball field and threatened to eject him from the game. Reporter Teddy Feinberg described the incident in an article a few days later:

“Alamogordo head coach Randy McCloud said the issue began when Jones thought that the Gadsden players were swearing at the Tiger players in Spanish. ‘What we heard was that Cory thought that [Gadsden] was cussing at one of our players in Spanish, or at least degrading them, calling him an idiot or something.’ McCloud said. ‘So he asked them not to [talk in Spanish], and then the Gadsden coach said that he couldn’t ask them to not speak Spanish. Then it escalated from there, but that’s about all we got involved with it.’”³⁷

According to a “GISD Spokesman,” the Panthers were not using any degrading or inappropriate language; rather, the young men were simply “encouraging each other...nothing bad was said.”³⁸ Jones, without any knowledge of the Spanish language, assumed malicious intent, threatening to remove any player overheard speaking Spanish for the rest of the game. This action sparked a heated debate with present sports officials, including a fellow umpire and two high school coaches, all of whom felt that Jones’ actions were both insensitive and inappropriate, particularly

³⁷ Teddy Feinberg, “Gadsden Independent Schools file complaint against Alamogordo umpire,” *Las Cruces Sun News*, April 12, 2013.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

given the demographic breakdown of the region,³⁹ where many students are bilingual and self-identify as Hispanic.⁴⁰

In the days following the controversy, two community representatives—Bobby Campos, the director of athletics for Las Cruces High School, and David Day, a principal from Alamogordo—spoke out as public advocates for the rights of Spanish speakers on and off the baseball field. In an interview with the *Las Cruces Sun*, Campos explained how “the cultures here are so ingrained in the families,” pointing to Gadsden’s proximity to the Mexican border⁴¹ and alluding to the cultural competency required of “anyone who [lives] in this area.”⁴² Striking a similar note, Day categorically condemned Jones’ thoughtlessness, saying, “We’re in the 21st century, we’re on the border, this is the kids’ heritage.”⁴³ In their respective statements, Campos and Day both alluded to one of the central responsibilities that characterizes community leadership in southern New Mexico: the responsibility to give a public voice to the experiences of marginalized communities.

Their reactions to the Jones controversy epitomize how language in the southwestern region of the United States is by nature wrapped up in complicated notions of politicized identity, a phenomenon that impacts how school leaders approach their interactions with members of the surrounding community. Less than a week after the incident, Cory Jones resigned without commentary. By the time he submitted his notice of departure, accounts of the

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ “School Fact Sheets: Enrolment by Ethnicity,” NM Public Education Department (2009-2010), <http://www.ped.state.nm.us/IT/fs/13/09.10.ethnic.pdf>, Accessed May 6, 2016.

⁴¹ More information about how Gadsden’s geographic location impacts the development of a bicultural identity can be found in the section below entitled “Where in the World is the Gadsden Independent School District?: III. *Two Nations.*”

⁴² Teddy Feinberg, “UPDATE: New Mexico ump quits over Gadsden, Alamogordo game no Spanish call,” *Las Cruces Sun*, April 17, 2013.

⁴³ Teddy Feinberg, “UPDATE: Umpire resigns after Spanish-speaking incident with Gadsden High School,” *Alamogordo Daily News*, April 17, 2013.

controversy had already traveled from a local activism and culture forum (“Latino Rebels”)⁴⁴ to national news sites, reaching *The Huffington Post* on April 17, 2013,⁴⁵ just five days after Feinberg first published the story.

If we return to the concepts of stigma and bias outlined by López and his colleagues, we can begin to understand why a local baseball dispute quickly became a symbol of a more extensive ideological struggle taking place along the New Mexico border. In the Gadsden Independent School District, the way you play baseball makes a statement about who you are and where you come from. When Cory Jones targeted a student for speaking Spanish, he did not merely reveal the limits of his own cultural competency—an inexcusable offense for a local, as Day and Campos indicate—he also highlighted the way language is tied up in power, particularly as it affects traditionally disempowered groups, including the immigrant communities situated along the southern border of the United States.

Jones’ discomfort with Spanish, and his assumption that the players must have been insulting or disparaging their rivals, epitomizes how language dominance relates to geographically specific notions of power. Robert Garcia explained Jones’ actions by contextualizing his response within a more extensive cultural paradigm; as he told the *Las Cruces Sun* in the days following the altercation, “people think when someone’s speaking Spanish in front of an Anglo-American that they’re speaking about them.” Garcia’s commentary implies that Jones’ disproportionate reaction underscores a sense of insecurity endemic to the monolingual English community that has, traditionally, held power in North America. Garcia

⁴⁴ “Local New Mexico Baseball Team to file Complaint Against Umpire Who Didn’t Want Players Speaking Spanish.” Latino Rebels. Updated April 12, 2013. <http://www.latinorebels.com/2013/04/12/local-new-mexico-baseball-team-files-complaint-against-umpire-who-didnt-want-players-speaking-spanish>.

⁴⁵ “Corey Jones, New Mexico Umpire Who Allegedly Told Players Not to Speak Spanish, Resigns.” HuffPost Latino Voices. Updated April 17, 2013. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/04/17/new-mexico-spanish-baseball_n_3103782.html.

situates the 2013 controversy within a complex political network that aligns language with historically entrenched concepts of culture, diversity, nationalism, and multi-nationalism. At the same time, he gestures toward a relational nuance that emerges out of a history of social stratification, which encourages those in power to distrust those out of power.

In the following section, we will delve more deeply into the culture and geography surrounding the Gadsden Independent School District, which will help to further clarify how various authority figures—from baseball umpires to principals—become involved in ideological conversations focused on the relationships that develop among language, identity, and advocacy. Throughout, we will explore how the treatment of language and culture in the GISD represents expansive efforts to shift perceptions of linguistic minorities on a local, state, and national (or international) level.

Where in the World is the Gadsden Independent School District?

I. Four Counties

For several decades in the 19th century, the Gadsden Independent School District lay in disputed territory. Gadsden schools primarily serve residents of Doña Ana County, an ambiguous stretch of land owned by Texas and Mexico until the Gadsden Purchase of 1853,⁴⁶ which allowed the United States to gain control of all territory located northwest of the Rio Grande. The deal (and, years later, the school district) was named after South Carolina native James Gadsden, a wealthy entrepreneur who helped to fund the project. Initially, the Gadsden Purchase was designed to provide land to help construct a transcontinental railroad stretching

⁴⁶ Prior to this, in 1851, the U.S. federal government settled yet another long-standing dispute between Texas and New Mexico over the area east of the river by awarding the former \$10,000,000. These funds granted New Mexico control over the territory and officially “established the eastern boundary of New Mexico where it now stands.”

from east to west across the southern half of the United States.⁴⁷ The Purchase officially established the southernmost border of New Mexico,⁴⁸ now the site of Doña Ana (the home of the Gadsden Independent School District) and several neighboring counties in Arizona (see Figure 1). Since the Gadsden Purchase was completed in 1854, the southern border of New Mexico and Arizona has remained relatively stable, though international disputes over the land persisted, particularly as the United States continued to seek more southern territory under President Franklin Pierce.⁴⁹ Later on, the Gadsden Purchase enabled the construction of one part of the I-10 freeway, retroactively fulfilling James Gadsden's original hope for a transnational transportation route.⁵⁰

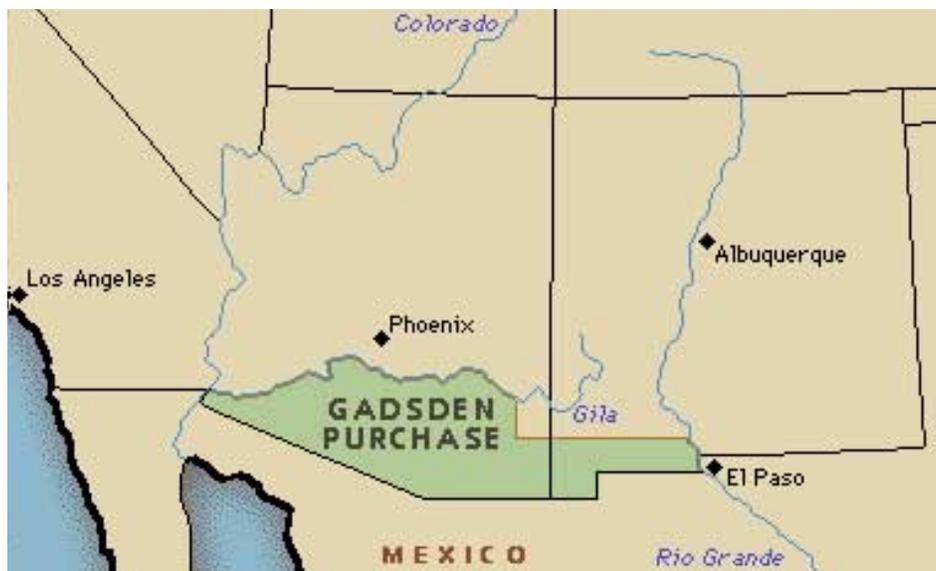


Figure 1: Site of the Gadsden Purchase (1853-1854)⁵¹

⁴⁷ Edith Donaldson, "Gadsden History," Gadsden Independent School District, last modified July 13 2010, accessed March 2016, http://www.gisd.k12.nm.us/site_res_view_template.aspx?id=bb8e9727-c300-444b-a588-0f3d21b598ef.

⁴⁸ "Gadsden Purchase, 1853-1854," Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State, accessed on March 2016, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1830-1860/gadsden-purchase>.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ "Interstate 10," Interstate Guide, last modified June 2 2015, accessed March 2016, <http://www.interstate-guide.com/i-010.html>.

⁵¹ "Gadsden Mesilla," ¡Viva Mesilla!, accessed March 2016, http://www.oldmesilla.org/html/gadsden_purchase.html.

The Gadsden territory of today covers the most southeastern portion of New Mexico, bordering Las Cruces, NM on one side and El Paso, TX on the other (see Figures 2-3). The district spans 1,400 square miles and serves approximately 14,200 students living in the southern half of Doña Ana County.⁵² Driving ten minutes south of the district, you come to the U.S.-Mexico border. Within a matter of miles you can end up in Ciudad Juarez, a town known for its violent crime and rampant drug trade, though the city has been actively working to change this reputation in recent years.⁵³ The Gadsden Independent School District is a geographic go-between, so close to state borders that the nearest shops, restaurants, and businesses are located over in El Paso, which can be reached easily by driving directly east from the main district complex and crossing the state border.

Other than the schools themselves, there are few buildings on the Gadsden side of the county line. Amidst miles of farmland, you might come across residential pockets, which comprise small clusters of identical houses all painted in the same dark brown and muted beige that matches the desert landscape. Some of these communities include new homes built out in the southern sprawl to satisfy increased demand for homes and land. Most, though, are dilapidated



Figure 2: Map of southern New Mexico

⁵² Edith Donaldson, "Gadsden History," Gadsden Independent School District, last modified July 13 2010, accessed March 2016, http://www.gisd.k12.nm.us/site_res_view_template.aspx?id=bb8e9727-c300-444b-a588-0f3d21b598ef.

⁵³ Nick Valencia, "After years of violence and death, 'life is back' in Juarez," *CNN*, April 21, 2015, accessed March 18, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/04/21/americas/mexico-ciudad-juarez-tourism/>.

remnants of abandoned building projects. Near the northern end of the district in Vado, NM, most of the businesses that might at one point have made up the downtown area are closed, though there is still an active cattle ranch and crop production center located just off the highway. Down in Sunland Park, a large cemetery separates the district offices from a nearby middle school, while the closest high school is isolated from downtown El Paso by a dusty road that branches off from James Gadsden's local legacy: the I-10 interstate, which crosses through Doña Ana County on its way from Las Cruces to Texas.

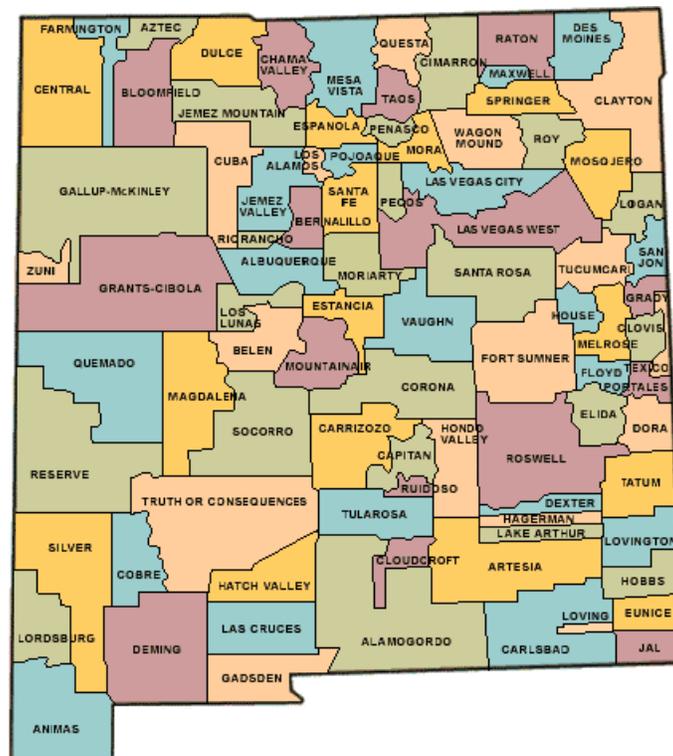


Figure 3: District map of New Mexico⁵⁴

From the central offices, the district extends over the Chaparral in the east and San Miguel in the northwest, each of which are approximately a 40 minute drive away by car. Both of these areas are separated from the rest of the district by long drives down dusty highways that

⁵⁴ "District Web Pages," *NM Public Education*, accessed March 18, 2016, <http://ped.state.nm.us/resources/districtWebsites/index.html>.

cordon off the communities from all but the most basic amenities. In Chaparral, for example, blocks of mobile homes and patched tin roof structures line the edges of S. County Line Drive and Highway 213. There is one local supermarket, a Mom & Pop restaurant, and a few auto-repair shops, but most of the surrounding area is consumed by a large ranch. The median household income is approximately \$23,300 per year,⁵⁵ nearly \$30,000 less than the national median according to the 2014 census. This places Chaparral in the 3rd income percentile in the country.⁵⁶ Despite this, there is a car parked in nearly every driveway, a necessity for the families living in such a removed part of the state.

Four schools serve the children living in the Chaparral area.⁵⁷ These buildings are bunched so close together that they overlap on the district map (see Figure 4), cutting right through the middle of the town and protected by sturdy fences and smiling security guards, who greet parents, children, and visitors while students congregate on one of the large sports fields adjacent to the two high schools or climb over small play structures in a shared elementary school yard. These schools are remarkably similar to those located in other portions of the district; throughout Doña Ana County, land is cheap and available, allowing the

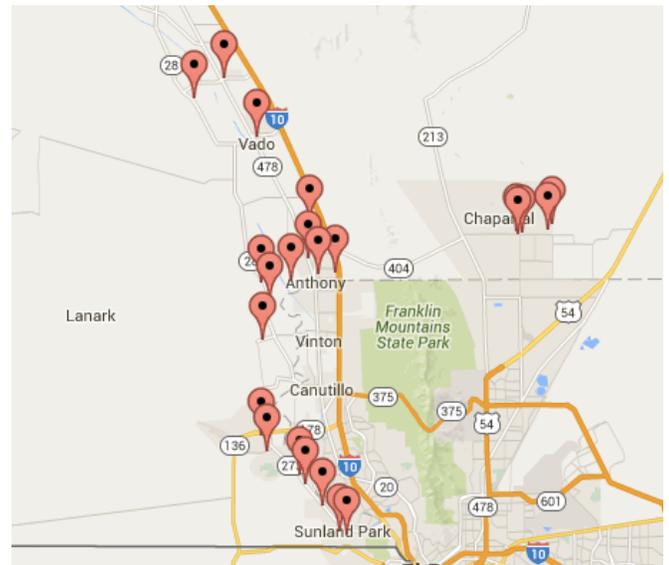


Figure 4: GISD district map⁵⁰

⁵⁵ In the GISD at large, the median family income is only slightly higher, resting at approximately \$26,000 per year according to the most recent data.

⁵⁶ "Doña Ana County NM Information," *NM HomeTownLocator*, accessed March 18, 2016, <http://newmexico.hometownlocator.com/nm/dona-ana/>.

⁵⁷ Originally, students in Chaparral traveled approximately 40 miles round trip to attend their assigned high school in Anthony, NM. In 2004, the district began construction on a new school, allowing Chaparral students to attend a more local high school (Zahira Torres, "3rd time's a winner: Chaparral students to get own high school," *El Paso Times*, March 22, 2004).

schools to take advantage of the surrounding area to develop their sites, which, along with local churches, transform into pseudo-community centers. Gadsden schools boast fresh paint and immaculate hallways. The color of heavily creamed coffee with eggshell blue details, they are easily the most beautiful buildings in the area.

Though the GISD serves relatively few students (we might compare it, for example, to the nearby El Paso Independent School District (EPISD), which serves around 60,000 students across 94 schools, making it the 61st largest district in the United States.⁵⁸), administrators emphasize the challenges that arise from managing a larger geographic area. “I heard once that we’re bigger than Delaware,” says one central office employee, while the superintendent affirms that the district is “bigger than the entire state of Rhode Island.” The district’s unique geography makes it difficult to ensure that the central office is able to provide appropriate transportation services while staying within the established annual budget. The bus depot in Anthony departs vehicles to all corners of Doña Ana County, which, in the southwestern heat, can mean high gas costs and long, dusty trips for students living further away from the county border.⁵⁹

In addition, conducting regular observations in more remote campuses can prove a logistical challenge for the small administrative team,⁶⁰ which is housed nearer to the El Paso side of town, a significant distance away from the Las Cruces border. While upper-level administrators are dedicated to reaching all Gadsden schools as often as possible, this can require extensive drives around the area, and multiple trips through Texas territory to reach schools located further east (see Figure 5). One administrator emphasized the importance of these

⁵⁸ “District Information,” El Paso Independent School District, accessed March 2016, http://www.episd.org/district_info.

⁵⁹ In 2007, the GISD successfully petitioned the New Mexico Department of Education for additional funding to charter three new buses for Chaparral students. According to a brief report in the *Las Cruces Sun News*, the funding resulted from a “Hazardous Walking Condition Request” filed on behalf of rural parents “concerned about the walking routes of their children.”

⁶⁰ District superintendent, personal communication (interview), March 14, 2016.

regular visits by drawing distinctions between different parts of the district, highlighting the “different energy” that one might find in northeastern schools as compared with those located closer to the central administrative offices in the southwest.⁶¹ This dedication, though, means that administrators are often pulled away from their desks, investing personal time and resources to provide support to more removed schools.

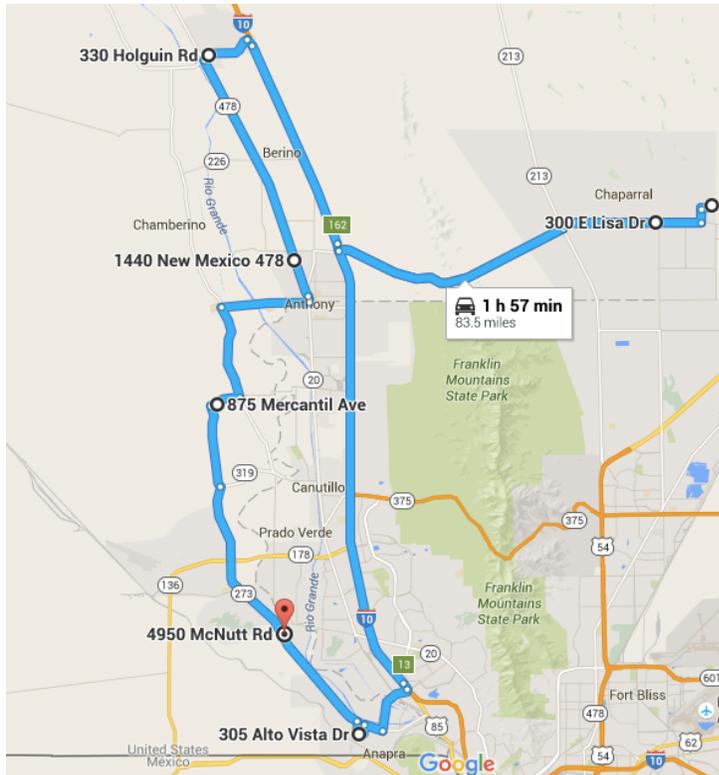


Figure 5: This map represents the path an administrator might take on a series of regular school visits, beginning and ending at the central administrative complex in Sunland Park (marked by the red balloon). To reach the six major towns included in the GISD would take nearly 2 hours by car.

II. *Three States*

Navigating across the Las Cruces-GISD-El Paso borders, it does not often feel as if “three states, four counties, and two nations” are “com[ing] together for the good of the children.”⁶² El Paso natives sneer at Gadsden sports teams, which don’t have the muscle to

⁶¹ GISD bilingual instructional specialist, personal communication (interview), March 14, 2016.

⁶² Edith Donaldson, “Gadsden History,” Gadsden Independent School District, last modified July 13 2010, accessed March 2016, http://www.gisd.k12.nm.us/site_res_view_template.aspx?id=bb8e9727-c300-444b-a588-0f3d21b598ef.

compete with their rivals in Las Cruces to the west. According to locals, it would be silly to even consider any of the New Mexico teams in the same context as their counterparts in Texas, where increased finances and manpower result in regular victories and a thriving football culture, as evidenced by the expansive stadiums dotting western El Paso. At my hotel (which, I must admit, is on the Texas side of the border), the representatives at the front desk compare statistics, outlining the history of the Gadsden-Las Cruces rivalry and distinguishing those matches from the higher profile games in the EPISD.

Sports aside, Gadsden's proximity to El Paso engenders some animosity among faculty and staff members employed by the district, some of whom grew up further north in New Mexico and some of whom moved over after retiring from the Texas public school system. Because it is limited by New Mexico funding and performance standards, the Gadsden school system has trouble competing with its neighbors to the east and west. It is difficult for teachers to find appropriate, accessible housing options, particularly in more remote parts of the district, like San Miguel or Chaparral. As one principal explained, working in Gadsden means either driving 45 minutes or more from Las Cruces each day, or giving up the substantial pay increase that comes with working over the state border in El Paso.⁶³ Entry-level Gadsden teachers earn an average of \$31,372 per academic year.⁶⁴ In comparison, their first-year colleagues working just 15-20 minutes away in El Paso are paid a salary of approximately \$44,940 per year,⁶⁵ more than most experienced educators in the GISD earn annually. This disparity makes it difficult for the GISD to attract and retain top talent, many of whom prefer to work in the larger Texas

⁶³ GISD high school principal, personal communication (interview), March 14, 2016.

⁶⁴ "Salary Schedule 1A CERTIFIED PERSONNEL – 3 TIER." *Gadsden Independent School District*. <http://www.gisd.k12.nm.us/www/gadsden/site/Hosting/Human%20Resources/salaries/certified/SS-1A.pdf>.

⁶⁵ "2015-2016 Teachers, Librarians, and Student Activity Managers," El Paso Independent School District, accessed March 2016, https://www.episd.org/employment/teachers_librarians.php.

district, where they will make more money and be able to introduce their students to specialized programming.

Despite this, several teachers and administrators employed by the GISD, including the current superintendent and several principals, began their careers across the border in Texas. While these leaders bring valuable experience in the education field, and are often highly sought after by GISD hiring teams, some of the staff members who were born and bred in New Mexico emphasize the fact that the two districts are located in different states, which means that they serve different communities and, more significantly, are beholden to different standards and held accountable to different tests. “I have to remind them, you’re working on this side of the line now,” explains David Torres, the head of the District Bilingual Instructional Specialist team. “We don’t have TELPAS; we don’t have STAAR,” he says, listing off a few of Texas’ state-mandated assessments. “Over here, we have PARCC.”⁶⁶ Torres, a former classroom teacher who has been employed by the district for most of his professional life, goes on to explain how, in his experience as a long-time employee of the GISD, he has found that many former Texas teachers and administrators need to refocus their efforts to effectively serve a very different community across the border. In addition to learning new accountability programs, these professional transplants are confronted by new cultural and economic inequalities, many of which present challenges even for experienced career educators.

Other Gadsden administrators echo Torres’ sentiments, expressing deep anguish over the limits imposed on their ability to hire new faculty or to offer advanced coursework to their

⁶⁶ As of the 2014-2015 school year, all students enrolled in New Mexico public schools take the “New Mexico’s Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers” or “PARCC” exam. This assessment replaced the Standards Based Assessment (SBA), and, according to the state department of education, was “developed to measure the full extent to which students are demonstrating mastery of the New Mexico Common Core State Standards” adopted in 2010. It is worth noting that, unlike the New Mexico Public Education Department, the Texas public school system has not adopted Common Core.

students. In spite of this, though, they emphasize that one of the primary benefits of going to school in Gadsden is getting a true sense of “family” in your academic environment. Where students on the other side of the state border are thrown into a large academic pool, the GISD is small enough to retain intimate relationships among students, parents, teachers, and administrators.⁶⁷ This “family feel” is reflected in the way employees interact with one another in the central administrative complex. It is not uncommon for one staff member to leave behind his or her office and linger over at another department; doors tend to stand wide open, and employees mill about the complex throughout the work day.

Above all, employees of the GISD are fiercely dedicated to their work. While many lament the inequities that put their students at a disadvantage compared to their peers in Texas, they choose to see their unique geography as both a challenge and a distinguishing trait that makes this district unlike any other. Administrators sometimes express furtive resentment toward El Paso educators; more often, though, they highlight the intense personal loyalty they feel toward their own community. A collective focus on family and personal relationships at all administrative levels makes this district a particularly intriguing place to explore the boundaries of leadership. Principals and directors in the Gadsden area express a strong sense of responsibility that frames their various actions and initiatives in a wider context, acknowledging the unique position they occupy (literally and metaphorically) as educators in the southwestern United States.

III. Two Nations

As might be expected based on its proximity to the U.S.-Mexico border, the Gadsden Independent School District serves a largely immigrant population. While, in accordance with

⁶⁷ GISD high school principal, personal communication (interview), March 14, 2016.

state and federal law, educators do not dig into the legal status of their students and families (as Torres puts it, “we don’t ask...they’re here, we need to educate them”⁶⁸), the district does track a student’s general migratory pattern, asking parents to identify a country of birth. In the past, the GISD used to serve immigrant students and their families in much higher numbers, but, in recent years, the population has steadied somewhat.⁶⁹ Those I interviewed offered various theories to explain this migratory shift, from increased xenophobia in U.S. politics to the growth of the Mexican middle class.

While Gadsden schools certainly serve fewer *new* immigrants, particularly at the high school level, than they did in the past, it is worth noting that many first or second generation American students present comparable cultural and linguistic challenges when they become part of the New Mexico public school system. As a result, though immigration patterns have shifted noticeably, teachers and administrators in the GISD do not necessarily view their population any differently than in prior years.

Wherever they are born, most, if not all, of the students in the GISD come from Spanish-speaking homes. 97% of the students in the district self-identify as Hispanic, and there are few English monolingual families in the area.⁷⁰ Approximately 60% of the students enrolled in a Gadsden school are designated as English Language Learners (ELL) based on the standards determined by the New Mexico Public Education Department. However, as one principal explains, most students in the district are bilingual, and the ELL statistic does not include those who have been officially exited from the program, but who still require intervention and special

⁶⁸ GISD bilingual instructional specialist, personal communication (interview), March 14, 2016.

⁶⁹ Two bilingual curricular specialists explained that this demographic shift has also necessitated rather drastic reductions in support staff. Though each school in the GISD is still assigned at least one curriculum specialist and several ESL teachers, schools in the past employed a much more extensive team dedicated to enrolled ELLs. In addition to the change in enrollment, it is possible that this development is in part a result of increased professional development opportunities for non-ESL content teachers. For more on this, see “The Gadsden Curricular Model.”

⁷⁰ “School Fact Sheets: Enrolment by Ethnicity,” NM Public Education Department (2009-2010), <http://www.ped.state.nm.us/IT/fs/13/09.10.ethnic.pdf>, Accessed May 6, 2016.

consideration beyond the classroom. “Whether or not they are an official ELL, all the kids here are bilingual,” Torres reminds me.

Mexico is not simply the place across the border from “The Land of Enchantment;”⁷¹ it is a part of the history of the GISD, and, as a result, is a part of the present reality for its educators. The Gadsden community is heavily influenced by the language, customs, and finances associated with surrounding domestic and international communities. For this reason, it is imperative that we understand the actions and commentary of various school leaders within both a cultural and a geographical context, as both are wrapped up in the personal narratives that inevitably impact the political implications of instances of localized leadership.

The Gadsden Curricular Model

While all schools in the GISD enroll bilingual students, they do not all follow the same curricular model. Half of the schools in the district utilize a more traditional transition or immersion program,⁷² an approach Torres terms “archaic” and “subtractive.”⁷³ Within this model, students slowly increase their proficiency in English, “transitioning” away from Spanish entirely. As Torres explains, this approach ultimately requires that students “accept one [language] and reject the other.” Currently, about half of the schools in the GISD, including all five district high schools, continue to use this curriculum, which was in vogue until the early 2000s. The remaining elementary and middle schools have adopted a 50-50 dual language model, where “beginning at kindergarten, 50% of the time, or 50% of the day, or 50% of the week is spent in English, and 50% is in Spanish, but in that 50, literacy and mathematics are

⁷¹ New Mexico’s tagline, this quote appears on all welcome signs posted along the state border.

⁷² More information on these program styles can be found in the “Key Terminology” section.

⁷³ GISD bilingual instructional specialist, personal communication (interview), March 14, 2016.

happening.”⁷⁴ Though Gadsden schools continue to use both instructional formats, curriculum specialists like Torres advocate publically for the dual language approach and hope to incorporate the model into all schools in the GISD in the near future.



Figure 5: This graphic comes from the GISD Bilingual and Multicultural Education Programs website (http://www.gisd.k12.nm.us/group_profile_view.aspx?id=848a9286-bddd-46e0-b4bd-6d5e72a038c1). The image is an artistic rendering of the primary goal of the GISD dual language education program, which aims to help students develop comfort and proficiency in both English and Spanish. The girl in the cartoon stands on a book, implying that her language skills are academically motivated and supported, and she expresses herself with equal ease in the two languages.

Torres and his colleagues have elected to support the dual language model over the transition model for several key, common reasons, which each provide insight into the relationship between curricula and cultural advocacy. First and foremost, supporters of dual language instruction believe that this approach offers students the best chance for academic success. Principals and teachers substantiate this belief through oblique references to various “studies” that have demonstrated the lifelong benefits of bilingualism. By constantly deferring to the concept of “the literature,” these educators implicitly acknowledge that their work will be substantiated by outside forces, including the researchers and statisticians whose findings inform various policy developments. While specialists like Torres are well versed in contemporary pedagogy, principals tend instead to reframe their actions within what we can think of as the “accountability academy” broadly conceptualized: a cryptic collection of researchers and

⁷⁴ Ibid.

politicians who determine which practices are beneficial, and which are detrimental. By constantly asserting that relevant research has proved (a term most academics would themselves hesitate to employ) the benefits of dual language, and of bilingualism more broadly, employees in Gadsden highlight how the idea of public perception undergirds descriptions of pedagogical decisions or initiatives. They thus contextualize their actions within an openly political framework.

The concept of public, research-backed promotion becomes particularly important when we begin to examine how school leaders talk about the dual language model in relation to the more traditional transition model. Beyond the intellectual and developmental advantages of the dual language approach, specialists and school leaders suggest that the model can help students to develop academic proficiency in both English and Spanish, a skill that cannot be attained through colloquial speech.⁷⁵ In their review of the teaching and development of formal English, Anstrom, DiCerbo, Butler, Katz, Millet, and Rivera explain the concept of “academic literacy,” which “sometimes refers to reading and writing, but more often to **the knowledge and skills students need in order to be successful in an academic setting** including speaking, listening, reading, and writing” at an advanced level.⁷⁶ Academic English is often misconstrued as a proxy for the kind of “pure English” associated with professional assimilation. However, at its philosophical core, academic proficiency is more accurately defined as a collection of broad language skills that allow an individual to communicate in different media.

⁷⁵ Louisa Aguirre-Baeze, in her article, “Creating Two-Way Dual Language Schools through Effective Leadership,” epitomizes the distinction between native and academic language development. She describes herself as a “weekend Spanish speaker” who learned the language from grandparents and caregivers, but notes that, as an adult, her “written Spanish is equivalent to that of a delinquent fourth-grade student.”

⁷⁶ Kristina Anstrom, Patricia DiCerbo, et al, *A Review of the Literature on Academic English: Implications for K-12 English Language Learners*, The George Washington University Center for Equity and Excellence in Education (Arlington: 2010): ix.

While the development of academic literacy is ordinarily conceptualized in relation to the attainment of English proficiency for non-native speakers, proponents of the dual language model argue that it is equally important for students to hone these skills in their original language. The dual language model recognizes the distinction between “the knowledge and skills students need in order to be successful in an academic setting” and the speech patterns they acquire naturally through conversations with friends and family members. By delivering content in Spanish, as well as in English, teachers in dual language schools in the Gadsden district help their students to acquire a kind of bilingual dexterity that immersion programs, by focusing solely on the development of English proficiency, fail to achieve. At the same time, by prioritizing the development of academic literacy in Spanish, these programs shift away from the bias inherent in the assumption that English is the “language of school.”⁷⁷ The Spanish language is elevated and placed on par with the vernacular of English, and students are expected to master both idioms on a higher cognitive level.

By promoting the dual language model, school leaders in Gadsden are able to work actively toward dismantling the stigma⁷⁸ and the social divisions that can often emerge in bilingual settings. Acknowledging the academic and professional value of both English and Spanish eliminates the issue of language dominance in the school environment, and, at the same time, helps to ameliorate the class labels that are often conflated with language divisions.⁷⁹ Bilingual students are reconfigured as both social and scholastic insiders, because “all languages are considered viable for socializing as well as learning.”⁸⁰ Stereotypes within the student body

⁷⁷ Theodore Andersson, “Popular and Elite Bilingualism Reconciled,” *Hispania* 59:3 (September 1976): 497-499.

⁷⁸ David E. López, “The Social Consequences of Chicano Home/School Bilingualism,” *Social Problems* 24:2 (December 1976): 234-246.

⁷⁹ Tanya Golash-Boza, “Assessing the Advantages of Bilingualism for the Children of Immigrants,” *The International Migration Review* 39:3 (Fall 2005): 721-753.

⁸⁰ Maria Estela Brisk, “Toward Multilingual and Multicultural Mainstream Education,” *The Journal of Education* 173:2 (1991): 114-129.

are undermined: all children are exposed to both English and Spanish over the course of the academic day, and both languages are used and promoted by members of the faculty. In other words, under a dual language model, both English and Spanish provide vital and acceptable means of communication in both a colloquial family setting and in a formalized educational environment.

Finally, dual language programs help to encourage the professionalization of language instruction. By incorporating dual language education into content classes, schools dismantle the physical and intellectual divisions ordinarily established among ESL and mainstream classes.⁸¹ Bilingualism becomes normalized within the context of the school day, and bilingual educators are implicitly incorporated into the general professional community, which is ordinarily dominated by monolingual content instructors. Under the dual language model, teachers plan and execute curricula in tandem, allowing bilingual educators to interact with their colleagues, rather than remaining isolated within a segregated ESL department. As a result, all employees, regardless of their area of instructional expertise, become “artists of both languages,”⁸² and they work together to continuously utilize both English and Spanish in the content classroom. This helps to elevate the status of bilingual educators and to consider the ways in which content teachers and language specialists might work together to help integrate bilingualism into the everyday structure of the classroom. The GISD bilingual and multicultural education team warns that the dual language approach requires a certain degree of professional collaboration, which can be difficult for teachers who are new to the model. However, through extensive support and professional development, bilingual specialists are able to mediate among classroom instructors on subjects like curriculum planning and lesson execution.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² GISD bilingual instructional specialist, personal communication (interview), March 14, 2016.

The various ways in which school administrators in the GISD work to promote the dual language model—even above the transition programs used in a substantial number of district schools—further reflects on how organizational and curricular decisions are distinctly tied to public perceptions of bilingualism in and beyond the boundaries of the school building.

Bilingual curriculum specialists, in particular, view dual language programs as an opportunity to change how their profession relates to the broad mission of public education. While transition model ESL programs conceptualize bilingualism (and, by extension, bilingual teaching) as an interim state, dual language programs disassemble the distinctions between language and content, integrating language development into every part of the academic day. As a result, proponents of the model view the impact of these programs beyond the classroom: dual language development is not simply a means of instructing English; it is an active attempt to reconfigure the place of multilingualism in the public American classroom.

Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How Bilingual Teaching Happens in the GISD

While Gadsden administrators, and their colleagues across the United States, express firm support for the dual language model, it is worth considering why approximately half of the schools in the GISD continue to utilize transition or English immersion programs. In particular, it is important that we fully explore how the needs of older students differ from those of their younger peers and unpack the various curricular challenges that arise in response to these distinct needs. Though the dual language model is promoted for young children, high school students are often placed into traditional, segregated ESL classrooms. These programs are designed to allow students to complete the myriad subject classes required for graduation while they are

transitioning to monolingual English content classes.⁸³ Whereas elementary schools work to develop academic proficiency in both English and Spanish, high school ESL programs in the GISD focus particularly on preparing students for mainstream coursework as quickly as possible. The pedagogical distinctions evident among primary and secondary bilingual programs suggest that there are more restrictions in place at the high school level, which limit the flexibility of the dual language model.

In part, this disparity arises from the different time pressures affecting students at the high school level, which do not apply to younger children just starting out in the K-12 system. Elementary schools have the ability to reach students early on in their educational careers, when they have the best chance of developing fluency in a new language.⁸⁴ In addition, at the elementary level, all students, including monolingual English speakers, are still working to master academic English.⁸⁵ As a result, every elementary school student is, in a non-categorical sense, an academic “English language learner,” a distinction that makes it easier to design and implement a dual language curriculum at the elementary level.

By high school, the gap between English speaking and non-English-speaking students has widened exponentially. At the high school level, instructors no longer focus on the development of academic proficiency; instead, teachers incorporate academic English directly into their daily lessons. Consequently, in secondary schools, English Language Learners no longer benefit from general cohort instruction in academic English. In addition, the substantial coursework required of high school students precludes the development of an authentic dual language program, which

⁸³ GISD bilingual instructional coaches, personal communication (interview), March 16, 2016.

⁸⁴ Jacqueline S. Johnson and Elissa L. Newport, “Critical period effects in second language learning: The influence of maturational state on the acquisition of English as a second language,” *Cognitive Psychology* 21:1 (January 1989): 60-99.

⁸⁵ Kristina Anstrom, Patricia DiCerbo, et al, *A Review of the Literature on Academic English: Implications for K-12 English Language Learners*, The George Washington University Center for Equity and Excellence in Education (Arlington: 2010)

requires that teachers deliver content in both languages to mixed groups of students. For these reasons, among others, it is difficult for high schools to successfully develop and promote dual language programs.

Instead, Gadsden high schools utilize traditional transition model ESL curricula designed to prepare students to enter mainstream classes. These programs focus on helping students to master the English vernacular while minimizing the time they spend as officially designated English Language Learners. Because the transition model disaggregates language acquisition from content coursework, ELLs at the high school level face considerable logistical pressures. As Mariana Jones, another bilingual instructional specialist who works to support five GISD schools, including one transition model high school, explains, these students need simultaneously “to acquire the language” and, at the same time, to “keep up with content,” which poses a challenge for the advisers tasked with guiding students through their time in the New Mexico public education system.⁸⁶

To graduate from a public high school in New Mexico, students need to complete four English courses that exhibit a “major emphasis on grammar, nonfiction writing, and literature,” as well as four math credits, 3.5 social science credits—including “US History and Geography, World History and Geography, Government, Government and Economics, and 0.5 credit (*sic*) of NM History”—three science credits, one physical education course, one “career cluster course, workplace readiness [course] or a language other than English,” and “7.5 elective units that meet department content and performance standards.”⁸⁷ For students who also require ESL interventions, which can take up multiple course slots, it is essentially impossible to complete

⁸⁶ GISD bilingual instructional coaches, personal communication (interview), March 16, 2016.

⁸⁷ “Graduation Checklist: 2015,” Assessments Demonstrations of Competency, New Mexico Public Education Department (December 2015): 4-6.

these requirements in fewer than five years.⁸⁸ In addition, because New Mexico requires that all students complete at least one course designated as “Honors (H), Advanced Placement (AP), Dual Credit (DC), or Distance Learning (DL),”⁸⁹ many English language learners will enroll in an AP Spanish course, using yet another class opening on native language development rather than fulfilling an additional content requirement.⁹⁰ Whereas, in elementary and middle school, students are still able “to acquire language as they are acquiring the content,”⁹¹ the rigor of the high school curriculum makes it far more difficult for ELLs to stay on track with their monolingual English peers.

In Gadsden, all of these scheduling difficulties have been augmented by a recent shift from a block schedule, in which students enrolled in fewer courses that each lasted one semester, to a 7-course structure. Under this new plan, students enroll in courses for an entire year, a practice that particularly affects ELLs looking to move through language intervention programming as quickly as possible. Whereas, in the past, a student might have been able to pass into a less intensive ESL level halfway through the school year, the 7-course schedule locks students into the same academic plan for two full semesters, extending the amount of time an individual might spend in the transition program.⁹²

The intense academic pressures placed on students in high school are matched by high stakes examinations at the institutional level. Each administrator I interviewed highlighted the difficulties of trying to simultaneously integrate students into their school environment while

⁸⁸ The difficulties these students face are also augmented by the limitations imposed on transfer credits. For “newcomer students” who immigrate to the United States in high school, literature and social science coursework completed in their country of origin cannot be applied toward graduation from a NM public school. Some math and science credits may be transferred, but students are often required to retake their various history and English courses once they enroll in a GISD institution. In these cases, it can take students even longer to earn a diploma.

⁸⁹ “Graduation Checklist: 2015,” Assessments Demonstrations of Competency, New Mexico Public Education Department (December 2015): 4-6.

⁹⁰ GISD bilingual instructional coaches, personal communication (interview), March 16, 2016.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

preparing them to perform well on a slew of standardized tests that require proficiency in academic English. For this reason, high schools in Gadsden focus on rapid English language development, attempting to incorporate reading and writing skills without compromising the development of the listening and speaking abilities that students need to succeed in their monolingual English content courses.

In order to ease this transition, and to accommodate somewhat for the drawbacks of the model (as described earlier⁹³), the GISD focuses heavily on professional development efforts. One of the primary responsibilities of the bilingual instructional specialist concerns bridging the space between teacher and student, ensuring that both parties have the support and the information they need to provide appropriate instruction that does not sacrifice rigor for the sake of specialization. Jones, Torres, and their colleague, Analise Miller, each highlight the importance of teacher awareness. For example, Jones and Miller discuss a new initiative that provides content teachers with a full roster identifying bilingual students inside and outside of the ESL program. These rosters help teachers to specifically target students who might otherwise “become little wallflowers,” providing them with extra support or attention as needed.⁹⁴ Jones describes the importance of “keep[ing] teachers aware of who is in the classroom,” particularly once students officially complete their ESL intervention requirements.⁹⁵ This ensures that teachers are able to diversify their instruction to properly serve the students in their classroom.

Beyond identification, successful bilingual programs provide educators with the proper training and support to target linguistic minorities under any curricular model. In 2008, the GISD adopted a new pilot program that allowed certified teachers to receive additional training

⁹³ See “The Gadsden Curricular Model.”

⁹⁴ GISD bilingual instructional coaches, personal communication (interview), March 16, 2016.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

and professional development at the Eastern New Mexico State University. Through this program, secondary school content teachers were able to earn their certification for the Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)⁹⁶ on the district's dime.⁹⁷ This program is still in use today and continues to support additional training for instructors throughout the district, including those employed in one of the five district high schools. The program has helped to ensure that all teachers are not only aware of bilingual students, but are also prepared to teach them.

Beyond offering support for teachers, the TESOL endorsement initiative implicitly reinforced rights for bilingual students in the Gadsden area. Promoting TESOL endorsement for content teachers actualized Jones and Miller's emphasis on "bringing awareness [of bilingual issues] to teachers" and helping them to understand their classroom through "the lens of language."⁹⁸ Just as the dual language model elevates the status of the Spanish language and ensures that all students, regardless of their language dominance, are being adequately supported by teachers who are trained specifically to service their needs, district-wide TESOL training recognizes that language might impact a student's experience beyond the ESL classroom. In this way, the program highlighted the importance of preparing all teachers, regardless of their discipline, to adequately serve the large numbers of English Language Learners enrolled in the GISD.⁹⁹ In addition, the program helped to mitigate some of the staffing concerns plaguing Gadsden schools by offering underprepared but enthusiastic teachers the opportunity to better understand the specific needs of their population.

⁹⁶ More information on TESOL endorsement can be found at <http://www.tesol.org/>.

⁹⁷ Aileen B. Flores, "Teachers learn new bilingual techniques," *El Paso Times*, December 17, 2008.

⁹⁸ GISD bilingual instructional coaches, personal communication (interview), March 16, 2016.

⁹⁹ Approximately 60% of the students in the GISD are identified as ELLs. Many others who do not qualify for ESL programming are unofficially incorporated into the support models in use in various district schools. In 2008, approximately 1/3 of the district's bilingual students were enrolled in high schools. While this number has decreased over the last five years, teachers continue to face many challenges in content classes related to language development and implementation.

The TESOL initiative is one example of the way in which district level staff members have continually worked to serve all linguistic minorities enrolled in Gadsden schools, regardless of their age or classification. While high school ELLs, in particular, pose substantial challenges to counselors and teaching teams, specialists at work throughout the Gadsden area expend continuous effort to serve these students inside and outside of the ESL classroom. In the GISD, every teacher, every staff member, and every administrator is required to think critically about the needs of their particular student population. In the following section, I will further discuss the role of the bilingual instructional specialist as it relates to providing support for further professional development. In addition, I will explore how instructional specialists help to integrate bilingual education and mainstream education at various levels, continually upholding the ideological underpinnings of both the TESOL endorsement program of 2008 and the dual language movement more generally.

Selling Bilingualism to Parents, Teachers, and Communities

Galvanizing support for bilingual teaching requires that school leaders in the GISD target three distinct communities: parents, educators, and public representatives at various levels. In each case, promotion of bilingual pedagogy is explicitly tied to the reevaluation of the Spanish language as an academic asset, rather than an educative burden. School leaders in the GISD attempt to translate research on bilingualism in the classroom into tangible, approachable concepts that simultaneously uphold the value of the bilingual student and work to support innovative and rigorous instructional practices.

First and foremost, the district bilingual instructional specialists are responsible for supporting teachers through professional development workshops, one-on-one trainings, and

standards and assessments evaluation. Miller says that she uses her meetings with teachers to make sense of the newest research, and to make innovative tactics feel both “relevant and personal.”¹⁰⁰ While educational research can, on its own, help to guide practice, it is up to the specialist to directly translate academic developments into practical and applicable information. Miller explains it in the following way: “teachers hear all these words, but they’re still left with, ‘ok what do *I* do, what does [this strategy] look like in my classroom?’”¹⁰¹ For this reason, specialists will often model various practices directly, demonstrating what they mean by pedagogical buzzwords like “rigor” and “critical thinking.” Trainings are heavily interactive and draw on the specialists’ own backgrounds as classroom teachers, a tactic that helps to sidestep the power structures ordinarily at play in professional development settings.

Usually, the administrator in charge of the workshop focuses first on building relationships with attendant staff members. Once these personal connections are established, the group as a whole will turn its attention to what Jones and Miller term “relevance,” considering how different concepts, questions, and topics might play out in a Gadsden classroom. Finally, the curriculum specialist will solidify the concept of rigorous teaching, helping educators to articulate expectations for themselves and their students. This tiered structure, in which rigor is built on relevance and relationships, models the same approach teachers themselves employ to engage students in coursework. Successful content delivery, Miller explains, depends on making information simultaneously stimulating, significant, and accessible.

GISD staff members emphasize that they try to avoid imposing distinct teaching styles onto educators. Instead, the team focuses on identifying in-use strategies that can help target the

¹⁰⁰ GISD bilingual instructional coaches, personal communication (interview), March 16, 2016.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

needs of linguistic minorities. Because Gadsden schools serve large numbers of ELLs,¹⁰² many teachers have already developed successful means of engaging children from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Rather than “talk[ing] down to or at” teachers, instructional specialists work hard to show how their work fits in to the larger research framework affecting the development of content standards and state mandated language assessments. GISD instructional specialists epitomize the “constructivist” leadership style Aguirre-Baeza outlines in her analysis of dual language school development, wherein administrators “see values, experiences, and prior knowledge as tools for new learning.”¹⁰³ Aguirre-Baez’s idea of constructivist leadership can be applied to bilingual education infrastructure more broadly: programs (and, by extension, leaders) that expressly incorporate the assets that students and teachers bring with them into the classroom re-conceptualize home-based knowledge as a curricular advantage, honoring the experiences of bilingual children and professionals. In the same way, instead of asking students to “check their language and culture at the door,” teachers welcome the ideas and skills developed in Spanish-dominant spaces.¹⁰⁴ Instead of re-teaching language or re-fashioning pedagogy, the bilingual instructional teams in Gadsden consciously utilize the skills of the people in the room to develop appropriate programming.

Professional development, as a result, becomes a process of “sitting back and reflecting” on the particular challenges of the district.¹⁰⁵ Rather than actively “selling” the bilingual model to educators, specialists acknowledge that many teachers already unofficially incorporate bilingual pedagogies into their classrooms. Consequently, they focus on bolstering the efforts of teachers on the ground floor, serving as “translators” who are able to draw on both practical and

¹⁰² See “Where in the World is the Gadsden Independent School District: Two Nations”

¹⁰³ Louisa Aguirre-Baeza, “Creating Two-Way Dual Language Schools through Effective Leadership,” *Educational Horizons* 79: 4 (2001): 167-170.

¹⁰⁴ GISD high school principal, personal communication (interview), March 14, 2016.

¹⁰⁵ GISD bilingual instructional coaches, personal communication (interview), March 16, 2016.

theoretical knowledge to augment the effectiveness of the various bilingual programs used throughout the district.

Over the past year, the GISD has augmented its professional development offerings, based on this teacher-first approach, moving toward extensive workshops that include theoretical studies alongside practical discussions about the nuanced application of pedagogy. These workshops represent a key component of the myriad ways in which Gadsden administrators work to support teachers in their communities, especially those who are not as well versed in specialized classroom structures.¹⁰⁶ However, professional development is only a small part of the work performed by the district bilingual specialists, who serve as an essential link among teachers, families, and students.

In addition to supporting educators, specialists are responsible for communicating with parents. Many parents in the GISD are monolingual Spanish speakers, and some initially demonstrate substantial anxiety about innovative instructional models, including the dual language curriculum. Torres, Jones, Miller, and several principals all acknowledge that it can be difficult for non-English speaking parents to trust in the dual language model, which can pose challenges for students in their early elementary years. Jones identifies a unique sense of “urgency” among immigrant parents in particular, who want their children to acquire English as quickly as possible, assuming that they will continue to develop their Spanish language skills at home. In addition, according to Miller, some parents who have “struggled [with language]...don’t want their children to struggle.”¹⁰⁷ These parents are discomfited by the challenges associated with a dual language approach, wherein students are asked to simultaneously develop new language skills in English *and* continuously enhance academic

¹⁰⁶ See “The Gadsden Curricular Model.”

¹⁰⁷ GISD bilingual instructional coaches, personal communication (interview), March 16, 2016.

proficiency in their native language. In contrast, the traditional transition model feels practical and familiar, as it plays into the dominant narrative of assimilation that many parents have themselves experienced as monolingual Spanish-speaking adults.

Recognizing these concerns, GISD representatives focus on engaging parents in the different curricular models and explicitly asking for their trust and fidelity. Administrators at various levels, from the school instructional specialist to the principal him or herself, will often sit down with parents to explain the benefits of the dual language model, and, in particular, to emphasize the importance of developing academic proficiency in both English and Spanish.¹⁰⁸ These meetings are designed, once again, to highlight the benefits of general bilingualism and to help more wary parents begin to view their native language as an asset, rather than a burden, for their children. The district also asks that parents who choose to enroll their children in dual language programs sign a contract with the school, agreeing to work within the program for a minimum of four years. Principals and specialists alike emphasize that, regardless of which curriculum is in place, fidelity to the educative model can help ensure student success. Signing an educational contract requires a well-founded leap of faith, and yet, every year, more parents take the plunge, a phenomenon that demonstrates the impact of personal interactions between administrators and families. Despite some initial reservations, response to the program has been overwhelmingly positive.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ The success of these personal conversations is undoubtedly due in part to the general focus on community engagement spearheaded by Gadsden administrators. In addition to serving as school leaders, several principals in the district organize services for parents and families, which range from adult ESL classes to bringing in local spiritual leaders for talks and events. One principal in particular, Alexandra Reynolds, has coordinated an extensive outreach program that connects her parents to different community representatives and provides them with access to the mental health services and domestic abuse counseling ordinarily unavailable in more rural areas. In addition, Reynolds provides each parent with her personal cell phone number and is constantly on call for questions and conferences. While her efforts might be considered extreme by outsiders, the dedication she demonstrates to her families helps to ensure that parents are comfortable coming to her with concerns and, ultimately, that they put real stock in her recommendations.

¹⁰⁹ GISD bilingual instructional specialist, personal communication (interview), March 14, 2016.

To successfully implement bilingual programming, a school district must garner support from all parties involved, including the teachers, administrators, and parents collectively working for student success. In the GISD, curriculum specialists act as mediators among these different groups, helping to reframe ESL education within the mainstream public school environment. Rather than capitulating to the stereotypes placed on bilingual students, the adults affiliated with Gadsden schools think in both practical and philosophical terms about how to serve a nuanced bilingual community within a particular social structure. While we might initially think in simplistic terms about “school leaders,” limiting our definition to principals, assistant principals, and superintendents, further examination of some of the most important relationships in the district reveals how curriculum specialists also fit under this category. Alongside principals, these men and women are responsible not only for providing a particular form of instructional support, but also for developing school cultures that value the voices and experiences of linguistically marginalized students.

Conclusions: Placing Gadsden in a National Context

“It’s not that we don’t have the research...it’s just that there’s not the political will. Everyone wants a silver bullet, but it’s a long, hard process.”

~ Director of Bilingual and Multicultural Education, New Mexico Public Education Department

Unlike many of their peers throughout the United States, teachers and administrators in the GISD work within a bilingual educational framework that is explicitly supported in state infrastructure. While the state constitution does not expressly identify a legal language, New Mexico has historically exhibited official support for both English and Spanish. For example,

the state constitution provides provisions that uphold the voting rights of non-English speakers, including laws affirming that “constitutional changes must be printed...in Spanish and English,” as must “sample ballots, official ballots, primary election proclamations, information about registration and voting, [and] voter registration certificates.”¹¹⁰ New Mexico’s State Department of Education also sets aside specific funding for bilingual programs, like those in use in Gadsden schools.¹¹¹

In 2008, the Board of Education for the Gadsden Independent School District was named the “Board of Education of the Year,” a prestigious honor awarded by the New Mexico School Boards Association. An article in the *Las Cruces Sun* highlighted the board’s “exemplary work of establishing credibility with the community,” alluding to an ambiguous set of “tough issues,” including the recent budgetary scandal, that were “professionally and cohesively...resolved” by board members.¹¹² Six years later, in 2014, the Governor of New Mexico published an opinion editorial in the same paper lauding local teachers and administrators for overcoming “virtually impossible hurdles,” including poverty, overcrowding, and linguistic diversity.¹¹³ Though these articles commended the efforts of Gadsden educators, they each continued to use rhetoric that implicitly identified bilingualism as a deficit to be overcome by talented teachers and figureheads, a standard expressly rejected by the curricular models promoted throughout the district. Governor Martinez’s article raises questions about how Gadsden schools have rallied around the charge “to no longer accept mediocrity or failure in our schools, to no longer make excuses for why our kids cannot achieve, and to no longer follow the status quo because it’s

¹¹⁰ Deborah Baker, “Spanish not ‘enshrined as official N.M. language,” *Albuquerque Journal* (June 2013).

¹¹¹ Icela Pelayo Cervantes, Elisabeth Valenzuela, et al, “New Mexico Bilingual Multicultural Education and Title III Programs, Technical Assistance Manual 2013-2014,” Bilingual Multicultural Education Bureau, New Mexico Public Education Department: 5-6, 20-24.

¹¹² GISD, “Gadsden Independent School District named Board of Education of the Year by New Mexico School Boards Association,” *Las Cruces Sun News*, December 9, 2008.

¹¹³ Susana Martinez, “Gadsden schools deserve to be honored,” *Las Cruces Sun News*, August 3, 2014.

comfortable and familiar.”¹¹⁴ Martinez’s praise suggests that the GISD is doing something noteworthy, or, at the very least, something different that merits special attention even within a state with historical and structural support for bilingual programming.

While New Mexico is often thought of as a “bilingual state,” it is important to consider why Gadsden might be considered a revolutionary district on both a state and a national level. Though Spanish is incorporated directly into New Mexico’s various electoral materials, the state is still part and parcel of “an education system built on monolingual English priorities.”¹¹⁵ As Andrew Harris, the director of the non-profit organization “Dual Language Education of New Mexico, and a former career teacher, puts it, “you measure what you treasure.” Schools throughout New Mexico, and throughout the United States, primarily measure English proficiency, reflecting the persistent dominance of social and academic monolingualism. Even in expressly bilingual environments, like southern New Mexico, language is usually celebrated in an Anglican context: successful schools “overcome the odds” to graduate English-proficient students. High-profile reactions to the work of Gadsden’s school leaders once again highlights the importance of reconfiguring the place of non-Anglican languages in the United States in and beyond the public school system.

Like their peers across the country, Gadsden schools expend considerable effort arming students with listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in academic English. However, the way in which teachers and administrators go about developing English language skills “build[s] on the capital kids bring with them from their families,” incorporating language and culture into the fabric of the bilingual classroom.¹¹⁶ While many of these efforts are still informal, the work

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ GISD bilingual instructional specialist, personal communication (interview), March 14, 2016.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

of leaders in districts like Gadsden is helping to bolster more official efforts to recognize bilingualism as an academic and professional asset.

For example, New Mexico recently adopted a state seal of bilingualism and biliteracy (see Figure 6),¹¹⁷ which allows students to earn a tangible certificate after completing an ESL program. The seal officially recognizes the logistical difficulties involved in completing ESL coursework at the high school level (see “The Gadsden Curricular Model”), translating the asset-inspired language utilized by bilingual instructional specialists into an actual reward that can be earned and, more importantly, recognized by outsiders. The seal, which is being implemented in various states across the country,¹¹⁸ provides an official commendation, awarded by the school



Figure 6: New Mexico State Seal of Biliteracy

district, for students who exhibit academic proficiency in multiple idioms, publically announcing bilingualism as a public asset. It is precisely this kind of effort that actualizes the philosophical implications of the various curricular decisions made on the local level in communities like Gadsden.

The GISD experiences its own unique challenges, from unconventional geography to transnational and inter-state competition. While these nuances certainly impact the actions taken by leaders in this particular region, what is more important to consider, ultimately, is how examples of school leadership figure into larger conversations about the relationships that emerge among language, culture, and status in the United States. By virtue of their educative missions, school districts are uniquely positioned to shift contemporary academic and political

¹¹⁷ “New Mexico Seal of Biliteracy,” Seal of Biliteracy, <http://sealofbiliteracy.org/new-mexico>, Accessed April 25, 2016.

¹¹⁸ Seal of Biliteracy, <http://sealofbiliteracy.org/>, Accessed April 25, 2016.

conversations. The case of the GISD suggests that, with strong pedagogy and right-minded priorities, school leaders are able to translate decisions made on the local level into larger ideological developments that will help to reconfigure the status of bilingual and multicultural identities in the United States. As a result, these leaders can help to change the definition of the “American vernacular” itself.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research and Development

The case of the Gadsden Independent School District provides crucial insight into emergent trends in the practice and politics of bilingual education in the southwestern United States. The efforts of school and curriculum leaders in this district epitomize how the work done in schools translates into broader forms of advocacy that might inform (1) future areas of academic interest in the field of bilingual education and (2) policy developments that will actualize these intellectual developments on a national scale.

While there is substantial research on bilingual pedagogy for elementary and middle school instructors, further work remains to be done on the teaching of bilingual students at the high school level. Recently, Dual Language Education of New Mexico (a non-profit organization dedicated to “serving the professional and informational needs of New Mexican communities who wish to develop, refine and/or implement dual language education programs”) has begun to publish support materials expressly designed for secondary school teachers.¹¹⁹ In addition, researchers over the last decade have begun to turn more attention to the unique needs

¹¹⁹ “Who We Are,” DLENM, accessed April 28, 2016, <http://www.dlenm.org/>.

of high school language learners. However, more work remains to be done in this area, especially as the demographics of the American high school continue to shift.¹²⁰

In addition, the research explored in this study relates directly to bilingual education, and does not investigate the substantial challenges that arise in multilingual contexts. While New Mexico does serve several indigenous communities, each of which express unique linguistic needs, language education in this state primarily focuses on English-Spanish programs. As a result, the models at work in this district are not necessarily replicable in areas serving multilingual populations. The dual language model, specifically, cannot adequately develop three or more languages in a single academic setting. Projects investigating the nuances of school leadership in multilingual communities might provide crucial insight into which trends and tactics can be transplanted into more complex cultural and sociological contexts.

However, there are some programs that can and should be directly implemented in districts throughout the United States, regardless of their demographic differences. Gadsden's 2008 TESOL certification program helped to provide teachers not only with specific pedagogical techniques, but also with a broad understanding of the challenges faced by English Language Learners. This kind of training does not merely service the bilingual or ESL educator; TESOL endorsement programs can also help equip monolingual content teachers with the cultural understanding that will help them to reach all students, regardless of linguistic background. TESOL endorsement programs might prove especially helpful in multilingual environments, where instructors are asked to contend with multiple languages and cultures in one classroom. By incorporating TESOL endorsement into existent teacher certification programs, we can better

¹²⁰ Of course, any research dealing with bilingual education at the high school level must continuously contend with the pressures of high stakes assessments, strict course requirements, and the shortage of qualified secondary classroom teachers. These factors all complicate the development of bilingual programs for secondary school students, as compared with their elementary peers.

prepare new generations of educators to serve a diversifying national populace. At the same time, requiring all teachers to complete some form of bilingual training continually reinforces support for ELLs on an administrative level, highlighting the importance of investing literally in the experiences of linguistic minorities. Similarly, continuing efforts to implement an official seal of bilingualism and biliteracy across the country (see Figure 7) will help to provide public acknowledgment for the accomplishments of bilingual students, celebrating their skills beyond the boundaries of the ESL classroom.

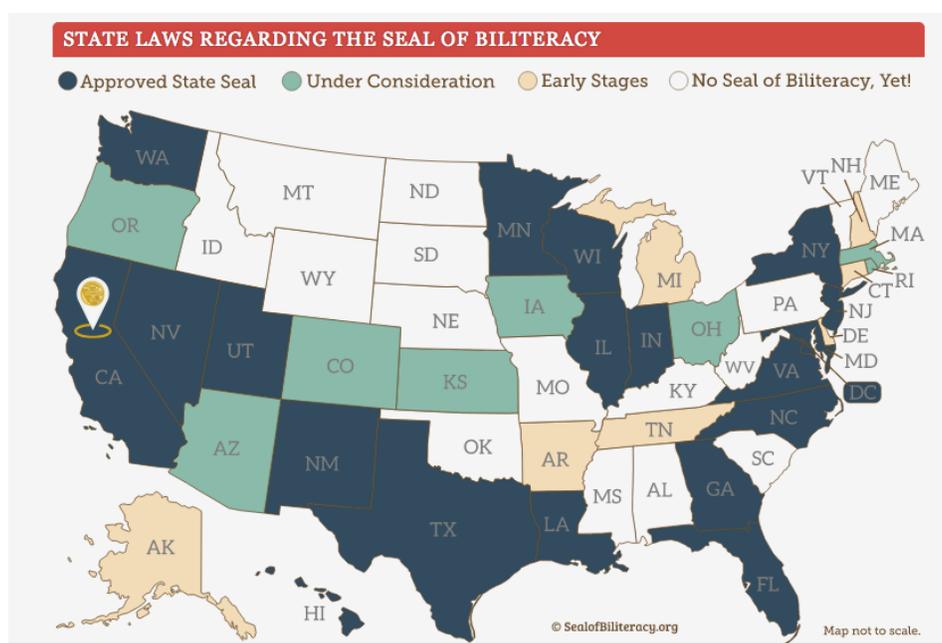


Figure 7: Map depicting the growing national implementation of the Seal of Biliteracy¹²¹

Most importantly, the success of administrators in the GISD, and the way in which the district, despite its shortcomings, has been lauded by the New Mexico State Department of Education, suggests that true progress for linguistic minorities in American schools requires the direct input of leaders on the ground floor. Incorporating the experiences of teachers, principals, and specialists into conversations about bilingual education policy will ensure that the personal

¹²¹ Seal of Biliteracy, <http://sealofbiliteracy.org/>, Accessed May 6, 2016.

needs of these students are given a public voice. By empowering the voices of local educators, we can begin to empower the voices of bilingual students themselves. Through these academic, intellectual, and political developments, education researchers and practitioners can work to augment the cultural value of linguistic diversity, asserting bilingualism as a cogent and commendable feature of the contemporary United States.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Before the interview commences, please complete the following information:

SCHOOL NAME:

PRINCIPAL NAME:

INTERVIEWER NAME:

DATE OF INTERVIEW:

TIME INTERVIEW BEGAN:

TIME ENDED:

At the start of the interview, obtain the following information:

- 1) Verify your contact information:

NAME:

EMAIL:

PHONE NUMBER:

- 2) How long have you been employed by the Gadsden Independent School District?
- 3) Please describe your career path prior to beginning as a principal.

During the interview, be sure to ask the following questions. Feel free to include other questions as the conversation allows.

- 1) Can you tell me a little bit about your school?
- 2) When you first started as a principal, what sorts of goals did you set for yourself and/or your school? What were some of the most pressing issues you identified as a new administrator?
- 3) How do you approach interactions with your students? With parents? With teachers?
- 4) How do you view your relationship to the surrounding community?
- 5) What are some of the biggest challenges you have faced as a principal?
- 6) Looking back on your career, what are you most proud of?

At the end of the interview, please conclude with the following questions:

- 1) Is there anything else that you wish to share with me before we conclude?
- 2) Is there any question that you wish I had asked, or that you think I should ask in future interviews?
- 3) Can you think of anyone whom I should contact to aid in my research?
- 4) If more questions come up, may I contact you via phone or email?

After the interview, answer the following questions:

- 1) Please describe the general demeanor of the interviewee. Were they gregarious? Willing to answer questions? Reticient? Provide examples to support your adjective choice.
- 2) Are there any particular phrases or linguistic ticks that stood out to you over the course of the interview?

APPENDIX B: OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

SCHOOL NAME:

OBSERVER’S NAME:

DATE OF VISIT:

TIME OBSERVATION BEGAN:

TIME ENDED:

Before the observation commences, briefly outline your goals for the visit, and describe what you hope to obtain through your observations:

At the beginning of the observation, please answer the following questions:

- 1) Describe the administrative offices (location of the principal’s office, signs targeting students and parents located in and around the office, bulletin boards, number of offices in the main administrative building, fliers set out in the vicinity of the main office).
- 2) Rate the physical environment at the site.

1=Poor 2=Fair 3=Good 4=Excellent	1	2	3	4	N/A
Attractiveness of physical facility (freshly painted, good lighting, etc.)					
Presence of school pride paraphernalia (t-shirts, posters, etc.)					
Access to computers for employees in the administrative offices					
Access to higher-level officials (e.g. open doors, easy path to the principal’s office)					

- 3) Describe the chronology of events in the time leading up to the start of the school day:

30 min
prior to start
of school
day
15 min
prior to start
of school
day
School start
time
15 min after
start of
school day

4) Who is in the office?

Administrators

Parents

Students

Teachers

Assistants

5) How are different individuals interacting? Describe 1 or 2 cogent examples.

6) What kinds of questions are being asked? To whom are they being directed, and who is providing answers?

7) Are there any official phrases or language used by school administration? What are a few examples?

8) Who is responsible for greeting arriving students and parents? Describe those interactions.

9) If possible, obtain a copy of the principal's daily schedule, and paste it in the space below:

