Mexicans in the Pacific Northwest: Lessons from Progressive School Leaders for Progressive Educational Policy

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Abstract
Latinos now live and work in areas of the United States where they have not been before. These changes impact schools in a variety ways. This article reviews recent research on how communities have responded in the South, New England and the West with a primarily assimilationist approach including English-only policies. The article then provides a description of one school district's response in the Pacific Northwest. This school district's progressive leadership provides guidance for progressive educational policy. The author concludes with a recommendation that the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 that No Child Left Behind eclipsed be reinstated to guide the nation in these changing times.

Introduction

With the passage of No Child Left Behind in 2002, bilingual education was reduced to lower case letters.[1] It no longer benefits from regular attention at the federal level, as it was when the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 was reauthorized with each new administration. As the current administration launches educational initiatives and mandates, it continues to ignore the dramatic demographic changes that the country it serves is experiencing. These changes are impacting schools in unprecedented ways and posing enormous challenges to schools. No other demographic changes have made this impact more than those associated with immigration primarily from Mexico and the New Latino Diaspora (Murrillo & Villenas, 1997).

Contemporarily, the Mexican diaspora has been "one *sui generis* whose dispersion to other countries is limited to [the United States of America]" (González Gutiérrez, 1999). The "New Latino Diaspora" refers to the migration

of Mexicans and other Latinos within the United States to parts of the country where they have never gone before.

In this paper I argue that policy at the federal level is needed to guide our nation to respond appropriately to communities and schools who are receiving Mexican immigrants and migrants.[2] I accomplish this task by first highlighting some of the recent research focused on education and the New Latino Diaspora. I then provide a detailed description of how one school district in the Pacific Northwest has approached their increased number of students who are the children of Mexican migrants and immigrants. I conclude by revisiting the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 and how it could be revisited to provide a federal policy about the education of the children of the globalized workforce. Eschewing the policies of school districts that have the overt goals of assimilation and acculturation but whose covert goals my be segregation and discrimination, I base my recommendations on lessons learned from a school district whose goals are equity and integration.[3] Finally, I acknowledge the contradiction of my calling for federal educational policy for the education of Latino students at the same time as calling for the sovereignty of schools for Latino students (Moll & Ruiz, 2005).

New Latino Diaspora and the New Area Settlements

In this first section I explore the changing demographics of Latinos in the U.S. and their impact on schools and communities with an emphasis on the New Latino Diaspora and what the Pew Hispanic Center calls "new settlement areas" (Kochlar, Suro, & Tafoya, 2005). Much of the research in this area follows from the work of Stanton Wortham, Enrique Murillo, Jr., and Edmund Hamann, who together edited the volume *Education in the New Latino Diaspora: Policy and the Politics of Identity* in 2002. The diaspora has dispersed Latinos into states such as Georgia and North Carolina to what Calafell (2004) calls the New Latina/o South and Neal and Bohon (2003) call The Dixie Diaspora, and as far northeast as New England, into the heartland of rural Illinois, up into the Rocky Mountains and out to the Pacific Northwest. Wherever cheap labor is needed, Latinos are welcome. They are welcome on the job (by the employers), but not so much in the communities and in the schools. The new settlement areas struggle with welcoming the newcomers in part because racist stereotypes of Latinos follow them in the diaspora.

Furthermore, the ways the newcomers and the host community interact with and react to one another can make the struggle ever more challenging.

The New Latino Diaspora in the South

States in the southeastern region of the U.S. have experienced unprecedented growth of Latinos in nthe decade of the 1990s. And this growth continues.

Table 1

States in the Southeast and the Percent Change of Their Latino Population between 1990 - 2000

State	1990	2000	% Change
N. Carolina	76,726	378,963	394
Arkansas	19,876	86,866	337
Georgia	108,922	435,227	300
Tennessee	32,741	123,838	278
S. Carolina	30,551	95,076	211
Alabama	24,629	75,830	208

Source: Pew Hispanic Center tabulations from 1990 and 2000 Census Summary (Kochlar, Suro, & Tafoya, 2005)

The studies from the New Latino Diaspora collection and others indicate that most school districts are unprepared to welcome the newcomers. When they do accept that something should be done to accommodate the newcomers, most favor facilitating forms of cultural and linguistic assimilation.

In a small, rural town in North Carolina with a growing Latino population, for example, Villenas (2002) describes the "public difficulties" that Latinos experienced, including "labor exploitation, housing discrimination, linguicism (language racism), public health neglect, educational marginalization, and so

forth . . ." (p. 30). A large part of the difficulties Villenas found in the schools were centered on negative reactions to the speaking of Spanish particularly by children in schools. In general, the community was more comfortable with the idea of an assimilationist, English-only education than any approach that might facilitate children becoming bilingual.

Extending beyond language, Villenas describes the "benevolent racism" that results when "Latino parents' agency" is not respected (p. 31).[4] These are policies and practices around education and public services that view Latino parents as incompetent, even negligent, and in need of assistance and education to be assimilated into the "right ways" of American life.

Murillo (2002) describes how the Latino newcomers in North Carolina fought to have quality education for their children but were met with "the public sphere construction of Latinos as 'problematic' and 'less deserving.' Murillo interprets this construction of a negative image as southern racism historically constructed to dehumanize Blacks that is extended to Latinos. A way to solve the "problem" is to promote assimilationist policies and practices in the schools.

Assimilation is not just abandoning a culture and language to adopt those of the host community, it is simultaneously a negative critique of the primary culture and language. This aspect of assimilation can be seen as a form of "symbolic violence" (Shannon & Escamilla, 1999). Beck and Allexsaht-Snider (2002) found that anti-bilingual education sentiment among policy makers and educators at key levels of the Georgia state government inspired local decision making that Latinos experienced as symbolic violence. Symbolic violence is often perpetrated through the use of coded language; a word or term triggers a negative reaction that becomes tacit. In this case, bilingual education means Mexican immigrant and often carries the connotation of "illegal." For those who believe that Mexican immigrants are unwelcome in this country, they are likely to also believe that bilingual education is a privilege that Mexicans not only do not deserve but to which they have no right (Shannon, 1999).

Among the studies of the South as a destination in the New Latino Diaspora, the work from the Georgia Project (Hamann, 1999, 2002, 2003; Hernández-León & Zúñiga, 2002, 2005) stands out because of an unexpected interested party – the city's "industrial bourgeoisie." The description of the formation of the project bears quoting at length:

> The project began when a group of Dalton civic and public school leaders contacted the authorities and faculty at Universidad de

> Monterrey in Mexico in search of the academic and cultural expertise to meet the educational and institutional challenges that Latino immigration had brought about in their community. By the time these leaders traveled to Monterrey, in December of 1996, Latino pupils were already one third of the student body in Dalton public schools. Contacting a Mexican university was clearly an unusual step, one that can be explained by at least two factors: first, the lack of responsiveness to these leaders' calls for assistance from state institutions, such as Georgia's Department of Education and local universities, and second, their access to the joint venture ties between the largest carpet manufacturer in Dalton and industrialists in Monterrey, who in turn had links with the university's president. (Hernández-León & Zúñiga, 2002, p. 11)

The capitalist dimension is an important one here because the Mexicans are in Dalton now because of the need for workers in the carpet mills. This is reminiscent of Derrick Bell's Interest Convergence Dilemma (Bell, 1980). It is in the best interest of whites, in this case, to address the educational concerns for the children of their new labor force and to keep manifestations of racism against the Mexicans at bay in order to allow the labor force to work without overt antagonism. Hernández-León and Zúñiga (2005) explain that "The exclusion of Blacks from mill jobs, the absence of European immigrants and the continuous resistance of rural Anglos to the factory regime, created endemic labor shortages and high worker turnover for the textile industry" (p. 245). With the industry needing workers and Latinos willing to work, this southern community needed to address the changing demographics. Furthermore, these workers were not alone. They came with families and were able to establish themselves away from migrant work to stable factory work. And their children would go to school.

Georgia was not an exception to the racism and discrimination found in other parts of the South. For example, Hamann (2002) found the school district to be only willing and able to adopt assimilationist policies and practices for the growing number of Latinos in its community (such as an English-only scripted curriculum). He also found that the district cooperated with some accommodations for the students "when forced" and that the accommodations were implemented as "begrudging compromises rather than part of an inclusive, multicultural vision" (p. 93).

The New Latino Diaspora Outside the South

As one moves outside the South, the assimilationist trends that have been documented there are less strident. Wortham (2002) conducted an ethnographic study of a small town in rural New England that he named Haverford, with a growing population of Latinos. His focus was on adolescent identity development and school success. He found marked differences between males and females but his final conclusion was that the factors were complex. He concludes that "gender difference in attitudes toward school and school success results from a configuration of factors, a configuration that is in part specific to the Havertown context and that ties both to the heritage Latino newcomers bring with them and to the way they are received by the host community" (p. 138). The males in this study tended to acculturate to the extent that they could still emulate Mexican men and the roles they play in their families and communities while the females tended more toward assimilation at school and accommodation at home. Wortham does not report on the active role the schools took in these processes but it is clear from his report that Haverford was a relatively welcoming community to the Latino newcomers, allowing these adolescents to make choices that were ultimately accommodating without complete assimilation.

A small, rural town in Illinois whose Latino population increased since 1996 was the focus of Brunn's study (2002). He explored the policy making process the school district adopted that included perspectives from Latino parents and students as well as Anglo teachers, parents and administrators. He describes how decisions about policies and practices for changing demographics are constantly contested and revolve around debates about whether the newcomer Latinos need to be assimilated, integrated, neglected or ignored. He found that even some of the Latino parents questioned the use of Spanish for instruction as they were anxious for their children to learn English. Brunn uses that example as one to illustrate the importance of educating the stakeholders in policymaking; in this case educating parents and educators about bilingualism and second language acquisition. Without this education and in the absence of overt racism, such that Latinos experience in the South, one wonders if Latino parents would want assimilation for their children.

Moving west to the Rocky Mountains of Colorado, Elías Martínez (2002) found racist animosity towards the Latinos working there. The town Martínez lived and worked in is one of several "world class" ski resorts. The

newcomer Latinos are hired for service industry work and construction. The cost of living in this area is exorbitant, however. The low paying jobs that the Latinos, primarily Mexicans and Central Americans, occupy barely allow the families to subsist. Virtually all the Latino families live in crowded trailer parks in plain view of multimillion-dollar estates. Martínez conducted an ethnographic study of the implementation of a transitional bilingual education program at a local elementary school. He found that the racist response of the host community to the newcomers fragments any policy at school to accommodate the children. Martinez found that even young, elementary school Latino children experience the *"ni de aquí ní de allá"* lament of *Los Tigres del Norte* ["not from here nor from there," a line from a *Tigres* song] in part because the school only provided a segregationist program of pull-out ESL. The socioeconomic class differences also exacerbate the racism against Latinos in the community such that the haves generally do not want the have-nots to assimilate, they want them to disappear.

The social and political dynamics of communities in the South and elsewhere in the U.S., resulting from the rapidly changing demographics, center on the social construction of the image of Latinos and particularly Mexicans (Shannon, 2007). North American ambivalence to Mexicans living, working and attending schools is a growing conundrum. Particularly in the South where racial tensions have traditionally been between Blacks and Anglos, the new settlement areas should come to terms with having Mexicans among them. Working in factories with stable jobs, settling families in a community, and sending children to local public schools is not the same as being invisible workers in the fields who move on after the harvest. And as the Colorado case demonstrates, needing low wage workers to service a resort is tricky when they have to live among you or, at least, at arm's length.

Throughout the studies cited here (and I am not claiming that this selection is exhaustive, as work is being done throughout the U.S. and from every discipline) the issue of education is the focus. But within education the question is: What is the goal of the education of the children of the Mexican newcomers? Is it acculturation, assimilation, bilingualism, biliteracy, abandonment of Spanish or English monolingualism? Each community approaches answering those questions in different ways that are based on a variety of social constructions of Mexicans and of themselves. Here I describe how one school district in a new settlement area in the Pacific Northwest has approached the increase of Latinos in their community.

A New Settlement Area for Latinos in the Pacific Northwest

Drawing on a qualitative evaluation of the implementation of a dual language program that I conducted in 2005-2006 and ongoing ethnographic fieldwork, in this section I present the case of Foreston (not its real name), a small town in the rural Pacific Northwest. Foreston represents a new settlement area in the New Latino Diaspora. The Latino population in the county in which Foreston is located increased by 167% between 1990 and 2000, much of it concentrated in Foreston.

The Latino population of Foreston is primarily Mexican with some Central Americans. Foreston is an agricultural center, and the fruit and vegetable growers in the valley have relied on Mexican farmworkers since the 1940s. Reforestation and plant nurseries emerged in the 1970s as major winter occupations, enabling thousands of area farmworkers to remain in the region year-round. Today, Foreston is home to the largest migrant worker union in the region – *Los Pineros y Campesinos del Noroeste* (PCUN) [Northwest Treeplanters and Farmworkers United] founded in 1985. The union owns and operates a community radio station that was built by hundreds of volunteers in 2006 and broadcasts music, news, and public affairs to listeners in Spanish and several indigenous Latin American languages.

Among the differences between Foreston School District (FSD) and those described previously is that Foreston has not only experienced an increase of Latinos, but it also is home to a community of Russian speakers that is now almost the size of the Anglo population. The Russian community in Foreston is comprised of members of the Old Believers Russian Orthodox Church. Many of the older generation (grandparents of school-age children) came from Russia through Alaska and down into the Northwest beginning in the 1960s. They are immigrants but are also a part of the diaspora of Old Believers who left Russia. While there has not been a measurable increase in Russian speakers to Foreston in recent years, the community has stabilized and children of second and third generations live and attend school there.

Foreston has also experienced a simultaneous decrease in the Anglo, English-speaking population. Anglo flight from the schools to other districts and to private schools explains in part why this is so, but it is also the case that much of the city's adult population is of retirement age whose children are no longer school age. The northeastern portion of the community is a sprawling retirement village with a golf course.

Foreston School District
Our Mission
Engage and inspire all students to achieve
challenging goals and aspirations,
and contribute to a diverse world.

Reflecting the demographic changes that the county in which the FSD is located, today, more than 70% of the nearly 5,000 students enrolled in K -12 are Latino, and the vast majority of those students are of Mexican origin. In addition to the Anglo, White student population, nearly 10% of the students in the FSD are of Russian heritage.

Table 2
Ethnic Groups by Number and Percent in FSD

Ethnic Group	*N*	%
Anglo	774	15.77
Latino	3,471	70.72
Russian	464	9.45
Others	56	1.14
Total	4,908	100.00

In 1997, parents, educators and members of the business community formed a leadership team to create a vision and plan for the district. That plan was revisited in 2002 and a five-year renewal strategic plan was implemented. Below are the core values identified in the plan: a) family is the strongest influence on the growth and development of an individual, b) all people have equal inherent value, c) people are accountable for their choices, d) diversity is a strength, e) mutual integrity, trust and respect are essential for healthy relationships, f) learning is key to the survival and advancement of the human race, and a community thrives when its members recognize and value their interdependence. These core values clearly communicate that the school district's plan is inclusive, equitable and positive. The strategic plan based on

these core values includes one focused on language:

> Strategy 3. We will design and implement a system so that all students will be literate in more than one language to achieve the strategic objectives.

The Evolution of Dual Language Education in FSD

In 2002, the leadership team re-evaluated its English Transition Program (ETP), which was a late exit bilingual program. The ETP program, like most bilingual programs, was designed to teach English to Spanish and Russian speaking students while teaching core content in their native languages. Seeing that these students emerged from the ETP program as bilingual and biliterate and that all students could benefit from the program, a dual language approach was planned. The dual language program is a one-way immersion program in which English-speaking students and Spanish-speaking students learn together in both languages. In the Russian program, Russian-speaking students learn together with English dominant Russian Americans. With the demographic trends that FSD has experienced, the majority of the English-speaking students are learning Spanish or Russian as their heritage languages. In other words, Latinos include both English language learners and English dominant or monolingual.[5] This dual language program design is well suited for schools and districts with that kind of demographic and many such programs are found on the Mexican U.S. border. Foreston is unique with its inclusion of the Russian one way dual language program.

The Spanish/English dual program has been implemented in kindergarten to second grade in each of the four elementary schools with plans for a dual language strand to be added each year. The Russian program is located at one elementary school and middle school that share the same campus. Like the Spanish/English program, the Russian/English program continues through to the high school.

An examination of how the dual language education evolved district wide shows that the leadership of FSD followed through on its commitment to the core value of interdependence along with the value of diversity. The district moved away from an assimilationist bilingual model, i.e., a transitional program in which Spanish and Russian-speaking students received instruction in their native languages only until they could transition to the English mainstream classroom, usually after three years. The next step was to an accommodation model in which these same students were able to maintain

their native languages after they had acquired English. Now with the dual language program, all students learn two languages and learn in two languages. This is an innovative and progressive approach and clearly distinctive from more conservative approaches other new settlement areas have taken, mainly English-only and/or transitional bilingual programs.

Implementing the Strategy: Progressive Leadership

Overall, a strength in the FSD and the dual language strategic plan is the progressive leadership and commitment demonstrated in multiple ways by the superintendent's office, specifically the superintendent. The fact that one of the five strategies to achieve the district's vision is devoted to integrating language groups makes this strength clear. This individual is a native of Foreston, Anglo, and a parent whose children attended schools in FSD. He models behavior such as learning Spanish, living in the community in integrative ways (frequenting one of the Mexican restaurants or market in the middle of town, for example) and visiting Mexico every year. In his travels he has visited schools and observed in classrooms in the rural Los Altos region of the state of Jalisco and in its capital, Guadalajara.

At another level, the progressive program and vision are strong with the leadership of the district's Director of Bilingual Education at the time of this study. This individual has done many things to bring this vision to the district and to ensure that it is realized, including but not limited to: restructuring leadership for the dual language program, recruitment and retention of highly qualified staff (Strategy #1 of the Plan), and professional development. He is originally from Guadalajara and has done doctoral work at the University of Arizona.

Besides the strong leadership at the superintendent's level, including the Director of Bilingual Education, one of the more striking features of the FSD administrative structure is that there is a bilingual coordinator for each building. At a coordinators' meeting they talked about how this structure has helped to strengthen the program. All agreed that the teachers needed the support at the classroom level and they valued having time to focus especially with new teachers or teachers new to the district or the program.

The coordinators also mentioned challenges they faced. One that they all shared was that they are in a transition period moving year by year to adding a grade level to the dual language program. That also meant that the

coordinators are simultaneously supporting the two-way program while the one-way program (Spanish and Russian speakers learning English while maintaining their first languages) was in place. They reported that their greatest challenge was time. One coordinator said that since she is not in a classroom, her time is not protected and she feels that she gets chosen to pick up slack in other areas. They all agreed that their positions were valuable and necessary for the program's success. They have been able to coordinate with one another regarding knowing about and acquiring materials, professional development, assessment (the materials and their administration), and assisting teachers with placing students and informing parents. The coordinators who are all bilingual (Spanish/English or Russian/English) are essential in those schools where the principal is not bilingual.

The Russian program coordinator is in a different position as this individual supports the program at the elementary, middle and high school. Her major concern is finding adequate materials in Russian that match the standards-based curriculum in English. An impressive amount of textbooks and literature has been translated and cut and pasted into English language books. Again, lack of time is a concern.

In interviews with bilingual coordinators, teachers, principals and assistant principals they repeatedly reported that the Director of Bilingual Education had actively recruited them to leave places like California and New Mexico. In addition, he found teachers originally from Cuba, Ecuador, and Russian speakers from Alaska and Russia. The director attended the conferences of the California Association for Bilingual Education and the National Association for Bilingual Education where he met these educators. One teacher from California said that FSD's vision "matches up with the same goals I would have," which she explained were focused on valuing diversity and allowing students to realize their full potential through two languages.

Everyone is Educated about Dual Language Education

Initiatives to eliminate bilingual education have passed in California, Arizona and Massachusetts. In only one state to date has this type of initiative been defeated: Colorado. Key players in the campaign opposing that legislation report that educating the public about the amendment and about bilingual education was critical to their victory (Escamilla, Shannon, García, & Carlos, 2003). In a district like FSD with an innovative vision, educating the faculty

and staff about what dual language education is, how it benefits all children and the research that shows that it works is essential. This education is critical for educators to inform parents and to create successful programs. The FSD strategic plan states that all district personnel must know what the plan is and must be able to articulate it. They all need education for that to happen.

Evidence of this education is bountiful through the professional development opportunities that have been available. Experts are regularly invited to work with staff and opportunities for staff to travel to Mexico, study Spanish, and visit schools are routine. Staff have continued to visit schools in school districts throughout the country. Additional opportunities are opening up for travel to other communities with Russian speakers as well as to Russia. Coordinators spoke often of expertise within the district that they rely on, including one another. One coordinator explained:

> I learn from [others] within the district with expertise to support the learning of principals and teachers particularly those who do not have a bilingual education background and who are not bilingual. When you hear the same thing from high quality people and you see results you start moving that direction in the interest of the students. (fieldnotes, November 14, 2006)

Educating within and outside of the district about the positive results that are being achieved in FSD was often reported as the single reason why the district should have the vision that it does and why they support it.

Another strategy that the district is successful within the area of education is the partnership with a local private university and the state license endorsement program. Requiring teachers and staff to take university level courses focused on the education of bilingual students is essential and making it a part of their credential shows the district's commitment to retaining high quality educators. Furthermore, partnering with the university allows the district to prioritize the knowledge that its staff needs most and immediately.

A Snapshot of a Culturally Relevant Curriculum

One of the ways that FSD has enriched its curriculum with a view of integrating the experiences and realities of all students is to infuse it with cultural relevance. Here I describe two classrooms where this infusion is evident.

In a middle school, two classrooms worked on a migration theme. In the language arts class, the students were reading a book *Cajas de Cartón* [Cardboard Boxes] about a Mexican migrant family (this class was in Spanish). The teacher led the group discussion about the family that had to leave a community to follow the harvest in California. She provided abundant scaffolding for the rich vocabulary contained in the book and much of that support was to draw on the students' own experiences as members of migrant families.

In the social studies class (in English) the students were working on a unit about immigrant groups to the U.S. The students were preparing reports on the following topics relative to the group they chose: a) treatment by our society, b) positive contributions by immigrants, c) opportunities for success by immigrants, d) immigration laws.

The majority of the students in the class were children of Mexican immigrants and native Spanish speakers. In this class they had the opportunity to study the phenomenon of immigration as a normal part of U.S. life that affects people from all over the world. The teacher encouraged the students to choose a sending country different from their own but also said that they could learn more about their own immigration or that of their parents or grandparents if they so desired.

The snapshot I would like the reader to leave thinking about Foreston is one of three classrooms at a middle school. They are located in a portable building in the far corner of a campus with an elementary and a middle school. In front of the portable is a vegetable garden with some flowers and plants. Inside one classroom, the fifth graders are learning about volcanoes and individuals are reading their reports on an experiment they had done. Everything is done in Russian – the reports, the questions and the responses, the posters on the wall, the books on the shelves and the teacher in the chair. Next door, the same scene is repeated except that everything is in Spanish. In the classroom next to that one, the students were engaged in similar activities, in English.

Foreston: Astounding Results

In 2004, Virginia Collier and Wayne Thomas had published in the *NABE Journal of Research and Practice* an article entitled, "The Astounding Effectiveness of Dual Language Education for All." In it they report their

findings from evaluations they carried out of dual language programs (both two-way and one-way programs) in 23 school districts and 15 states over the last two decades. At the time of the publication, Collier and Thomas were participating in a longitudinal evaluation of Foreston's program. The research design was similar to the other evaluations that they had done with an emphasis on a program's ability to close the achievement gap between English language learners and what they call non language minority English speakers. They also disaggregated data in this case to take into account the progress of language minority English speakers, i.e. those students whose heritage language is Spanish.[6]

Collier and Thomas state that Foreston has challenges to closing the achievement gap in that they found high student mobility out of the district and that the majority of the Latino families were of low SES and parents had lower levels of education than non Latino families. Nevertheless, results of comparing state standardized test scores on Reading at different grade levels over five years shows clearly that Foreston is achieving this goal.

> Overall, [our analyses] indicate Foreston School District English learners are indeed closing the achievement gap at rates almost as fast as those produced by the most successful English learners programs [two-way dual language at 4-6 years], and about as fast as the most effective one-way programs that have been investigated in major national studies [6-8 years]. (Thomas & Collier, 2007, p. 27)

In their recommendations, Collier and Thomas encourage FSD to plan for the development of a two-way dual language program in the future as more non Latino English speakers participate in the program. They argue based on their findings that the achievement gap is closed more quickly in two-way programs. Closing the achievement gap is probably an important goal and maybe the most important goal because the persistence and pervasiveness of the gap is a major failure of public education in the U.S. I believe, however, that improving test scores is only part of the picture.

Discussion: Valdés' Cautionary Note on Dual Language Education

I would like to remind us of Guadalupe Valdés' 1997 *Harvard Educational Review* "Cautionary Note" in which she warns of the appropriation by Anglos of Spanish and bilingualism in two-way dual language programs. I am also keenly aware of how Anglos can exercise white privilege in dual language

programs to devastating results typically for the Latino families (Cf., Potowski, 2007; Shannon, forthcoming). I believe that Foreston has the advantage of a critical mass of Latinos and a third party ally with the Russian community, but it would be naïve to think that the Anglos might not upset this setting. For example, it remains to be seen if a few individuals would demand that their children not participate in the dual language program or in the Russian heritage language program and require the school district to maintain an English-only track for them. While the visions and policies the FSD has planned clearly benefit the Latino and Russian students, they could benefit the Anglo students. As Thomas & Collier (2007) point out, the two-way dual language program would be an enrichment program for non-Latino English speakers.

Conclusions

Foreston has had Mexicans and Latinos working in agriculture for as long as some old settlement areas in the Southwest, although clearly not in the numbers it is experiencing today. Further, the community has had a significant presence of Russian refugees and immigrants who are very different insofar as religion, language and culture. It may seem unfair to compare Foreston with towns in Georgia or North Carolina, particularly in terms of the intensity of racial tensions. Situated in the Pacific Northwest certainly makes the FSD distinctive from the Southeast relative to race relations and experience with dealing with them in schools. How the Northwest differs from New England or Illinois with respect to Mexican newcomers may be trivial or substantial depending on the social constructions of diverse community members. Foreston's Anglos are not the hyper elite of the Colorado town and class distinctions are much less so among the Anglos, Russians and Mexicans. In any case, FSD's plan provides lessons learned for a progressive policy to guide school districts across the country who are experiencing sudden and dramatic increases in their Latino populations. FSD represents a forward thinking school district that has been proactive and not reactive. Most importantly, FSD has based its strategies on restructuring its schools on integrationist principles aligned with social justice and equity for all students and based on the context and resources available to Foreston and with the leadership at a particular moment (Miramontes, Nadeau, & Commins, 1997).

In many ways, Foreston's practices and policies are in direct contrast to No Child Left Behind (NCLB) which provides very little progressive guidance to school districts as regards the increasing numbers of children

of the immigrant labor force. Indeed, NCLB has created problems with, for example, the inappropriate testing of children who speak a language other than English (Abedi & Dietel, 2004; Mahoney, Thompson, & McSwan, 2004) as well as by its overemphasis on English acquisition as the primary purpose of schooling. Even those students who are instructed in two languages, as in the case of dual language programs, are often tested only English given the restrictive bias of NCLB (McCombs et al., 2005). With its implementation in 2002, NCLB did away with The Bilingual Education Act of 1968 (BEA). I would like to see the BEA revisited as a progressive policy that directly addresses the bilingual students in our schools and particularly the children of Mexican workers.

The BEA of 1968 states that bilingual education is needed to address "acute educational problems." Much of the support for this law came from then Texas Senator Ralph Yarborough who was alarmed by the underachievement of the Spanish-speaking students in his state (Lyons, 1990). Basing national legislation on what occurs in Texas relative to Mexican heritage children in the schools is somewhat of a paradox given the history of Texas, the U.S. and Mexico (Shannon, 2007). Nevertheless, the same concern at the time could have been championed by any member of Congress representing the states in the Southwest. The original legislation was a compensatory effort to address problems stemming from speaking a language other than English without reference to immigration.

The final reauthorization of the Bilingual Education Act in 1994 under Bill Clinton's administration included the finding that "The presence of linguistic minorities is related to the federal policy on immigration." Since that time we have had immigration policy that is seriously flawed. There are now an estimated 12 million undocumented persons in the U.S., the great majority from Mexico. It is estimated that by 2010, children of immigrants will represent over one-quarter of the student population (Capps et al., 2005). Regardless of their legal status, children are guaranteed an education in the public school system by the 1982 legislation, Plyler v. Doe, and school representatives cannot inquire about a child's legal status.

Obviously, workers are crossing the border, working throughout the country and their children are attending schools, documented or not. It is beyond the scope of my conclusions here to address immigration policy. But we need an educational policy that does not ignore, as NCLB does, the

education of the children of immigrant workers that do not speak English. Looking to Foreston as inspiration, I find John Dewey's ideas applicable. He says that schools should not emulate society, but learn from its mistakes and misdeeds and create a better society. He said that the school should seek

> . . . to eliminate, so far as possible, the unworthy features of the existing environment from influence upon mental habitudes. It establishes a purified medium of action. Selection aims not only at simplifying but at weeding out what is undesirable. Every society gets encumbered with what is trivial, with dead wood from the past, and with what is positively perverse. The school has the duty of omitting such things from the environment which it supplies, and thereby doing what it can to counteract their influence in the ordinary social environment. By selecting the best for its exclusive use, it strives to reinforce the power of this best. As a society becomes more enlightened, it realizes that it is responsible not to transmit and conserve the whole of its existing achievements, but only such as make for a better future society. The school is its chief agency for the accomplishment of this end. (Dewey, 1916, p.24)

But the studies that I describe here are more often than not microcosms of society including the undesirable and "positively perverse" (Cf. Valenzuela's, 1999, description of an uncaring high school and its effects). If Mexicans and Spanish speakers are perceived as inferior, worthy of exploitation and discrimination in U.S. society, then Spanish-speaking children face formidable challenges when they enter schools (Shannon, 2007). Foreston schools responded to the challenge of changing demographics that brought the children of two non-mainstream and non-English speaking communities and embraced them. Foreston weeded out the racism and discrimination that Mexicans routinely face and the misunderstandings and racism that religious Russians experience elsewhere in the U.S. Foreston succeeded where other school districts have failed because its leaders and educators selected "the best for its exclusive use . . . [to] make for a better future society" (Dewey, 1916, p. 24).

I call for a revival of the BEA to be one that addresses the children of workers, refugees and other immigrants. Wiese and García (1998) trace the reauthorizations of the BEA from 1968 through 1994 and show that increasingly, the BEA pointed out that the U.S. is world leader and a first act

on the global economic stage. If NCLB had not eclipsed the BEA, we might have had subsequent administrations pay attention to the way immigration includes children who are guaranteed by law to an education in the U.S. Each reauthorization helped to redefine approaches and who was included and why. Starting with Mexican children in Texas, finally recognizing Native Americans and their languages, considering English-speaking children at first in limited ways and then for full participation, and in its last reauthorization in 1994, children of immigrants were acknowledged.

In a final and perhaps contradictory note I would also like to call for the sovereignty of schools for Latino and other minority students (Moll & Ruiz, 2006). English-only policies have elements of control and coercion, as do assimilationist policies in general. Foreston's leaders acted with autonomy, within the sovereignty of their own community.

I will let Moll and Ruiz clarify their use of term educational sovereignty because it helps us see how such autonomy would not be free from following guiding principles that a federal policy in a new BEA could provide,

> It is important to reiterate that we are not using the term "educational sovereignty" to signal the need for an act of separation. We mean by it almost the opposite -- the strength and power a social setting like a school can garner by developing strategic social networks to create "cultural spaces" that will enhance its autonomy, mediate ideological and programmatic constraints, and provide additive forms of schooling for its students. (p. 302)

The school district in Foreston acted with educational sovereignty but guided themselves with core values. The new BEA should be a policy with core values that acknowledge that the U.S. needs immigrant workers in a global economy and that these workers have families and children who have a right to public education. The new BEA should inform immigration reform and remind legislators that children and families are involved who are valuable and not expendable. The new BEA should insure the linguistic rights of all children by providing instruction in both English and children's first language and assessing what they know in both languages. The new BEA should hold all school leaders accountable for providing anti-racist education for all children.

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Endnotes

1. A few years before NCLB passed the word "bilingual" was excised from all the offices and departments in federal and many state and locals education agencies. The Office of Bilingual Education and Language Minority Affairs (OBEMLA), for example, became the Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA) and the National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education became the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition.

2. I acknowledge that immigrants come from places other than Mexico, but the vast majority of them do. Furthermore, racism and discrimination against Mexico and Mexicans are endemic in the U.S., poorly understood and blatantly ignored. The problem is centered around workers who are unauthorized to be in the U.S. but who actually provide a necessary workforce (See Shannon (2007) for an historical analysis of the problem).

3. I am using the terms assimilation and acculturation following Margaret Gibson (2002): "Assimilation is a process whereby individuals of one society or ethnic group are incorporated or absorbed culturally into another. At the individual level, cultural assimilation implies loss of identification with one's former group. Acculturation is the process of culture change and adaptation that occurs when groups with different cultures come into contact. It need not be a subtractive process. Instead, it may lead to the addition of new traits or the blending or [sic] new and old ways." (p. 249) I am using the term "assimilation" and not "Americanization" as many Latinos already think of themselves as Americans, just not North Americans.

4. Benevolent racism is another form of what Solorzano refers to as "racial microagressions." These acts are regularly performed by whites to insult and marginalize others for their race and/or gender (Solorzano, 1998).

5. Gallegos (2008) refers to English monolingual Latinos as Mesoamericans emphasizing the "in the middle" nature of their identity relative to language.

6. Thomas and Collier did not include the Russian one-way program students in the evaluation.