

Moorhead Area Public Schools

Spanish Immersion Program Evaluation

A Report

To

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Submitted

By

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Abstract

This evaluation report examines the Moorhead School District's Spanish Immersion Program for efficiency, effectiveness and equity. The primary focus of the report examines the data in terms of academic achievement, parent satisfaction, and cost effectiveness.

In the Spanish Immersion Program the students spend all or part of the school day learning school curriculum in a secondary language. The first students enrolled in the program have completed the fifth grade and are attending Horizon Middle School. The Moorhead Spanish Immersion Program has been established as a magnet program located at Ellen Hopkins Elementary School.

The program has faced challenges through the years. The program began in the 1999-2000 school year. After the first two years of the program, the coordinator and transportation for students outside the attendance area were discontinued due to budgetary restraints.

The demographics in the program indicate fewer students eligible for free and reduced lunch, lower ethnicity ratios, and lower percentage of students receiving special education services compared to the school district elementary population. The information obtained from student achievement data and parent satisfaction surveys indicate positive results.

The school district should continue to support the K-5 Spanish Immersion Program. The support for the program should reflect the efficiency, effectiveness and equity focus of the Moorhead Area Public Schools.

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Purpose

The purpose of this evaluation study is to examine the Spanish Immersion Program, now located at Ellen Hopkins Elementary School, in the areas of efficiency, effectiveness and equity. The commitment made by the School Board of Moorhead Area Public Schools in 1998 was to ensure that any group of students that enrolls in the immersion program would have the opportunity to remain in the program through grade five. That commitment has been afforded and this study will evaluate data and information to assist the School Board in determining future options such as: expansion, status quo or reduction.

Background

All children in the Moorhead School District entering kindergarten through second grade in the fall are eligible to register for the Spanish Immersion Program. The only criterion for enrollment is the interest of parents having their children learn a second language. Students who enter the program receive instruction in Spanish through the elementary grades (K-5).

In the Spanish Immersion Program, all classroom instruction occurs in Spanish. Spanish is the language of instruction, not the topic of instruction. Students read, write and speak Spanish as they go through their daily lessons. Curtain and Pesola (1994) define language immersion as a method of foreign language instruction in which the regular elementary curriculum is taught through the language for the entire school day during the first two or three years. In total immersion programs, reading and writing are taught through the second language.

The curriculum goals of the immersion program are the same as the goals for all elementary schools in the Moorhead School District. The students learn the same subject content that other students learn in the elementary school setting. Besides learning the regular school curriculum, the children learn to think and communicate in Spanish. Students are exposed to the cultures of Spanish-speaking communities in the United States and around the world.

The immersion approach typically produces results that have not previously been achieved in traditional foreign language programs. The success of the immersion approach has been demonstrated in the United States and Canada for the past 30 years.

Studies indicate students in foreign language immersion programs have significantly richer educational backgrounds and more positive attitudes toward other cultures. David Downs-Reid (2000), Director of Immersion Education at the Robbinsdale Immersion School in the Robbinsdale School District, examined student achievement on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments in 1999. Results of the 1999 MCAs were used to compare the performance of immersion students at four schools with that of students attending non-immersion schools. The comparison schools had similar percentages of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch. Results of the tests were consistent with research that indicated that immersion students score as well as or better than their non-immersion peers do on standardized tests in English.

In the Moorhead Spanish Immersion Program, formal instruction in English reading and writing begins in grade 3. The percentage of classroom instruction in English increases each year until approximately 20 percent of the day is in English at

grades 4 and 5. Some students will begin to apply their understanding of reading and writing to English well before it is formally taught.

The Spanish Immersion Program, which is located at Ellen Hopkins Elementary School, provides students with instruction in a child-centered school that is rich in providing opportunities and learning support for children. The program began in the 1999-2000 school year with 56 students enrolled in kindergarten and first grade. The current enrollment is now 226 students in grades K-5.

Original Goals and Objectives of the Program

The original recommendations presented to the School Board in 1998 are listed as follows:

- Open a full immersion program in the fall of 1999 for two sections of kindergarten and two sections of first grade.
- Ensure that any group of students that enrolls in the immersion program will have the opportunity to remain in the program through grade five.
- Employ a .5 FTE immersion program coordinator by January 1, 1999.
- Employ licensed elementary teachers with native or near-native fluency in the target language for the classroom positions.
- Enroll students as in a magnet school e.g. ensure space is available for students from each K-4 building and provide transportation to the program.
- Selection of a building to house the program will be made administratively based on the district facility plan and enrollment factors.

- Provide extensive information to parents who are considering immersion. Inform parents of child development factors which could impede second language learning and urge them to enroll their child only if they anticipate the child remaining in the district through grade 3.

As the committee researched immersion programs and gathered research data, the following objectives were put into place:

- Develop a high level of proficiency in the foreign language.
- Develop positive attitudes toward those who speak the foreign language and toward their cultures.
- Develop English language skills commensurate with expectations for the student's age and abilities.
- Gain skills and knowledge in the content areas of the curriculum.
- By grade 4, children in full immersion programs achieve scores that are as good as or better than those of their peers who have been learning the curriculum in English.

Current Status of the Spanish Immersion Program

The Spanish Immersion Program is currently located in Ellen Hopkins Elementary School in Moorhead. The current enrollment is 226 students. Students who originally started the program in grade 1 are now in grade 6 at Horizon Middle School.

There are currently 10 sections of Spanish Immersion in Ellen Hopkins Elementary School. The following chart provides information on the demographics and enrollment in the program.

Demographics and Enrollment Data

<i>Gender</i>	2001-02		2002-03		2003-04		2004-05	
Female	81	57%	96	54%	114	56%	116	51%
Male	60	43%	81	46%	91	44%	110	49%
Total	141		177		205		226	

<i>Lunch</i>	2001-02		2002-03		2003-04		2004-05	
Free/Reduced	26	18%	22	12%	27	13%	20	9%

<i>Ethnicity</i>	2001-02		2002-03		2003-04		2004-05	
White	102	72%	140	79%	173	84%	199	88%
Black	15	11%	13	7%	8	4%	6	3%
Hispanic	18	13%	17	10%	20	10%	15	7%
Am Indian	1	1%	3	2%	2	1%	2	1%
Asian	5	4%	4	2%	2	1%	4	2%
	141	101%	177	100%	205	100%	226	101%

<i>Language</i>	2001-02		2002-03		2003-04		2004-05	
Kurdish			1	1%	1	1%	1	1%
Spanish	16	11%	11	6%	12	6%	8	4%
English	125	89%	165	93%	192	94%	217	96%
	141	100%	177	100%	205	101%	226	101%

<i>Special Ed</i>	2001-02		2002-03		2003-04		2004-05	
Speech	4	3%	9	5%	7	3%	10	4%
SLD	9	6%	5	3%	5	2%	4	2%
EBD	1	1%	2	1%	3	1%	2	1%
OHD	3	2%	2	1%	2	1%	2	1%
DD					2	1%	3	1%

<i>Grade</i>	2001-02		2002-03		2003-04		2004-05	
Kindergarten	43		46		40		64	
Grade 1	39		36		47		32	
Grade 2	34		38		32		45	
Grade 3	25		33		38		31	
Grade 4			24		27		32	
Grade 5					21		22	
Total	141		177		205		226	

District and Spanish Immersion Demographic Comparison

	2001-02 District	2001-02 SI	2002-03 District	2002-03 SI	2003-04 District	2003-04 SI	2004-05 District	2004-05 SI
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Lunch

Free/Reduced	31%	18%	33%	12%	33%	13%	25%	9%
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Ethnicity

White	86%	72%	85%	79%	84%	84%	84%	88%
Black	2%	11%	2%	7%	3%	4%	3%	3%
Hispanic	9%	13%	9%	10%	8%	10%	8%	7%
Am Indian	3%	1%	3%	2%	3%	1%	3%	1%
Asian	1%	4%	1%	2%	1%	1%	2%	2%

<i>Language</i>	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05
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Kurdish	2%		2%	1%	2%	1%	2%	1%
Spanish	7%	11%	5%	6%	7%	6%	7%	4%
English	89%	89%	90%	93%	89%	94%	89%	96%

<i>Special Ed</i>	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05
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Speech	2%	3%	3%	5%	3%	3%	3%	4%
SLD	5%	6%	5%	3%	5%	2%	4%	2%
EBD	3%	1%	2%	1%	2%	1%	2%	1%
OHD	3%	2%	3%	1%	4%	1%	4%	1%
DD	2%		3%		2%	1%	2%	1%

Student Academic Achievement

Minnesota Comprehensive Achievement Tests

The Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA) tests include reading, math and writing assessments that are given annually to all public school 3rd and 5th graders in Minnesota. The content of the tests is derived from the academic standards adopted in the state of Minnesota. The MCAs were given statewide in March 2003 and 2004.

In a comparison of the 3rd and 5th grade Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments, the proficiency rate of the Spanish Immersion students on the whole was 4%-20% higher than the district proficiency rate. It should be noted however, that the program is a choice

program, and students and families have self-selected to be in the program. Additionally, information from the parent surveys of students no longer enrolled indicated some students have elected to exit the program due to academic difficulty.

The target score for proficiency on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments is 1420. The following chart provides information on the proficiency rate and the average score for each grade level.

Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment Results and Comparisons

2003 Reading	Spanish Immersion	Moorhead District	State
Grade 3 – % Proficient	74%	67%	73%
Grade 3 – Ave. Score	1537	1488	1511
2003 Mathematics	Spanish Immersion	Moorhead District	State
Grade 3 – % Proficient	79%	67%	72%
Grade 3 – Ave. Score	1553	1491	1519
2004 Reading	Spanish Immersion	Moorhead District	State
Grade 3 – % Proficient	74%	70%	73%
Grade 3 – Ave. Score	1573	1517	1535
Grade 5 – % Proficient	95%	70%	76%
Grade 5 – Ave. Score	1730	1495	1579
2004 Mathematics	Spanish Immersion	Moorhead District	State
Grade 3 – % Proficient	80%	53%	60%
Grade 3 – Ave. Score	1553	1429	1523
Grade 5 – % Proficient	90%	67%	74%
Grade 5 – Ave. Score	1616	1495	1539

Measures of Academic Progress Assessment Data – Fall 2004

**Reading Normative Data
Average Mean Rit Score**

Grade	Spanish Immersion	Moorhead	National Mean
2	168	176	177.7
3	196	192	188.7
4	204.7	200	198
5	213.7	208	205.2

**Mathematics Normative Data
Average Mean Rit Score**

Grade	Spanish Immersion	Moorhead	National Mean
2	176	180	177.6
3	201	194	189.7
4	206.9	204	200.4
5	221.2	213	208.9

The data would indicate results following national studies (Rubio, 1998). The Spanish Immersion students demonstrate lower performance on standardized tests in the primary grades, but often achieve at the same level or higher than peers in the intermediate grades.

Parent Satisfaction

This study sought to determine the level and nature of parent satisfaction with the Spanish Immersion Program. A survey of parents with students currently enrolled and/or previously enrolled was conducted. The current student surveys were sent home with students and returned to the schools. The surveys for the 6th grade students and the students no longer enrolled in the district were sent in the mail with return envelopes. The kindergarten surveys were distributed at kindergarten information meetings and returned to Ellen Hopkins Elementary School. The surveys were developed by Lynne Kovash, Assistant Superintendent, with assistance from Anne Moyano, Principal, S.G. Reinertsen Elementary School, and Mary Jo Schmid, Principal, Ellen Hopkins Elementary School, using surveys that had been developed for other language immersion programs. The surveys were divided into four different categories:

- 1) Current students
- 2) Students no longer enrolled in the program
- 3) 6th grade students
- 4) Kindergarten students who chose not to enroll

Current Students

The rate of return for the survey of current students was 43%. Two hundred twenty-four surveys were sent home with students and 97 were returned. A majority of the respondents (78%) indicated that the main reason they enrolled in the Spanish immersion program was so their child will have an academic or career advantage.

The next highest indicator was that their child would have a stronger identity as a bilingual-bicultural person (51%).

Seven respondents (7%) indicated they moved to Moorhead so their child could attend the Spanish Immersion Program. Thirty of the respondents (31%) indicated that the Spanish Immersion Program has not influenced whether they live in Moorhead. Ninety respondents (93%) indicated they would recommend the Spanish Immersion program to other parents. Respondents also indicated high levels of agreement, in the 90% range, with teaching children the same subjects as other students, developing Spanish skills, and developing knowledge of other cultures.

Eight of the respondents (8%) listed lack of transportation as a concern. Eleven respondents (11%) indicated they wanted the program continued in the upper grades. Six (6%) indicated a need for tutors and two (2%) indicated a concern with class size. Five respondents (5%) also noted concern with the retention of teachers.

Students No Longer Enrolled in the Program

Twenty-six surveys were sent out to families with students no longer enrolled in the program and 13 were returned, for a return rate of 50%. The respondents to this survey indicated the main reasons their students were enrolled in the Spanish Immersion Program was to have an academic or career advantage (77%) and to have a stronger identity as a bilingual-bicultural or multicultural person (62%). Four respondents (31%) indicated their child was no longer in the program due to not making progress. Four responses (31%) indicated they were disappointed with the program. Three respondents

(23%) indicated they could not arrange transportation. It appears that many (39%) of the students left the program after their kindergarten year.

6th Grade Survey

The survey was sent to families of students who had been enrolled in the Spanish Immersion Program in the 5th grade and now attend Horizon Middle School. The rate of return for the survey was 70% with 20 surveys sent out and 14 returned.

The majority of the respondents indicated that the main reason they enrolled in the Spanish Immersion Program was so their child will have an academic or career advantage (86%). The next highest indicator was that their child would be able to communicate with family, friends or other Spanish-speaking people (50%). One respondent (7%) indicated they chose to move to the Moorhead School District so their child could attend the Spanish Immersion Program. The surveys also indicated a high level of satisfaction with the K-5 Spanish Immersion Program with positive responses near the 100% range for the teaching of subjects, knowledge of cultures, and English skills developed. Eleven of the respondents (85%) indicated they would be interested in after school programs for their child to practice Spanish.

The survey provided an opportunity for respondents to relay issues or concerns. Seven respondents (54%) indicated a desire for continuation of the program in the 6th grade or higher and five (38%) had general positive comments for the program.

Pre-Kindergarten Parent Questionnaire

The questionnaire was distributed to families of prospective kindergarten students at kindergarten registration. Approximately 350 surveys were distributed to families as they registered for kindergarten. At this point, 130 surveys were returned. Only two surveys were returned of those students who have chosen to enroll in the program. Of the surveys returned for students who have chosen not to enroll, the information has been tabulated.

Forty-three of the families (47%) chose not to enroll their child in the Spanish Immersion Program, as they preferred to have their child attend the assigned school. Nineteen of the families (17%) could not arrange transportation and 18 (17%) indicated their child would receive a better education in the regular English program. Twenty of the families (18%) indicated learning a second language was not important at this time.

Cost Analysis

Transportation Costs

Transportation was provided to the students enrolled in the program from 1999 to 2001. Transportation service outside of the attendance area for the assigned schools was discontinued beginning with the 2001-2002 school year as part of the overall budget reduction process by the school district. The costs were estimated to be in the \$65,000 range per year. In an effort to continue the program, despite massive budget cuts, the School Board made the decision to eliminate transportation for the program.

Administration

A program coordinator, Rita Gullickson, was employed from 1999 to 2000. In a continued effort to reduce administrative costs associated with the program and across the district, the coordinator position was eliminated in 2000. Central office administrators, the building principal, and teacher leadership worked together to administer the program. The program requires a substantial investment of administrative involvement to maintain its success.

Staff Recruitment and Retention

The hiring of Spanish Immersion teachers from the United States is comparable to the hiring of other teachers. The teachers will usually be able to apply for a teacher's license with their credentials from their current state. The hiring of teachers from other countries is a more complex task.

The amount of time to secure both a visa and a Minnesota teaching license can involve large blocks of time. The steps to secure a Minnesota license include an evaluation by World Education Service (WES) to determine the level and type of license the state of Minnesota will issue. If the state will not issue an elementary license, then a variance must be sought, which can involve coursework, mentors, a letter of support from the principal and possibly administration. The Praxis Test, which is a competency test, must also be passed for all teachers applying for a Minnesota license. The process for preparing for the Praxis Test can involve tutors, practice tests and a cost of approximately \$100 to be paid by the applicant.

The visa process has involved communication with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services regional offices and U.S. Embassy staff. Timelines are

essential to have teachers arrive in the United States to start teaching in the fall. The process can take up to six months. Assistance from federal congressional leaders has been sought, which involves preparation of information for the congressman's staff to enable the process to go smoothly.

Prospective teachers normally need to have many questions answered about living arrangements, social security cards, driver's licenses, teaching licenses, costs to be encountered for living expenses, and other issues when entering the country. E-mail and telephone calls are the main ways to communicate with teachers from other countries, which can also take additional help.

The process of assisting the prospective teachers with the requirements to enter the United States can take about 80 hours for each teacher. The assistance from the school district's Human Resources Department for teacher licensure may also take about 40 hours. The administration has also provided assistance for teachers in getting settled into the community, which can be about 120-160 hours. Over the year with additional requirements and assistance the estimate is about 80 hours. The school district's Human Resources Department and building administration have spent approximately 210 hours for each teacher.

Instructional Materials

In 1999 and 2000 the original cost of providing the library materials, textbooks and instructional supplies for the classroom was approximately \$30,000. The district also utilized funds from entitlement grants to subsidize the program in the beginning years. Those costs now are a part of the textbook cycle, and Spanish materials are provided when the English materials are ordered. At this point those costs are now equitable.

However, anytime a new classroom is opened, there is a cost for providing new instructional materials. Many of the supplies in the Spanish Immersion classroom may be provided on an equitable basis as for non-immersion classrooms.

Curriculum writing was paid in the first years of the program to the Spanish Immersion teachers for adapting curriculum materials that were not available in Spanish. Time was also spent translating materials into Spanish. The costs the first two years were about \$16,000. The funding for the curriculum writing was out of entitlement grants, staff development funds and competitive grants. Any curriculum work follows the regular schedule, and immersion teachers work side-by-side with non-immersion teachers to develop materials and purchase resources.

Conclusions

The Spanish Immersion Program has been sustained through budgetary reductions and reconfiguration of the district. The program continues to demonstrate academic quality evident through the assessment scores of the students enrolled in the program. The results of the parent surveys indicate a high level of satisfaction and regard for the program. While transportation is cited by a small number of parent survey respondents, indicators are that the enrollment within the Spanish Immersion Program has not been impacted negatively. Responses from the surveys also indicate that the Spanish Immersion Program has drawn a small number of families to the district.

The enrollment of the Spanish Immersion Program consists of approximately 10% of the total K-5 population. The program makes up about 30% of the student population at Ellen Hopkins Elementary School.

The elementary Spanish Immersion Program in the Moorhead School District has been a strong academic and cultural option for students. Compared to the demographics of the school district elementary population, the Spanish Immersion Program has fewer students with special needs and receiving free and reduced lunch. The program is a choice option for families and students. The program was designed as an elementary program and should continue to be supported to provide a strong academic base for all students who have chosen to be a part of the program.

Recommendations

1. Continue to provide the Spanish Immersion Program at Ellen Hopkins Elementary School as a K-5 magnet program. The program should continue to be a choice program for students.
2. Given budgetary restrictions, transportation for students living outside the attendance area will continue under the present system.
3. Develop literacy rich environments for all students. Ten percent of the elementary budget for media and library should be allocated to the Spanish Immersion Program. The 30% enrollment at Ellen Hopkins Elementary School should be considered in determining instructional supply budgets, library materials, etc. at Ellen Hopkins Elementary School.
4. Develop an advisory committee to guide the school district's long range planning for the program. The committee should review additional data and information regarding the program. The committee should be a part of the continuous

- improvement process for the program. The committee shall be comprised of administrators, teachers, parents and a school board member.
5. Work with Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM) and Concordia College to consider partnership opportunities for university students, immersion teachers and elementary students.
 6. Continue to provide assistance in the area of reading and math to meet the academic goals of the district for students in the Spanish Immersion Program.
 7. Research the fluency assessment from the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA) Institute of the University of Minnesota for assessment in the language fluency area.
 8. Work with the Spanish instructors in the district to develop a placement test for the students exiting the program in the 5th grade. The placement test will determine possible placement in high school classes or provide for the test out option as required by Minnesota state statute.
 9. Develop a plan to research and explore the dual language program for English Language Learners (ELL). This program is described in the ELL Education Program Guidelines 2004, Program Models. The model is also known as two-way immersion or two-way bilingual education.
 10. Consider the use of the START time at Horizon Middle School as an opportunity for students from the elementary Spanish Immersion Program to read and discuss in the Spanish language.
 11. The district should develop a mentorship program for teachers new to the district, which will be beneficial for teachers in the Spanish Immersion Program.

12. The district communications coordinator should continue to maintain and update information for parents and work with teachers to provide support for the program.
13. Support the staff recruitment and retention efforts of the school district through the Human Resources Department within the financial constraints of the school district.

Appendices

- 1) Current Student Survey Results
- 2) Students No Longer Enrolled in the Program Survey Results
- 3) 6th Grade Student Survey Results
- 4) Pre-Kindergarten Students Choosing Not To Enroll in the Program Survey
Results

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