

El Camino Traveled: Ten Years of Community Building: A Foreword

Ofelia García

This foreword introduces readers to the actions of the many people who have been making camino/paths as a community builds a school. In so doing, the traditional educational route is reversed. It is not simply the educators making the *camino* for a community regarded as poor and deficient. It is a rich bilingual comunidad of families, educational leaders and staff, students, community organizers who have fearlessly stepped into a *camino* that started out with Dos Puentes to bridge ‘idiomas, culturas y mundos’ and has ended up as a promising and rich bilingual comunidad in ‘The Heights’. This monumental book highlights the philosophy, practices, and experiences of all the different actors to create this bilingual community, because as a Latina mother says in Chapter 8, ‘community is created and nurtured; it does not just come from placing diverse people in the same space or school’ (p. 101).

The school’s philosophy of critical collaboration among diverse people is reflected in the ways that this book is structured and written. It is edited by a team made up of a university professor and co-founder (Kleyn), the founding principal of the school (Hunt), the founding assistant principal (Jaar), a founding teacher (Madrigal), and the founding parent coordinator (Villegas). Most research in bilingual education has been conducted and authored by academic researchers. This book, however, is authored by school leaders, teachers, student teachers, mothers, fathers, community advocates, and university professors and researchers, with all their diverse voices and lenses shaping an equitable community of scholars. In fact, this book emerges from a different locus of enunciation (Mignolo, 2020) – not from the scholars or the university partners, but from the comunidad itself, thus opening up a process of ‘decolonizing research’ (p. 3). The decolonizing work evident in this book’s horizontal collaboration among equal participants demonstrates a commitment to addressing inequities in the production of knowledge. Decolonizing academic work by inverting the power relationships in a school has the effect of unsettling traditional

ideologies about bilingualism, race, and class, as it reveals the potential and strength of complex multilingual comunidades. By acknowledging what Grosfoguel (2007) calls the ‘silenced knowledge’ of families and teachers, possibilities of an education ‘otherwise’ emerge.

As a decolonizing enterprise, the writing of this book has been inclusive of all voices and epistemologies, and has not shied away from the tension that exists when building a diverse community that centers language-minoritized children and families, their language and cultural practices, and knowledge. Teachers describe how their educational practices reflect their critical stances on equity, immigration, inclusion, race, bilingualism and biliteracy; and yet, how they must negotiate with family members who may question some of their beliefs and practices. Families recognize the disparities that exist between Latinx families and white families who live on the other side of the Broadway divide of Washington Heights, the side that is undergoing rapid gentrification. With honesty, differences are acknowledged and raciolinguistic ideologies are called out. The people making camino in these chapters make clear that what upholds this diverse comunidad is their shared meaning of bilingually and equitably educating the children of the Heights. The lens of this book is neither the center nor the periphery, but a network of complex relationships among equal partners.

Bilingual education in this book is not simply about language, for ‘linguistic objectives exist *alongside* but never *instead of* curricular goals’ (p. 179) and alongside an activist stance. In many ways, the commitments of this comunidad go back to the very beginnings of US bilingual education before models and language allocation policies had been defined by external educational authorities. Guided by the community and *haciendo camino al andar*, [making the path upon walking], the curriculum and educational practices and policies in this school have been shaped from the ground up. A decade of joint paseos and wanderings/wonderings through curricula, policies and practices have enabled them to ‘shift, modify, stretch and expand’ (p. 48). The original strict language allocation policies have made way for translanguaging spaces in order to give students the freedom to use their full linguistic and semiotic repertoire purposefully. Rigorous balanced literacy practices have given way to center-based learning, as the effects of the pandemic started to be felt. Strict class schedules now make room for Holding Space time to accommodate the experience of immigrant families who have been separated, for students and families who feared deportation after Trump’s election, as well as the socioemotional experiences of all. Books used are multilingual/multicultural/multiracial-centered, adding to the many rich stories of everyone in the comunidad. Structures that support families have been strengthened and are many - Family Fridays, Welcome Potluck, Home Visits, Language Exchanges, Rincón Hispano. And yet, as the comunidad walks, sometimes with different rhythms, it has remained committed to a joint purpose - the education of a racialized bilingual community.

For me, this book offers much more than ideas about policies and practices. It offers lived experiences, thoughts, feelings. It does not just name and list educational policies and structures or pedagogical practices. It does not do so from the perspective of the teacher on the one hand, or of the student on the other, but from the totality of the comunidad. It brings the reader into the experience holistically. For example, it does not just describe how field trips connect to the curriculum. It takes us in actual paseos, and allows us to live them through the experience of teachers, students, and community members. It does not tell us about the difficulties of remote teaching and learning during COVID. It brings us into the life of a father, struggling with his children. It does not name Family Friday as a useful structure to support families. It lets us see it and feel its effects through the actions of family members. It lets us as readers into a home to experience the home visits that staff members conduct prior to students enrolling in kindergarten.

In describing actual lessons, student voices are heard in classrooms: ‘Yo tengo una conexión,’ says a student during a literacy lesson. But that connection is not simply a curricular one; it is a lived one, fueled by the students’ agency in this comunidad. For example, parent-teacher conferences are replaced by student-led conferences, where children show parents pieces of their own work, thus ‘placing each child at the center of their learning’ (p. 95). We see, hear and feel children, parents and teachers. A 2nd-grader expresses his pride in showing his work to his parents during the student-led conference – ‘At first I was nervous’, but then ‘I felt proud’. His father shares how pleased he was to hear his child. This process not only shows the father what it is the child is learning, but also, as the father says, to ‘vivir la experiencia’ (p. 95).

For me, this is what makes this book so special to live the experiencia of a committed community of educators, family members, activists, students, university partners, as they make the road en conexión. The book takes us into the lives, languaging, experiences and vivencias of a community trying to shape a world of orgullo (pride) y activismo bilingüe for all. In so doing, the book paves the way for other comunidades wishing to forge new caminos to justly educate racialized bilingual children. It engages us in not only imagining, but in living a vision of other realities. Stepping into this space, we are liberated from the confinement of educational failure assigned to racialized bilingual communities. This book shows us the radical potential of a dual language bilingual school en conexión with community as it makes camino al andar.

References

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Dos Puentes Elementary: An Introduction

Tatyana Kleyn and Victoria Hunt

Dos Puentes Co-Founder and Founding Principal



Image I.1 The Dos Puentes Elementary School building in Washington Heights.
Photo by Gerardo Romo

Dos Puentes Elementary School was founded in 2013 as a New York City Public School, a community school in the upper Manhattan neighborhood of Washington Heights. Every student who walks through its doors becomes part of its dual language bilingual program *en español* and English from kindergarten through 5th grade. As the school prepares to celebrate its 10th anniversary, its founders, the editors of this

volume – Professor Tatyana Kleyn, Principal Victoria Hunt, Assistant Principal Alcira Jaar, *Maestra* Rebeca Madrigal and Parent Coordinator Consuelo Villegas – wanted to bring together the school’s *comunidad* to reflect on the formation and development of Dos Puentes.

Dos Puentes (translated as ‘Two Bridges’) is a fully bilingual school where all students – regardless of home language(s), place of birth, (dis)ability and additional social and human differences – are viewed as fully capable and deserving of becoming bilingual and biliterate, and of developing critical consciousness of their community and world as a human and educational right (Cervantes-Soon *et al.*, 2017). Within Dos Puentes, everyone is part of an enriching program that integrates students who come from Spanish/English/bilingual homes, as well as those who speak Arabic, Haitian Creole, Korean and Russian (among other languages). There are no barriers to entry such as academic assessments, teacher recommendations, or other gatekeeping mechanisms that ban emergent bilingual students with identified disabilities from taking part in a program where both their (dis)abilities and language learning are addressed (Cioè-Peña, 2021).

The student body continues to reflect the local community, which is mostly made up of those who come from Latinx, immigrant and Spanish-speaking homes. There are also students who come from upper/middle-class white, Black, and Asian English-speaking families, who contribute to the school’s heterogeneity. This brings with it positive aspects of integration where students who come from different racial, ethnic, cultural, socioeconomic and linguistic backgrounds can learn about each other in their daily classroom experiences rather than from a distance (via literature, film, etc.). The school’s dual language bilingual program is a model intended to push back against oppressive educational structures for Latinx students. While the setup for positive integration is there, having a dual language bilingual program does not make decentering whiteness a given. Research has shown that, ‘US schooling has white normativity at its core and thus schooling defaults to providing an inequitable education to students from marginalized groups, even with efforts like bilingual education that intend to make schooling more just’ (Chávez-Moreno, 2019: 103). This means that even when bilingual education programs – like Dos Puentes – are made up of a majority of Latinx students and teachers, the foundation of white supremacy still creates the conditions for unequal balances of power and entitlement that reinforce racial hierarchies (Spring, 2016). Therefore, while having diverse students together in a school learning bilingually is important, it does not ensure they will all benefit in the same way without an eye toward equity and decentering whiteness.

While the school is in a neighborhood where Dominicans have been the majority for decades, the neighborhood is experiencing gentrification that permeates into its schools. The gentrification of dual language programs across the country has brought to light issues of power, access, and

resource hoarding that are certainly not absent from Dos Puentes Elementary (Delavan *et al.*, 2021). The school's staff, faculty and administration have remained focused on the civil rights movement that serves as the root of US bilingual education policies as they work to center the families who are most vulnerable in our society and the school (Flores & García, 2017). This is done by paying attention to issues of race and racism, working toward linguistic equity in and out of the classroom, ensuring that leadership roles are available to Spanish-speaking and immigrant family members and focusing on equity – rather than equality – in terms of the needs and strengths of students and families. This work is undertaken with the goal of making these issues visible to the larger community, in order to counter how bilingual programs often remain centered on white and middle-class values and norms (Hadi-Tabassum, 2006).

This book offers case studies and longitudinal reflections from those who make up the school community. It is geared toward educators currently working in bilingual schools or programs, as well as those aspiring to be part of such a school to understand all that goes into developing and sustaining a bilingual school. Most of the text is written in English so that educators of all language backgrounds can access the content and make connections to bilingual programs in a variety of languages. However, *el español* is used throughout the chapters to reflect the bilingual approach of the Dos Puentes school, families and educators. The editors italicize Spanish words so that they stand out to readers who may not recognize them. The inclusion of Spanish in italics also allows for the book to reflect how languages are both integrated and separated in dual language bilingual programs. Names in Spanish and other languages are not italicized.

Decolonizing Research

Lessons from a Dual Language Bilingual School tells the story of the growth, successes and struggles of Dos Puentes directly from those who have made it their educational home. And just as the school does, the book brings to the forefront the varied voices and experiences of the whole community. In this way, the book works to decolonize research, which is often told through the lens of researchers, making the perspectives of educators and families tangential through quotes or text boxes. The reality is that some researchers have limited experience in the communities, schools and classrooms about which they write. As Ofelia García stated in the foreword, our approach to decolonizing educational research aims to center the voices of those often silenced, or left on the periphery, in research through an intentional approach that create more equal power structures among and between educators, families and researchers by forefronting the former. Therefore, the lessons of *una década de* Dos Puentes will be told directly by school community members, including the teachers, families, administrators and their university and community partners. The

chapters also include student perspectives and work. Then, to contextualize the key ideas shared by the Dos Puentes community, researchers with expertise in the topic and/or with a connection to Dos Puentes as university partners, student teacher supervisors, professional developers, or collaborators offer a short commentary to highlight the connections between the Dos Puentes cases and the literature, and to discuss implications and next steps for the field of bilingual education.

There exists a range of powerful books about how to create bilingual programs (Freeman *et al.*, 2022; Hamayan *et al.*, 2013; Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Romero-Johnson, 2012; Soltero, 2016), understand the raciolinguistic experiences of bilingual students and families (Flores *et al.*, 2020; Rosa 2019), develop a translanguaging stance and build it into the pedagogy (García & Kleyn, 2016; García *et al.*, 2017; Sánchez & García, 2022), teach towards biliteracy (Escamilla *et al.*, 2014; Espinosa & Ascenzi-Moreno, 2021; Pérez & Torres-Guzmán, 2001) and address issues of power and culturally sustaining practices (Dorner *et al.*, 2023; España & Herrera, 2020). This book aims to show how these areas come together within one bilingual school, and to do that from the voices of those who have been the most closely connected to Dos Puentes, some since its formation. The aim of the book is not just to share the trajectory and experiences of this singular and unique school, but to allow for prospective and current educators and leaders to think through how the work of Dos Puentes can connect to their own settings, and how they can inform and improve their context as well.

The Road to Dos Puentes Elementary: A Principal's Journey

Experience and opportunity

‘Have you ever thought about starting a school?’ the email read. It was the summer of 2012. These were the years of New York City (NYC) Mayor Bloomberg. Upon gaining mayoral control of the public schools, Mayor Mike Bloomberg felt that longtime ‘failing’ schools – meaning those with low standardized test scores – should be closed and reopened with a new administration, new staff and a new focus. While I (Victoria) was unsure about the legitimacy of this philosophy, the idea of starting a fully bilingual school that would use language as an asset, build from educators with many collective decades of teaching experience in bilingual settings and collaborate with like-minded educators in a city rich in resources, cultures and opportunities, was more than intriguing. ‘Our whole school will support full bilingualism in Spanish and English. We will treat parents as partners. We will use inquiry and hands-on learning to support deep thinking and language development. And we will partner with Teachers College, Columbia University and The City College of New York to ensure current teachers continue to deepen their craft as they also

prepare future bilingual teachers’, read the proposal submitted. After many pitches, interviews and panel presentations, the proposal was accepted, and the school was born.

I was the person who received the email six months prior and wrote the initial proposal. I had not grown up bilingual. After graduating from college, I moved to Chimbote, Perú to do volunteer work and learned Spanish through immersion in a new culture and community where no one spoke English. I worked in a school with very limited resources and created a summer program for children when school was on break. As I struggled in Spanish and made many mistakes, the education I brought with me was never questioned. My privilege as a white, English-speaking US citizen certainly contributed to the assumption that I was educated. Over time, I could share and build from my knowledge base as I learned to communicate in Spanish. A few years later, I was given the opportunity to teach in Houston, Texas in a transitional bilingual program. I told the representative from the district that my Spanish was not great. I could speak but my Spanish literacy was lacking. The person hiring replied, ‘It’s okay, you don’t really need to teach much Spanish, as the goal of our program is to teach children English – the Spanish doesn’t matter much’. How could this be? These children’s Spanish was rich and beautiful. They brought with them so much knowledge and confidence in their language. Why would anyone not want to build from that? As Latinx children they were not afforded the privileges offered to me in Chimbote.

My experience in Perú and Houston was what led me to pursue a master’s and then a doctorate in bilingual education and leadership. I learned about the power of building on students’ home language and culture, as well as the power of full bilingualism and biliteracy (Nieto, 2002). At Teachers College (TC), Columbia University, I was introduced to dual language bilingual education as an approach to supporting students to continue to develop their home language as they acquire a new language. In a dual language model, children learn to use their home language to build on or develop literacy and other academic skills as they develop these same skills in an additional language. At Dos Puentes our dual language program combines children from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds to support children’s learning from each other as they serve as language models (Torres-Guzmán, 2002). By systematically alternating languages in the classroom, the power dynamic between linguistic groups can be shared. On any given day, some children are leaders due to their language skills and the language of the day. Then, the following day, the other group are leaders as the language switches. But even within these structures there is space for linguistic flexibility and freedom via translanguaging (García *et al.*, 2017, see Chapter 2). I saw the power of this model prior to starting Dos Puentes through my experience as a dual language bilingual teacher for ten years and an assistant principal for six years in schools that housed a dual language program as a strand within the larger school.

The proposal for a brand new fully bilingual school was built not only from my experiences as an ever-developing bilingual educator, but also as a person who knows that there is so much to be gained through collaboration. My teaching experiences over the past 20 years were exponentially deepened by working with others. Initially, I collaborated with Tatyana Kleyn and Alcira Jaar, two longtime colleagues, through various stages of the new school proposal. Tatyana brought research and her deep connections as a professor of bilingual education at The City College of New York, CUNY. We had studied for our doctorates together at TC where we were both mentored by Professor María Torres-Guzmán. Alcira brought multiple years of teaching and curriculum knowledge and dual language pedagogy. We had taught together in two different NYC public schools, one with a bilingual strand, and we also shared similar training at TC. Once the proposal for the school was approved, we quickly reached out to Consuelo Villegas, a person with many experiences working with families and schools who was very sensitive to the challenges of migration and raising children as an immigrant. We also reached out to Rebeca Madrigal, a committed and award-winning bilingual teacher with deep roots in supporting Spanish development and teaching practices that center families in their children's education. Rebeca was also a teaching colleague who shared the same training from TC. This rounded out the five co-founders whose collective expertise, experience and passion laid the foundation for Dos Puentes.



Image I.2 The five co-founders at the Dos Puentes 10th Anniversary Gala. From left to right: Rebeca Madrigal, Victoria Hunt, Consuelo Villegas, Alcira Jaar and Tatyana Kleyn

In December 2012, our school was approved by the New York City Public Schools, and a building had been promised. However, there was no location, no staff, no budget, no furniture, no curriculum and no name for a school that was supposed to start in August 2013. Over the next four months, I attended the New School Institute with 39 other future principals who were chosen to open new public schools throughout the New York City school system. We learned a lot about budgets, unions and enrollments. We were taught leadership skills, personnel management, and teacher observation tools. We were also taught how to ‘brand’ our future schools, including marketing tools and how to compete with the many, many charter schools that were opening during the Bloomberg mayoral administration. While I had been an assistant principal of an elementary school for six years, and had completed my doctorate on leadership in dual language bilingual settings, opening up a new school was an exercise in building each individual piece from the ground up, within a context of school competition.



Image 1.3 Principal Victoria Hunt explaining the school’s values to prospective families. Photo by Gerardo Romo

By March 2013 we were given a location to house our new school. We would be a zoned community kindergarten-to-5th-grade elementary school, and co-located, meaning we would share a building with another long-existing elementary school. A zoned school meant our first priority was to serve the children in the surrounding blocks of the neighborhood. Our building was a 100-plus-year-old structure in Washington Heights, a vibrant neighborhood in northern Manhattan that consists of many families with Latinx roots. The

location of the school was to be in the NYC Public Schools' District 6, which has among the highest number of students in the city labeled as 'English Language Learners' (ELLs). As a new dual language school, we were in a position to build from the strong cultural and linguistic roots of the community. Additionally, Alcira had grown up a few blocks away from the school and had deep ties to the neighborhood. All five initial members were very excited (and relieved) about our geographic placement.

Building a bilingual school



Image 1.4 A map of Manhattan that shows the location of Dos Puentes Elementary School and its nearby bridges. Map created by Aliana Ellington

Now that we were officially a NYC Public School, we needed to create a name. On a Sunday morning in March 2013, I, as the future principal, sat with Alcira and Tatyana in a Starbucks three blocks from the future school site. We wanted a name that would embrace the multicultural community, and pay tribute to both Spanish and English. We also hoped to recognize the location of Washington Heights, and the potential strength and opportunities of an education that supports two languages. Geographically, the school sits between the Washington Bridge connecting upper Manhattan to the Bronx across the East River, and the George Washington Bridge crossing the Hudson River to connect Manhattan to New Jersey. Alcira nailed it when she suggested, ‘Dos Puentes Elementary!’. Then, we added ‘Bridges between languages, cultures and worlds’. From that fateful moment Dos Puentes Elementary became our name. Soon after, we chose a logo to represent our bridges *entre idiomas, culturas y mundos*.



Image 1.5 The Dos Puentes Elementary logo, which can be seen in color on the book cover, includes the bilingual name of the school in red, and a representation of the *dos puentes* or two bridges in blue and green. These colors represent flags connected to the origins of many of the school’s immigrant families. The red and blue pay tribute to the students of Dominican heritage, and the red and green pay tribute to the students of Mexican heritage.

Over the next five months, our team of five chose curricula, hired and trained staff and bought furniture and supplies. We also had to recruit students. Flyers about our new school were posted in apartment buildings, hair salons, churches, restaurants and laundromats. We visited street fairs and local preschools. On weekends, we set up a table in front of our building to recruit families. Over time, we registered enough brave families to open our doors to our first group of children: three classes of bilingual dual language kindergarten students. Two of the classes were general education dual language classes and the third was a dual language integrated co-teaching class (ICT). The ICT structure supports up to 40% of students in the class with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), considered full-time special education students, alongside 60% of general education students. We were committed to being an inclusive community that embraces the different ways children learn and build from their individual strengths. Over the next five years we grew the school one grade level per year to have 18 classes, with three classrooms per grade from kindergarten

to 5th grade. We graduated our first class in June 2019, and now in our tenth year as a school (2023), Dos Puentes serves 437 students, all through a Spanish-English dual language bilingual model.

I am very proud to be the founding principal of Dos Puentes, but I am more proud of the collective efforts of all who have contributed along the way, and of our continued ability to transform.

Our Students, Families and Washington Heights Community

Three fourths of our student body are from a Latinx background. Depending on the year, 22 to 40% of these students are designated as ‘English Learners Learners’ and the overwhelming majority speak Spanish as their home language. Twenty percent of our students identify as white or mixed race and speak English in their homes. The remaining 5% of students identify as African American or Asian and generally speak English in their homes, though we have had students who speak Russian, Portuguese, Arabic, Italian, French, Haitian Creole, Korean, Hebrew and other languages. The demographics of our neighborhood make Spanish an important and integral part of all our lives. When one walks down the street in front of our school, Spanish is often seen and heard in the store displays, campaign posters, street domino games and music escaping from apartment windows. Interactions with many street vendors and the corner *bodega* are often exclusively in Spanish, which is a vibrant and rich part of our surrounding community. It is also important to note that many of our bilingual students might be dominant in English even though they live in bilingual homes where other languages, mostly Spanish, are often spoken.

The multilingualism and multiculturalism of our school and surrounding community is something we view as a source of strength and pride. However, we are also aware of the imbalance of power that our families face in society, and subsequently in our school. The ripples of gentrification penetrate our interactions, and allow some family members a sense of privilege while others feel silenced, especially when they are Spanish speakers, in spite of being part of a bilingual school. There are tensions that arise based on differences in culture and values that require difficult conversations and deep listening, especially for those who are accustomed to having the loudest voices. These realities are not only something we aim to remain aware of, but to address explicitly with students and families. Thereby we can push back against the ways that ‘bilingual education programs often predominantly serve the interests of the white English-speaking majority’ (Chávez-Moreno, 2019: 107).

Our Educators

The vast majority of the Dos Puentes faculty are bilingual, and they hold bilingual teaching certification (what New York State calls a

bilingual extension). Our staff is reflective of our students; about three fourths identify as Latinx, a fifth identify as white and the remainder are African American. While English can easily become the language of dominance, we strive to deepen Spanish by holding some professional development in Spanish, and we use Spanish within our community and with the whole student body. When working with families, we try to say everything in Spanish first, and then follow up with translation into English in order to prioritize the value of Spanish. The recent influx of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers from Venezuela and Central America being welcomed into New York City has increased our overall student population, with many more new immigrant Spanish speakers than in the past. As an established dual language bilingual school, we are ready to support these newly arrived children and their families.

The Dual Language Bilingual Approach

The implementation of the dual language bilingual program at Dos Puentes primarily follows a 50/50 model of Spanish and English. In general, we alternate languages each day, one day in Spanish and the following day in English. Across grades this is implemented with slight modifications. In kindergarten and all ICT classes, the children stay in the same room and the teachers switch languages day to day. Monday and Wednesday are in Spanish; Tuesday and Thursday are in English. In kindergarten, the model begins with a 60/40 distribution where Friday is fully in Spanish to develop a strong base for our youngest students. This helps the Spanish-dominant students build from their base with early literacy skills being introduced in Spanish, while the more English-dominant students benefit from a strong consistent foundation in Spanish. By contrast, the ICT classrooms from 1st through 5th grade split Friday with Spanish in the morning and English in the afternoon to maintain the 50/50 model. In the non-ICT general education classes, students follow the side-by-side 50/50 model. Within the side-by-side model, a child has two teachers, one who teaches in one language and the other who teaches the second language in two separate classrooms (Freeman *et al.*, 2022). The children alternate teachers and classrooms to receive instruction bilingually across both languages.

At Dos Puentes, in our two general education classes in 1st through 4th grade, one teacher teaches in Spanish and the other teaches in English. The students switch between the Spanish and English component classes every other day. The teachers work as a team to always extend the content across the languages, rather than repeat it. The 5th grade general education students also have two teachers, but they divide the instruction by content and both alternate languages day by day. One 5th grade general education teacher teaches language arts, and the other teaches math and social studies through inquiry. On Monday, Wednesday and half of

Friday, they both provide instruction in Spanish, and then Tuesday, Thursday and half of Fridays they both teach in English (see Table I.1). All children subsequently have two teachers either in one classroom (kindergarten and all ICT) or two teachers across two classrooms. While there are different ways that we implement the language balance within the school, the goal is always to ensure both languages are used to promote full bilingualism and biliteracy.

Table I.1 Language distribution across grade levels in ICT and general education classes. Created by Sabrina Poms

Kindergarten General Education & ICT Self-Contained Bilingual Model (60/40) <i>Students stay in one classroom with the same teacher(s) and alternate languages daily</i>				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
el español	English	el español	English	el español

1st Grade – 5th Grade ICT Self-Contained Bilingual Model (50/50) <i>Students stay in one classroom with the same teachers and alternate languages daily</i>				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday * Alternates weekly
el español	English	el español	English	el español
				English

1st Grade – 4th Grade General Education Side by Side Bilingual Model (50/50) <i>Students alternate between the Spanish and English component classrooms across a 2 week cycle</i>										
	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI
Class 101	el componente de español	English Component	el componente de español	English Component	el componente de español	English Component	el componente de español	English Component	el componente de español	English Component
Class 102	English Component	el componente de español	English Component	el componente de español	English Component	el componente de español	English Component	el componente de español	English Component	el componente de español

5th Grade General Education Departmentalized Bilingual Model (50/50) <i>Students rotate mid-day between departments and alternate languages daily</i>										
	Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday	
	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM
Class 501	Literacy el español	Math el español	Math English	Literacy English	Literacy el español	Math el español	Math English	Literacy English	Literacy el español	Math English
Class 502	Math el español	Literacy el español	Literacy English	Math English	Math el español	Literacy el español	Literacy English	Math English	Math el español	Literacy English

Dos Puentes has been intentional in identifying out-of-classroom teachers who are bilingual, so that dance and art can be taught completely in Spanish. Music is mostly in English because we first began working with Ms Lorene, our music teacher, through a community partnership that evolved into a full-time position. While Ms Lorene is not fluent in Spanish, she sings in Spanish and has learned a lot of Spanish over the past eight years that she has worked at the school. Our two science teachers

alternate units in Spanish and English. Intervention and service providers such as speech and occupational therapy are done in the language(s) designated on students' IEPs. The ability for students to get these services in the language of need is critical in supporting the goals of our school as well as student needs. As we hire staff and create programs, bilingualism, language support and language planning are an integral part of our decision making.

Because we have students and staff with diverse backgrounds and countries of origin, we have the opportunity to explore, learn from and celebrate these linguistic and cultural differences. The variation in Spanish across different regions and countries is acknowledged and explored within the classroom, with each difference being seen as unique rather than correct or incorrect. While many of our faculty and students have ties to the Dominican Republic, many others are from Mexico, Honduras, Colombia, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, El Salvador, Peru, Argentina, Spain and more, as well as the United States and specifically New York City. Each person brings their own nuances to Spanish and from that we all exponentially grow.

The Four Dos Puentes Pillars

When all the founders of the school came together, we identified four areas that would anchor the vision of the school to keep everyone united and working toward the same goals.

Eventually, these areas became the pillars of the school's philosophy. First, we shared a common commitment to value the multilingualism and multiculturalism of the school community. We also committed to centering the experiences, knowledge and strength of families while supporting the bridge between home and school. Additionally, we agreed that learning had to be active, based on inquiry and exploration. This allows children to make connections and build from their different strengths, and prepares them to solve problems in their classrooms and beyond. Lastly, we were committed to building two-way partnerships to support and deepen the work of the school. These partnerships started with local universities to ensure staff continued growing and learning as we supported future bilingual educators. And it is these four commitments that became our four Dos Puentes pillars:

- (1) *bilingüismo, biliteracidad y multiculturalismo,*
- (2) *las familias son partners, leaders and advocates,*
- (3) *investigaciones and hands-on learning, and*
- (4) *partnerships with universities, organizations y la comunidad.*

These pillars are all written to emphasize *el bilingüismo*, woven throughout. They serve to unite us in working together to provide the foundation of what we do to support one another: students, teachers, staff, families,

partners and the community. We regularly reflect upon and make changes to our practices, but we do so while maintaining our commitment to these overarching pillars.

While we are far from a perfect school, our four pillars ensure we remain committed to building from the strength of bilingualism and multiculturalism, and from our families, as well as from inquiry-based learning and partnerships.

Book Organization

This book will describe the challenges, successes and lessons that have been part of starting and growing a bilingual school for a decade. This is done through taking readers into the planning sessions, lessons, trips and school-wide activities that make up the Dos Puentes ecosystem. The cases are often enriched by photographs that feature the people, community and artifacts from the school. While the book is rich in stories, it is not a ‘how-to’ guide that outlines the steps to starting a (dual language) bilingual program or school. Nor do we provide an overview of central theories and pedagogies, although references in the commentary that follows each chapter can provide that information. Instead, we show readers the inside story of a bilingual school that is centered on four pillars that have been constant since the school was founded: *bilingüismo*, *biliteracidad y multiculturalismo*, *las familias son* partners, leaders and advocates, *investigaciones* and hands-on learning, and partnerships with universities, organizations y *la comunidad*.

Each section of the book begins with an introduction of each pillar and includes four to six short chapters by Dos Puentes community authors. The Dos Puentes authors employ a composite-case approach that allows them to highlight a topic by showing rather than telling, and integrating a range of key moments, experiences, years, grades and anecdotes that take us into the school (Willis, 2019). Then, each chapter is followed by a researcher’s commentary.

This book was written *en comunidad* to celebrate, reflect upon and share the decade-long project of Dos Puentes Elementary. It features the perspectives and voices of families, educators and students who make up the school’s members and serve as its experts. The process of bringing this book to publication was aligned with the way the school functions, through a shared leadership approach that permeates the ethos of the community. In other words, the book is not just *about* Dos Puentes, but it *is* Dos Puentes, and more specifically those who are at the heart of it. As you make your way from chapter to chapter you will hear directly from a bilingual special education teacher who has been at the school since it started, an immigrant Ecuadorian mother who herself was never able to earn a college degree but has much to teach educators, a teacher who started out at Dos Puentes as a student teacher and a father whose child

graduated during the pandemic. These authors, and many more, aim to take readers inside the classroom walls as well as outside the school doors, to show how bilingual theories and pedagogies are enacted when they center the bilingual students, families and community. We hope that readers will draw from these cases, not for replication, but for consideration and comparisons with their own schools and settings.

Lastly, while this book addresses the four pillars of Dos Puentes, it in no way covers everything that happens within the school. We would need a few more books to address all the inner workings and activities of Dos Puentes, or any other school for that matter. However, we hope to share here the heart of what makes Dos Puentes unique, and to help readers think about the core principles that will make their own schools and programs thrive for decades to come.

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