

Implementing a Dual Language Program: Learning From the Success of Chula Vista Learning Community Charter School

Slides 1–4

PEGGIE: Welcome everyone. This is Peggie Garcia from the National Charter School Resource Center. Welcome to our webinar *Implementing a Dual Language Program: Learning From the Success of Chula Vista Learning Community Charter School*. The National Charter School Resource Center is funded by the U.S. Department of Education, and we are currently sponsoring a 12-webinar series related to English language learners (ELLs). This is the fourth in our series, and we're really excited to feature Chula Vista Learning Community Charter School from Southern California here today. Chula Vista is a high-performing school overall and particularly high with their ELLs. That's one of the reasons we wanted to invite them to share all of the interesting things that they're doing at their school. They are also using their charter school autonomies in really interesting ways and using a very innovative curriculum to encourage their students to be multilingual, global citizens. They're here to share more about their model and their best practices today.

Before we begin and I turn it over to our esteemed presenters, I'm going to give everyone a quick overview of the webinar platform. It looks like some of you have joined us before, but if you're joining us for the first time I did mute everyone on the call today so that we can preserve the audio quality of the recording. What we'll encourage you to do is to enter any questions you might have at any time during the webinar in the chat. Then, we'll let the presenters present for about a half hour and take your questions at the end. Please go ahead and enter your questions throughout the webinar, and then we will get to as many as we can after the presentation.

You can listen to the audio portion either through your computer or over your phone. If you joined by phone, please mute your computer speakers to prevent an echo effect. If you have any audio problems during the webinar and you'd like to switch over to the phone, the phone number and the access participant code are in the chat for you. Underneath the chat window, there's a file share window and a pdf of



the slide presentation there. If you did not receive the e-mail I sent this morning that had the slides attached and you'd like to print them out and take notes on the slides, you can go ahead and print them out from the file share window. You just have to click on the file and then a button called "save to computer" will pop up; you hit that and then you can go ahead and download the file.

There are a few participant notes underneath the participant slide. To ask a question, please enter your question in the chat box to the left at any time. We won't answer it right away, but we will get to as many as we can. If you want to make the screen larger, you can use the full-screen option on the top right. If you listen over your computer, please note that your bandwidth will affect the quality of the audio during the presentation. To hear the highest quality audio possible, you should have a wired connection for your computer rather than wireless. You should close all applications other than Adobe that are running on your computer, and clear your browser's cache and cookies. Finally, the webinar is being recorded; we typically have an archive available on our website within three business days after the webinar, and the website where the archive will be is listed right there.

Welcome everyone. At this time, I would like to do a quick introduction to our presenters and then turn it over to them because they have a lot of wonderful lessons learned to share with us. From Chula Vista Learning Community Charter School we have the director of the school, Dr. Jorge Ramirez; the assistant director, Francisco Lopez; and—I love this title—the ambassador of education, Christyn Pope. Welcome all of you. Christyn: You should have control now, and you can go ahead and take over. Welcome.

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CHRISTYN: Thank you. I'm going to actually turn it over to Dr. Ramirez who will be starting the slide show, and we'll go from there.

DR. RAMIREZ: Welcome all. We hope that you can take from our experience and hopefully give you some ideas to transform our educational system. Just a brief history: In 1997, I was part of a design team to create this charter school that would be innovative and, at the same time, look at the best interests of all kids and prepare them for the 21st century. In

1998, the school opened next to an elementary school; after that, the interest became extremely popular being that we were designing a dual language program with a 50/50 model. The following year we had an enrollment of 120 and the following year we had an enrollment of close to 500. We immediately exceeded capacity at the site we were renting, so our district built a brand-new site for us and, as you can see in the PowerPoint, that's the new site that was constructed for us.

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In the designing of this process and in the designing of this school, we really wanted to look at our mission and see how our mission will drive the way that we see education; we looked at it from a variety of perspectives. We looked at a curriculum that needed to be research based. We looked at dual language structures that really focused on the acquisition of the Spanish language as well as the acquisition of the English language. We also wanted to look into any additional languages that we would want to add, which we would be authentic and true to the way the language is instructed. We also wanted to extend that and connect whatever we were doing during the day, in terms of instruction of skills, instruction of content and curriculum. We wanted to see how that would look like in the real world—to build those connections—and we did that through the development of our MicroSociety program. We'll explain that further as we go along through the slides. The most important thing is that we wanted to involve our parents and have our parents be a strong component of the development and implementation of the school.

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With that, we created our vision. Recently, we've studied the philosophy and we've all read the book of critical pedagogy by Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. In there, we created some themes and some expectations of how we would begin to design and implement our school. Based on that, we integrated all of the theories from Paulo Freire and looked at: How does it look in the lens of a dual language program? How does it look in terms of language learning? How does it look in terms of critical and self- reflection?—so that students can be prepared to question and answer anything that comes to them in the world.

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Our school, if you would see the next slide, is very interesting. We don't have what we consider a boundary school. Our school is considered open to any child who lives in the city of Chula Vista. The students who register at our school we consider transfers. Enrollment is 100 percent transfer students and basically what it is, is that the children or the parents go and register their child at their home school, and from there they ask for a zone transfer to our site. We usually have a registration day two days after the traditional district registration, so that we can give parents opportunities to register their children at our site. We have one of the lowest, I guess the lowest, mobility rate in our district, at 8 percent, and 57 percent of our students are in the free or reduced-price lunch program. We have a high English learner population, at 50 percent.

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Our goal is to educate the whole child, so we look at learning disabilities not as a deficiency, but as an educational opportunity for us to look at the diversity of students that we have. Whether it's language, whether it's some type of learning disability, we look at that and create and design individual programs through our response to intervention model to ensure that all students are meeting academic expectations that we set at the beginning of the academic school year.

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The attendance rate at the Chula Vista Learning Community Charter School is number one in our district. For the past three years, we have been ranked number one. I think we attribute this to the success of our program and the design, and the dedication of our teachers when we open the school year.

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As you can see, our ethnicity really resembles what our district is. We have a high Latino population; of that Latino population, 50 percent are English language learners. We have a high population of Latino students who are not fluent in Spanish; therefore, our immersion

program really focuses on the acquisition of both languages, and it really guided us to look at Spanish instructional models that were true and authentic, so that our students can not only maintain their primary language, but also their culture and their identity. We also looked at how we can look at the other populations that we service and begin to establish a multicultural and global perspective, so that students can know and understand the world.

Slides 12 and 13

Achievement in our school has been kind of interesting. When we opened in 1998, we started with a small group of students. Eventually in 2000, when they started with No Child Left Behind and really looking at reaching the 100 percent proficient and advanced, we started looking at our students. We weren't making the national targets, and we went into program improvement in the year 2000. After that, we felt that we were working really hard in our program, but I don't think we were working smart and focusing on individual student skills and outcomes that will better help them understand the content or the standards that we were trying to teach. So, we began to work smarter—looking at the planning of instructional units, looking at the planning of key standards, looking at the planning of using highly academic language, infusing effective strategies for language learning throughout the whole entire day, not at specific times—and we began to see growth. We exited program improvement immediately after we started doing this.

As you can see in our target populations, our goal is to close the achievement gap and to ensure that all students are meeting the same type of outcomes. As you can see in our English language arts, there are one-digit gaps between each of the subgroups.

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In math, you'll see similar gains. You'll see in red what is expected from the national and then, in the different colors, you'll see all students as well as Latino, socioeconomically disadvantaged, our English language learners, and the target populations. We're looking at closing the achievement gap in terms of ensuring that we have one-

digit gaps, not two-digit gaps, when we look at student performance and reaching advanced/proficient levels.

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What we do spend time on is looking at our students at specific grade levels, so every time we meet we look at our populations. We call this student assessment monitoring, where we look at and we spend time. We have the school psychologist, we have the school nurse, we have all of the teachers, we have all of the administration together. What we begin to do is to look at students based on assessments that we do throughout the year. Our goal is to get students at advanced/proficient levels. We look at each child by name, we look at each child by their level of proficiency or how they've done in the specific benchmark, and then we start targeting instruction to make sure that they meet these academic demands. I consider one of our strengths is us working as a team and ensuring that we're doing everything in the best interests of the child.

We're looking at the response to intervention model where we place students in tier two and tier three strands and provide small group support or one-on-one support, ensuring that each child is challenged on a daily basis to make sure that they meet their specific targets that they have established with parents as well as with teachers. At this time, I'd like to turn the phone to Ms. Pope who will continue to discuss our journey.

CHRISTYN: Good afternoon everyone. I'm Christyn Pope, the ambassador of education here at Chula Vista Learning Community Charter. First, I just want to explain my name as ambassador of education because Peggie made a comment about it in the beginning [AUDIO SKIP] Chula Vista Learning Community Charter. Every classroom is a different country from around the world. Our kindergarten is the continent of Asia; our first grade, Africa. Our students do not call themselves by their homeroom teacher's name. If we ask them where they're from, they'll say, "I'm from Tokyo, Japan," or "I'm from Namibia, Africa," so we have a global view of the world here at our school. Our students are ambassadors. We run a United Nations model government and our parents are also called ambassadors. We have the United Nations of

parent ambassadors here [AUDIO SKIP] title of ambassadors [AUDIO SKIP] of education.

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I'm going to go into the next slide, and that is the mindset. This is something that we've really worked on with our staff, as Dr. Ramirez mentioned, when we were going into safe harbor, when we were not meeting the targets. We really sat down and asked ourselves what is it about our staff that we need to work on? He talked about how we were working really hard, we were staying late, but we were not working smart. We needed to create a mindset for the staff, and you'll see here from some of our statements that we created and worked on, and did some professional development around, that we have a passion for learning through engagement with the students.

We look at students as oriented thinkers and that's, in any case, whether they're second language learners, because we have second language learners throughout our entire school because we're dual language immersion. We have English language learners and we have Spanish language learners [SLLs], so our mindset here is that it's not just ELLs we're looking at; we're looking at SLLs as well.

We look at everybody as thinkers; they're learning another language. We believe they deserve the highest quality and opportunity without prejudice. A lot of times, teachers will pass over their lists at the end of the year to the new teacher and already provide their judgments on the students. We've really worked on starting a clean slate every year—that you do not have any prejudices as you take this new student in. It's a brand-new year for them; it's a brand-new year for you. You may have a different experience than the teacher had with them previously, so let's see what we can find in this child that's positive.

We build this love of learning and discovery with all of the students.

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We've mentioned our programs—what we feel has been our success is the dual language immersion program. The value of the languages

here, of the acquisition of other languages; everything is equal here. We do not look at English as the predominant language; we value Spanish just as much. That is very important to us here at Chula Vista Learning Community Charter. We've also started Mandarin Chinese as a new language that we've brought in. The children receive from one hour to two hours a week of Mandarin Chinese through rotation every week. We're trying to teach them that there are other languages besides Spanish and English in the world.

The other program that we feel has been a huge success here at CVLCC is MicroSociety (you can look them up on the Internet: MicroSociety.org). This is where, in the last hour of school—we do have an extended timeframe— all of the students are incorporated into a society that they build. I mentioned that we have a United Nations government that we run, so we have the Secretariat General; we have, just as others do, elections for that person. Then, that person appoints, once they're elected, their cabinet members—who's going to work with them. Because every different classroom is a different country from around the world, there's an ambassador from each country. They are the ones who disseminate the information, and the teachers become facilitators of different jobs that our upper grade students create.

They create any type of job, a business, venture, or agency, which they would like to open up in the society. They create a business plan. The students then read the classified ads, they write a letter of intent, they write an application for the job; there's a job fair where the upper grade students hire the lower grade students. They have to have kindergarten through fifth grade in their businesses, and they open up for business. They make actual products that they sell or they have services that they provide. If it's a sports center, they may provide [a place] where they play sports. For the last 45 minutes of the day, it opens up as a marketplace, and businesses are opened or closed. Students are paid by checks, and they have a couple of banks here on site where they cash their checks. They pay their bills and they go out into the marketplace and shop.

This has been where we feel we've turned over the empowerment to the students. Our students run all of the assemblies; we do not have adults running the assemblies. We do it in both English and Spanish. It's up to the owner and the facilitating teacher if they would like to

have their business in English or Spanish, and this is just the way that we have students using oral language development. This is a time where they can use their creativity, where they can talk to each other as peers and experience the subjects that they learn during their regular school day and apply them to a real-world situation application piece. It's 21st century skills.

The third part here is the perspectives, the global perspectives. We really provide a lot of opportunities for our students to reach out to the world. We didn't want to stay in just the Chula Vista community, so what we've done is we've created service learning projects for our students to be involved in where they go out into the community—the state of California, the country, and the world—based on their grade levels and they work with different ideas that they're passionate about. We're involved with Peace One Day, which is an international organization for one day of cease fire that our whole school is involved in. You saw that on the first slide. We made the peace sign and sent it over. We have different students work with adoption agencies or pet or animal shelters. We have a senior citizens' 42-unit on site, where we're involved with working with the elderly. We just want them to be aware of how can they take what they've learned and take it out to the world, again using a lot of oral language development.

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Our next slide is our framework of what we believe is what makes us successful, and this is reading comprehension. We feel that in all subject areas—mathematics, social studies, science— students have to have the basis of reading comprehension and foundational skills in order for them to comprehend and understand. Then, that follows into writing. We look at reading and writing as connected.

Our next piece is GLAD, Guided Language Acquisition Design, which is something that all of our teachers are trained in. It's a program in our district that many teachers use, schools use. It brings in the realia, charts, songs, and different ways for language learners to receive a variety of ways of modalities to have the comprehensible input.

Our teachers are also all GATE [Gifted and Talented Education] certified. We brought in GATE trainers and we had every single

teacher GATE certified because we believe in knowing and having the cognitive awareness of differentiation in the classrooms. This isn't just working with high-performing students; this is also learning how to work with the different levels. We put a lot of emphasis on our students who are not performing, who get one-on-one assistance or small group instruction, but we also were missing some of the students who are at the higher end. It was really important for us to bring in the certification classes and reach and stretch for activities that we can do for those students who are above and beyond, and to differentiate and also bring those activities to any level of students.

The last acronym you see at the bottom; we call it the GRR. This stands for Gradual Release of Responsibility—and this is work from one of the professors of San Diego State University Dr. Nancy Frey—that they've come up with. How do we release from teacher modeling to independent student work?

When our teachers are doing their lesson plans, we will see this whole framework involved in their lesson plan. We'll see reading comprehension (how it's implemented), writing across the subject areas, our guided language acquisition design (How are they bringing in realia, charts, songs?), and the GATE activities. Then, how do they release it from the teachers themselves modeling to the guided groups to the collaboration, which is groups of students working together, and finally to the individual independent activities.

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We focused on comprehension because we also wanted them to be metacognitive of what they're learning, how they're learning it, and why they're learning it. Many times, when we do walk-throughs as an administrative team, we will walk through the classrooms and we will ask questions: What are you learning? Most importantly, why do you need to know this? When we ask students that, if they're able to give us a clear definition, it really tells us that our teachers are on target with what their output is. We do listen to the kids. We look at the purpose of what the teacher wanted to accomplish as we listen to the students, and then we put those connections together.

Also, as we were going through the change from meeting our targets, what we noticed was vocabulary development was an area that we really needed to work on. So, we have:

- Word solving across the subject areas
- Context clues
- Word parts that we need to work with
- Language frames that we have all subject areas working on.

We didn't look at it as just for the language arts teachers; they're not responsible for everything. All of our teachers had to have these pieces in their instruction. They have to know text structures and they have to know text features in all subject areas. A lot of times we put all of this onto our language arts teachers and, really, it's the dynamics of all subject areas to be able to point these out as they're teaching.

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Dr. Ramirez also mentioned this earlier when he was showing the graph of our tier two/tier three students from the response to intervention, and this is what we've put in place. We have assistants who go into the rooms based on the students' performance of the benchmarks that we give out and the assessments—it could be the CSTs, which is our California State Test, to benchmarks, to just monitoring students with our teachers (they'll let us know this child needs more support). We bring in assistants and they have guided reading. Dr. Ramirez has trained all of our assistants on guided reading in the way that he wants to see it being implemented in the classroom, which is very important that we, as administrators, are showing our assistants how to do it correctly.

They need to know and understand the skills, how to get them to the next level. We look at the gaps; we look at what it is that the student is missing. We have to do a lot of analyzing of the child's tests and assessments, and with our teachers, we're asking them to be very explicit in their instruction with these students. Sometimes, we're asking our teachers to pull these students after they've given the modeling for small group instruction [AUDIO SKIP] do not believe that one-size-fits-all mentality. You need to bring in all modalities. You really need to know the students. You need to know them by name;

you need to know them by their skills. What works for one student may not work for another.

Something else that Dr. Ramirez has also done is trained our entire staff on differentiating questions, tiered questions—the tier one, tier two, tier three words with vocabulary development. It is very important that we're pointing these words out as we read text prior to working with our students. We need to know the text very well; we need to pull out the words that we feel they'll struggle with or won't understand, and the words that they do know, give them the success of those as well.

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We believe another reason for our success is our consistency of practice. Our entire school is based on four units of study that we create prior to the year beginning and prior to the state testing. We have to make sure that all standards are taught and exposed to the students prior to the testing period. We have unit one, unit two, unit three, and unit four, which are based on our new Common Core State Standards. We put them in an immersion as well, where it's informational expository text for the first unit, narrative text for the second unit, back to information expository for the third unit, and the fourth unit is narratives again. Our mathematics teachers have also paced their units of study based on what skills they feel need to come first.

We tried doing it as a whole school, but then we found out that some grade levels wanted to start their pacing differently, so we really empowered our teachers to create not only their units of studies with us but also their lessons, so they match up. Our history, social studies, and science classes are also implemented in the same way, in units of study, and we've planned them out with the teachers.

After each period, unit of study, we administer a benchmark test where we, the administration, write the test. The teachers do not see the benchmark until the day of the benchmark, and we base it on the standards that were taught within that unit. We will not put in standards that were taught in different units. We want to see what they've taught and what the students know.

We also have enrichment, which we call extended learning. Every week, our teachers are released for two and a half hours for planning together. We do a lot of collaboration. We have our Spanish and English teachers meeting together to plan out week by week. During this time when they're here in Dr. Ramirez's office and Mr. Lopez's office planning, their students are either:

- In physical education
- Going to the library
- Having Mandarin Chinese
- Doing service learning projects.

In our upper grades, the sixth through eighth grades, which is our middle school, they have physical education, Mandarin, and service learning.

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As I said before, we have assessments and we look at the student work, but we also want to see what students are doing within the unit. This is our academic portfolio; this is where the subject areas are highlighted, where we can see how the standards are actually put out into a product. The teachers all have a grading system that they use to grade the different weekly assessments that they've created or the products that they've created. This is where they also look at what else the students need, so they develop the portfolio that focuses on the outcomes. Then, they can put them into the next unit of study to see if there are any gaps. At this point, I'm going to turn this over to our assistant director, Francisco Lopez.

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FRANCISCO: We went through all of the different expectations creating the mindset and talking about the passion and consistency. Now, we get to the point where the teachers are delivering instruction and focusing on the purpose—why exactly they're teaching. This is based on the standards and how they're making sure the students have access to the standards that they're teaching. It is crucial that teachers know the expectation for them—that they're accountable for the standards in the unit, such as Ms. Pope just explained to you. At this point, we look at

the teachers as the ones who model and explain what exactly the students need to know and what exactly the students are expected to do in the classroom to show mastery of the specific standards that they're teaching. How do they go about that? They have to state the purpose. Teachers need to know and convey to the students the reason the students are learning the concepts in the classroom. How is this relevant for them? We want our teachers to be aware of that, to explain the purpose of their lessons and explain in a language where the students will understand it, not only get the academic language but understand the "why" behind it. How do they do this?

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They model this expectation by giving examples of the cognitive work that they have to do. What are the students expected to do? They provide the academic language based on the strategies already mentioned in the previous slides, based on the framework that they follow through the Gradual Release of Responsibility. At this moment, the teachers are the ones who are showing the students and explaining specifically what the students are expected to gain from the lessons. This is extremely important for us because our students will do what we present. If our expectations and their lessons are rigorous and the modeling of the expectation is rigorous, that's what the students are going to get. We need to keep in mind the academic language and we could follow this model in two languages, so students have access to this [AUDIO SKIP] the expectation for history, math, social studies, and language arts, so this is the framework that we follow.

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As the teacher models and sets the purpose of the classrooms, the room environment plays a big role in providing access to the students' understanding of what they're being taught in the classroom. We expect the city in the elementary classroom and the university in our middle school to have a print-rich environment to support the classroom learning with content in the books that they have access to, and pay attention to the work that they do collaboratively. This plays a big role in having success for students because we want the rooms to be a learning tool for the students. We want the students to be able to

access what they're learning and the information given to them, so they can use and make sense of the learning and the knowledge that they're being exposed to. The focus walls really play a big role in providing access for students.

How do we do this? How do we keep these high academic expectations? We follow the core values, and this is something that we, as Chula Vista Learning Community Charter School, have been able to create. We hardly have any discipline issues and concerns in the classrooms. When the students are in the classroom, they are on target and they're engaged because of the expectations that the teachers are setting for them. But we follow the core values of:

- Respect
- Honesty
- Responsibility
- Citizenship

So, the students really convey these values. It's through the learning they are exposed to that the students have the ability to showcase what these values we have in force here at school really mean and how they are connected to academic expectations in each one of the classrooms. This is based on classroom environment.

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How do we get here? We build consistency, and I think that is something very strong that we have created throughout the years. As Dr. Ramirez mentioned, we were working really hard, but how do we make this hard work really get us the results that we wanted? We created nonnegotiables, and as we presented the conceptual framework, this became one of the nonnegotiables for our school. Teachers have to follow this framework.

The curriculum that we choose to have really signifies and explains what we expect from each classroom and from each teacher, so now we're talking about the expectation. Our goal is not to teach to the test. Our goal is to make our students think, be able to access the learning, and really become critical thinkers. As we created these nonnegotiables, we were trying to find consistency in our programs by

asking teachers to provide lesson plans, to keep up with the gradebook.

Something really strong that created this consistency was the consistency of assessment. As we developed the assessments at the end of each unit, every single one of the students is being assessed in the different areas. These assessments were created in a way that they're consistent, just like a CST standardized test. Teachers don't have access to these assessments; these are made in-house by the administration. We look at the data based on how the teachers presented the information and the results; we analyze the results to drive instruction. I think this is a really key component of nonnegotiables.

I mentioned student behavior; teacher expectation for student success has been crucial at our school, but another big component was the parent communication. I think that's one of the key indicators of our success—making sure that our parents also understand the needs of their children and how we are supporting those things in the classroom, and how they can support those things at home. The way we communicate, it's crucial for them to really help us at home in this process.

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Another component that we established at one point at our school was—what are nonnegotiables? As we were trying to find consistency, we really had to take time to stop and discuss what are nonnegotiables? We explained and we specifically decided on the school routines that cannot be changed. Nobody can change our program. If we follow the framework, we have to stay true to our program. We are a 50/50 dual language program and we have to keep that program in the way it has been established—so consistency of program within the school.

All grade levels must follow in a timely manner, so as students travel from one classroom to another classroom, students have to meet the requirements of every single one of the expectations based on the language that they're being instructed. Our expectation is for teachers to follow our schedule very explicitly.

Another nonnegotiable was, while we have this program in our school, we are working to meet the needs of the students, and that's something that we have to be very clear on as we are setting the expectations of our program. I think our instructional program has to be consistent with the strategies; our program is very systematic and it provides the comprehensive [Inaudible] students are expected to acquire. This is based on the:

- Expectations for our teachers
- Expectations for our programs
- Expectations for our students
- Expectations for parents.

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As we're talking about students, something that we really stress is student behavior. Students need to know that the goal of their behavior is academic success. This is really showing respect in the classroom, and the way they're treated in the classroom by the teacher also models the expectation that we would like to have as a school. This is a strong model of showing respect, and we take pride in saying that our students really understand that the goal for them is having academic success in two languages. Now, we're adding Mandarin, so we hope to see that third language as another venue for them to show their academic success as well.

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As you know, on the last slide, I will say that we have highlights that we would like to share with you. Right now, we are opening a high school, so we're extending our K–8 program to a K–9 program in the following year and, subsequently, we're going to be a K–12 program.

We have highlights; we have challenges that we will continue to work on and strive to gain success, but always keeping in mind the population that we serve. We're always working and creating a mindset that this can be done, and as we look at the highlights as well [AUDIO SKIP] adults who live next to our school site and they come and help and support our academic programs as well as our enrichment program in our school.

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At this moment, I would like to open the forum for any questions that you might have for us— Dr. Ramirez, Ms. Pope, and myself. We're here to listen to your comments and answer any questions. Thank you very much.

PEGGIE: Thank you to all three of you. You are quite a dynamic team and you've certainly developed a really exciting and innovative school. I think we would all love to see all of the places around the globe that are represented in your building. It must be very compelling. Thank you for sharing your very unique model with us. I think we have some questions coming in. Let me start with a really simple one. You mentioned GATE; is that gifted and talented education?

CHRISTYN: Yes.

PEGGIE: Great. So you're training all your teachers in strategies that good for gifted and talented kids and then helping all kids with problem solving and critical thinking, is that right?

CHRISTYN: Exactly. We use GATE strategies with all students.

PEGGIE: Great. That's definitely a best practice. Our first question from Dahlia is how do you assess Spanish language in terms of proficiency in both formative and summative assessments?

CHRISTYN: That's a really good question. When we were creating the benchmarks for our staff, we used the multiple-choice model for English because that's pretty much what we see on the California State Test, but then we looked at the Spanish. We did have a consultant here from Spain who helped us create our Spanish program. As we said, we wanted to be as authentic as possible. We did not use an Americanized translation from English to Spanish. We found that there were standards missing or that did not relate to the Spanish language, so we filled in the gaps and created our own standards that went into every grade level.

We looked at comprehension, grammar (“comprensión,” “gramática”), and spelling (“ortografía”); we used “dictado,” which is dictation, and

we use constructed response a lot more in the Spanish than we did in the English. Actually, we've transferred that now over to the English; going with the Common Core, we've noticed that they need to justify and explain their answer in short constructed responses, so not looking so much at a multiple-choice test. The assessments have changed over the years, but in Spanish that's what we focus on— we focus on comprehension, we have a strong program in the grammatical area, and dictation is very important to us.

PEGGIE: These are all assessments that are developed in-house; you're not using a standardized assessment—is that correct?

CHRISTYN: Yes. Mr. Lopez, and a consultant Mr. Diaz write all of the Spanish tests. We take the standards test in California in Spanish—it's called the STS—and they are the standards that are the English standards, but they're in Spanish as well. We take it in Spanish and mathematics; our students take that every year. It's a state mandate for the students in a dual language immersion program.

PEGGIE: Great. Could you talk a little bit more about the benchmarks? Could you talk a little bit about how often you do those, and then how teachers use the data to drive their instruction after they get the results back?

CHRISTYN: Again, the benchmarks are given after the units, so we put in the instructional time one week after the unit is completed; the following week, they will take an English language arts test, a mathematics test, and a Spanish test. They will also take a writing test in English and a Spanish writing test. We also give some subject areas of social studies and science, but our main focus is the three departments of English, Spanish, and mathematics.

Our social studies is all taught in Spanish K–8. We focus a lot of the reading comprehension around the social studies topics and themes. The students will see a lot of, even if it's legends and myths in the narratives, they'll be related to the area of their studies—if it's world studies or if it's California, Native Americans—that is all created by us, and we give them after every unit of study.

PEGGIE: So, four times a year?

CHRISTYN: Yes.

PEGGIE: Great. You guys are doing a lot of work, but it's obviously paying off in incredible outcomes—congratulations! You mentioned a lot of teacher professional development that you're providing related to GATE and to Gradual Release of Responsibility. Could you talk a little bit about your teacher training for new teachers and your ongoing professional development—what does that look like and how are you supporting that as administrators?

DR. RAMIREZ: We developed our mindset as a teacher, as intellectual. We're looking at books that would really begin to engage critical thinking or even question the mindset. Like I mentioned before, we read Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, chapters one, two, three, and four. We hired a university professor who would come and teach it as if they were in a university setting, and they [the teachers] began to change and transform the written word into the application of the classroom. The teachers began to see how their mindset determines their behavior; therefore, it determines their results.

We hired a consultant who works very well with data; he comes in at the beginning of the year and shows the teachers their data, data from a variety of avenues, and again connects what they've learned through the university to what they should be planning in terms of their units of study.

We believe that in order for you to be literate and biliterate, you need to be able to learn how to read and write in that language; therefore, we made this read/write connection, so that in everything that we teach teachers must show reading, and therefore writing as a response, or write a response and then read. We looked at mathematics in the same format. The goal is to look at professional development not as an added initiative, but more as an integral part of the planning process and everything that we've designed as a site.

PEGGIE: Great. Obviously you've provided your teachers with lots of support and training, so that's kudos to you for doing that—it's wonderful. Dr. Ramirez, or I guess for any of the three of you, you talked a little bit at the beginning and at a couple of points throughout about engaging family and community. Could you talk a little bit more about how you

do that—how you recruit students; how you communicate with parents, both through formal events and then also informally, about ways that they can use family literacy in the home and reading with their kids? And the kinds of guidelines that you share with parents? If you could give us a few bullet points, that would be great.

DR. RAMIREZ: All of us will tag team on this one, so we'll be passing the mike so that everybody can ... From my perspective, if we train our teachers, then we also train our parents. We have sessions where we do professional development for our teachers; we do professional development for our parents, and we expect them to use that at home.

FRANCISCO: The expectation, as we train our parents, is to really take this back to the house and implement this, then come back and share with us their practice and the results as well. As we are promoting the idea of a new unit of literacy and expository text, we'll explain explicitly to parents the expectation by grade level in each classroom and how they can apply what is going on with teachers in the classroom. The language that they need is specific to that content, and they can take it back home. I think, as we train our parents, we're speaking the same language and the outcome has been very successful in this way.

CHRISTYN: Being the logistic mind of the three—they're the visionaries—I logistically think it is—and I'm sure people would like to hear this—is that once a month, we have two meetings: We have the United Nations of parents meeting from 5:00 to 6:00 p.m. prior to our board meeting from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m.. We have probably over 200 parents attending each month, and the reason why we have that many parents we feel is—Mr. Lopez runs them mostly and he's very dynamic—we do provide the structure of what's happening with the teachers. Just like Dr. Ramirez said, we do a lot of professional development with our teachers; we give that same professional development to our parents, and if we're doing an informational expository unit, we'll give them strategies and skills to use with their students.

We have math night, family night, so our teachers will come in and do family math with our parents. If we're doing narratives, we'll teach them what types of questions to ask before you read a story, during a story, and after a story. We also do writing with our parents—what's expected from our students in writing and just anything. It can go from

our nurse and psychologist coming in, because parents want to hear from them as well, to anybody from the outside community to teach us more. We want to educate everyone, and as we're educating our teachers, we're educating our parents; we're not leaving them behind.

PEGGIE: That is a really interesting use of both professional development and time. You're really kind of doubling the instructional time by having the parents do instruction as well in the home. That's wonderful that you're providing those kinds of supports for families so that kids can really continue their education both inside the school and inside their homes.

Grace has a question about helping kids to become college and career ready. You're obviously doing a lot of things to implement the Common Core, which is going to be a huge challenge for lots of charter schools. You're already clearly well on your way in that, and you're opening a new high school. What are some of the challenges that you see with the high school to prepare kids to be ready for postsecondary [AUDIO SKIP] in the 21st century?

CHRISTYN: We might pass this around again, but again we have our MicroSociety program, which prepares students for the 21st century, where each student in our kindergarten through fifth grade classroom has a job. They work four days a week and go out into their marketplace; they learn what it's about to communicate with others, what it's like to be a cashier—to marketing, to advertising. They use these subject areas that they need to balance their checkbooks. Our university classes do the same thing; they have electives where they work in different areas that are in the world that we live in, and that's how we feel we're best preparing them.

Every child here, from kindergarten on, has to do an application, letter of intent, and portfolios, so we believe we're preparing them for that. We have many students who come back to us, alumni, who let us know that our rigorous program is so strong that when they go to the higher grade levels, it's easy for them. It's not as challenging for them as they see with the other students that are coming from different schools.

We believe in an extremely rigorous program of academics because each teacher teaches to their passion. They're teaching in the

department that they want to be in; we ask them every year if they want to change, if they want to be in a different grade level. We're really asking teachers what's making them inspired, what's inspiring them as well. The English department will give a rigorous program, the Spanish department will give a rigorous program, and mathematics will give a rigorous program.

FRANCISCO: In the middle school, we have the expectation for students when they graduate from eighth grade to design, plan and execute a service learning project. If they have been through a program like what they have done in MicroSociety, just like Ms. Pope mentioned, now is their opportunity to go outside the classroom environment and execute this project. They expect to really get themselves involved with the community and apply all of the skills and the learning that has gone on in class to outside-of-the-school boundaries. At this time, the students need to really explain their project and provide specific reasons why they choose a project—how it impacted them and what are the next steps as they're planning and executing the project.

DR. RAMIREZ: In terms of enrollment and recruitment, we haven't had a major challenge. As I mentioned at the beginning of the presentation, usually when we have open enrollment, we have families that line up the night before and we have massive lines for registration. The opening of the middle school was via parent request as well as the high school. Parents are really pushing for us to even challenge ourselves as an institution, and most of the recruitment is done by word of mouth. I think we've established ourselves in this community as a very highly effective performing school that meets the demands of all students.

One of the unique things for our high school is this idea of creating internships in Spanish-speaking countries. We've already had some agreements with some colleges in Madrid as well as some in Mexico City, and we're currently getting a letter from an institution in Argentina that's really wanting to have our students experience Spanish in a Spanish-speaking country. That's what we're thinking beyond; it's in the planning stages right now, it's not a reality, but it's interesting, as we begin to look at possibilities of seeing education from a very different perspective, that doors open immediately because there are people who want to see the schools succeed.

PEGGIE: Great. Unfortunately, we've run out of time, and Jennie, I hope Dr. Ramirez just gave you a quick answer to your question. I want to thank Dr. Ramirez, Mr. Lopez, and Ms. Pope for joining us and for providing us with this very thoughtful and insightful webinar and really inspiring us with the model that you all have developed and implemented that is obviously highly successful. Thank you for sharing all of your lessons learned.

Slides 31–33

For everyone on the webinar, this webinar will be archived within three business days at the website that you see on your screens. I'm going to go ahead and send you to a short evaluation. If you could spend a few minutes doing the survey—let us know what you liked, what we could do better in the future, and what topics you might like us to explore—that would be wonderful. Thank you to all of the participants and, again, thank you to our presenters for a wonderful presentation.