

A Model for Support:
Meeting the Needs of English Language Learners
in a Small Community

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my amazingly wonderful son, Jonathon Carl Tahtinen. He inspires me and reminds me that each day of life is so precious. His joy of life and unending love help me to keep my priorities in line.



ABSTRACT

As the population of language minority families significantly increases in our nation (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2002), schools are trying to meet the needs of a growing number of students with limited English skills. This qualitative research study examined the types of academic, social, and linguistic support currently available to immigrant school-aged children and their families as they enter into a small mid-western community in the United States.

The forty-nine participants in this study included immigrant parents, school staff, and community members, who shared insight into the types of support most needed and helpful for newcomer students and their families. Using grounded theory methods of research, three major themes emerged and were used to create a model for support. Each of the three levels of support includes a précis of ideas for assisting schools, communities and families, as they develop ways to support newcomer students in their academic, linguistic, and socio-cultural development.

Major findings of this study include: a.) the need for increased communication and access to services, b.) the need for more opportunities to learn English, and c.) the importance of maintaining native language skills and culture as an asset to the community.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Historically, immigrants have had to face many new challenges when settling into a new country. While most have immigrated to the United States in hopes of beginning a new life, they often encounter unexpected challenges. These challenges include learning a new language, adapting to a new cultural environment, and entering U.S. schools, all of which can be isolating and overwhelming without some support. This study examines the issue of support, both needed and available, for K-12 newcomer students and their families. This timely topic of immigration and support from schools and communities is based on the increasing population of newcomers in our nation. Census research from the National Center for Educational Statistics (2002) shows the number of school-aged children with limited English proficiency has increased by over a million students in the last decade. According to current research from Child Trends and the Center for Social and Demographic Analysis at SUNY (2007), there are important reasons why Americans should care about the lives and prospects of children in newcomer families. First, and foremost, immigrant children currently account for twenty percent of all children in the United States. Children in newcomer families live throughout the country and their numbers are growing faster than any other group of children in the nation. The proportion of children in immigrant families falls below 5 percent in only 11 states. That proportion rises to 10 percent or more in 22 states and the District of Columbia, including 10 states where 20 percent or more children have an immigrant parent (p. 1).

As the population of language minority families increases across the nation, schools and communities are facing both challenges and opportunities of working with

the diverse needs of newcomer families. Schools across the nation have made efforts to meet the needs of this rising population in several ways. Some schools implement bilingual programs which help the students with academic concept development in the native language during the time they are learning the English language (Baker, 2006; Garcia, 1990; McCaleb, 1994). Other schools offer English as a second language (ESL) programs, or Sheltered English classes, where students receive support from specially trained teachers to help them understand the academic content and language in English.

While schools are trying to meet the wide-ranging needs of English language learners in various ways, the increase in newcomers poses additional stress on already stretched resources (Garcia, Ramos, & Duran, 2007; Short & Boysen, 2004) and many current programs do not have sufficient support in place to assist the newcomer students already enrolled in their schools. Research from Anderson, Hamilton, Moore, Loewen, and Fater-Mathieson (2003) identifies several ecological factors involved with students entering and adjusting to schools including; learning about a new culture, language, and new environment which far exceed just the academic needs of students and what schools currently offer.

The need for support in all of these areas is not only for students, but also for the newcomer families. As students and their families enter into the public school system, the academic and linguistic demands paired with cultural changes can be overwhelming and isolating (Nicolau & Ramos, 1990; Ramirez, 2001). In a recent study of Latino immigrant parents and their association with school, Ramirez (2005) found that parents encountered misconceptions and miscommunication when learning about and adjusting to the educational culture of their children's schools. In his research with Latino parents,

he found themes including: apathetic teachers, lack of school-home communication, school prejudices toward immigrant low socioeconomic parents, and the belief that parents do not have power over their children's education. Additionally, Ramirez found that students and their families that do not speak English often encounter barriers when dealing with their children's school. These barriers, such as communication in a common language and differences in culture and customs, create distance at a time when the student most needs the support of both family and school. In one example from Ramirez's study (2005), he describes a parent trying to meet with her child's teacher:

The year was spent trying to meet with the daughter's teacher, but the teacher would not be willing to meet at a time that was convenient for Esperanza. Esperanza needed to work during the day cleaning houses or she would not be paid. Her rent, food, and limited budget for her children's clothing were dependent on being able to work every day..., and this conflicted with the teacher's available times for meeting with parents... She asked the teacher if they could meet on the weekend, but the teacher responded that the weekend was "her personal time" and "all meetings are conducted at the school during the hours of 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m." (p. 49).

This quote illustrates a common challenge parents feel as they attempt to communicate with educators about their children's education.

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) of 2001 requires schools to promote and support parents. Section 3202 states that, "Schools are required to implement effective means of parental outreach to encourage parents to become informed and active participants in their child's participation in the English language instruction educational program."¹ So why is this vital relationship between parents and school (Inger, 1993) often overlooked when trying to meet the vast needs of students? According to Bermudez and Marquez (1996), this may be due to several factors including: lack in understanding of the needs of these families, difficulties in communicating with parents

¹ As found in section 3202, H.R 1 at <http://www.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/parentinguid.doc>

who speak another language, or not having a clear understanding of the cultural differences and the needs of these families. Added to the discussion are the additional needs of newcomer families including: learning English, access to housing, finding employment, healthcare issues, parental involvement and reaction to the new school system (García-Ramos & Durán, 2007). Furthermore, they assert that more information is needed to better understand ways to make current support programs more effective for these limited English speaking families.

In 2004, the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) released a report highlighting the need to focus on learning more about the kinds of services that work best for particular groups of students learning English as a second language (ESL). They also noted that the types of effective support services, including outreach or other services to families or communities, may look very different from what is currently provided by public schools for English language learners (ELLs). They emphasize that student and family needs extend beyond the academic needs of students and can be amplified in smaller communities where resources and support services are especially limited. Mitchem, Kossar and Ludlow (2006) point out that with decreasing resources, lack of necessary supports, and increasing learner diversity within schools located in rural America, the challenge is particularly difficult to address. At present, more information is needed to gain a better understanding of how to best support newcomer students in schools, particularly in rural areas where funding may limit the types and availability of services.

This research study utilized a holistic approach to explore the types of support students and their families need, as well as the support systems already in place that are most helpful to students in a small community where services are limited. This

information was used to create a support-network model to help identify ways that schools and communities can assist immigrant students transitioning into U.S. schools and communities.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study emerged during my 15 years of experience as an ESL/Bilingual classroom teacher. During this time, I gained first hand knowledge of the numerous challenges students and their families face when entering U.S. schools with limited English skills and limited formal schooling experiences. Many teachers, like me, work diligently and passionately trying and help students keep up with their academic content while they are learning English and adjusting to their new surroundings. I often wished to have more time in each day to meet with the students. I was working in two schools and so often found that more support was needed than just what the teachers could provide during the school day. The need to find ways to expand support efforts and create ways of helping students beyond the ESL classroom and school environment was at the forefront of my mind.

Beyond my own experiences, many teachers and schools across the nation are trying to respond to the diverse needs of newcomers. Even in the best programs, the curricular demands often require more language and academic support than can be offered during their school day (Anderson, et. al., 2003; Short & Boyson, 2004), thus creating a gap for students. Freeman, Freeman, and Mercuri (2002) refer to this gap as the distance between what the student is learning and what the student needs to learn. This gap is also mentioned in Hakuta, Butler and Witt's (2000) work. It illustrates the "daunting task facing these students, who not only have to acquire oral and academic

English, but also have to keep pace with native English speakers, who continue to develop their language skills” (p.2). Additionally, “it may simply not be possible, within the constraints of the time available in regular formal school hours, to offer efficient instruction that would enable the EL students to catch up with the rest” (p. 2).

Too often the common experience of immigrant youth in schools includes unwelcoming school environments, where they struggle to establish a new identity (Olsen, 1998; Valenzuela, 1999), where they are conflicted between home and school cultures and expectations (Lee, 2005; Sarroub, 2002), and where teachers’ racially based assumptions and low expectations about their students’ capabilities may result in detrimental effects on academic outcomes (Rubenstein-Avila, 2003; Valdez, 2001). Students are often inappropriately placed and/or “trapped” in a low-track program with teachers who may not be trained to meet their academic or social/emotional needs (Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Townsend & Fu, 2001; Um, 2003).

“As the rate of immigrant students in the nation’s school system grows...the successful education and social integration of these students becomes a significant facet of school accountability,” (Schoorman & Jean-Jacques, p. 308). And as the number of language minority families continues to increase in our nation (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2002; 2006), this gap becomes more significant to all teachers in schools as more students enter their classrooms with limited English proficiency.

While current studies have addressed individual program outcomes in schools or communities, few offer insight into a broader picture of how schools, communities, and families can work together to support newcomer students. In a recent large scale study, focused on ways of engaging Latino urban youth attending middle school, Garcia-Reid

and Peterson (2005) concluded that more information is needed on ways to meet newcomer student needs and should be approached in a way that targets “the individual, family, school, and community environment as well as the broader societal context” (p. 271) in order to best support students. More information is needed on the types of support currently in place, the types of support needed by students and families, and how to best provide this support (Fan & Chen, 2001; Garcia-Reid & Peterson, 2005; Lopez, Ehly, & Garcia-Vasquez, 2002). Schools have the opportunity to make a difference in children’s lives and the more that these variables are addressed with culturally appropriate solutions, the more we can offer to students as they navigate the public school system. By collaborating with students and their families, we can best identify the areas where help is needed and find ways to provide the support for those needs.

Research Questions

This dissertation examines the types of academic, social, and linguistic support available to immigrant school-aged children and their families as they entered a small Midwestern community in the United States.

For these reasons, the goal of this study was to discover which support systems work best for immigrant students and their families and how schools and communities unify and increase their efforts to better support students as they learn academically, linguistically, and socially in their new environment. The scope of this study focuses on the current needs of newcomer families in a Midwestern setting in the United States with a large Mexican immigrant population. All of the families in this study immigrated to this community from Mexico and consider Spanish as their first language. This

community is considered to be a small city², with nearly 6,000 residents, and provided a rich resource for this study.

This study sought to address the needs of these newcomers in this community. The overarching question addressed in this study is: How does a small city school and its community support Mexican immigrant K-12 students and their families academically, linguistically, and culturally during their first years in the United States?

Sub-questions addressed in this study include:

1. What are the main needs of newcomer students and their families?
2. What type of support, if any, do the school and community currently offer these families?
3. Which areas of support have been most beneficial? Why?
4. What needs of students and their families have not been met?
5. What recommendations do stakeholders have for improving support?

Study Limitations and Delimitations

This study focused on the needs of Mexican immigrant students and their families as they enter a small Mid-western community in the U.S. It included Mexican immigrant parents, as well as, teachers, school staff, and community members from this small community. It did not include other language minority groups and does not attempt to generalize the results to other immigrant populations.

It is important to note that during the course of this two-year study a change was made in the educational services provided to the children of parents in this study. This school district had a long standing reputation of providing bilingual education to the

² Small cities as defined by <http://www.city-data.com> contain between 1,000 and 6,000 residents.

numerous Mexican immigrant families that settled there over the years. This support was described as essential to the families in the community that wanted their children to learn English and maintain Spanish. This statement became even more significant when the school district decided to eliminate the bilingual program. Teachers were instructed to remove the Spanish materials from the classrooms. Books in Spanish were packed up into boxes and stored away into closets or given away. Bilingual teachers were directed to teach only in English and parents were informed that their children would be instructed only in English due to falling test scores in English. Having the unique opportunity of interviewing participants both before and after these dramatic changes, brought forth additional themes that were explored and delineated in this study, however it did limit much of the discussion to this topic during the transition.

Overview of the Dissertation

This research study is comprised of five chapters. The first chapter provides evidence on a growing need for a support-network model to help identify ways that schools and communities can assist immigrant students and their families transitioning into U.S. schools and communities.

The second chapter begins with the theoretical foundation for the review of literature and is based on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) student ecological theory. Bronfenbrenner's theoretical model connects the components of support for students into a comprehensive support network design. This theory was chosen to provide the foundation for the conceptual model which guides the format of this literature review into three main components including, a.) support within the community, b.) support in

schools, and c.) support from parents and family. Additionally, the literature review addresses issues of accessibility for students and their families through a discussion of social and cultural capital. Both areas of capital are defined and reviewed in relation to literature in the field of education.

The third chapter describes the qualitative methodology used in this study known as grounded theory. Grounded theory is an inductive method with set procedures for analyzing data and creating theory. This chapter describes these procedures and includes background information about the study location and participants for the reader to use when interpreting results.

Chapter four presents the analysis and results of this study. It is organized by the areas denoted in the conceptual model and includes a rich description of the context of the study. Data analysis includes quotations from the participants to illustrate the rich data that emerged from the focus group interviews. A reflective coding matrix is also used to highlight and define categorical properties of the data and show relationship toward theoretical development of the themes.

The fifth and final chapter is a discussion of the major findings of this study through each of the three major themes that emerged. From these themes, a Model for Support was created which includes three levels of support. Each level is described in detail and recommendations for support in each of the areas are offered. This chapter concludes with a discussion of future research implications for this work.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

The conceptual framework used in this paper is based on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) student ecology theory. This theory represents each area in the student's life in relation to his/her social and academic growth and development which provides a valuable holistic approach to this study. Bronfenbrenner's work is widely recognized and has been used extensively in the field of developmental psychology regarding child development and the relationships that influence development. One such example is Huitt's (2000) systems model of human behavior. This model highlights each of the influential relationships children have with parents, their school, the neighborhood, and community. Huitt explains that in order to fully understand each entity, one must study the relationships between or among these areas. His systems model of human behavior is based on the foundational work of Bronfenbrenner.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory has also been used recently in second language studies (e.g., Padrón, Waxman, & Rivera, 2002) to help define and address the issues concerning student development and academic success in the context of the family and surrounding ecological areas. These areas examine how the student is affected by each component. According to ecological theory, the social and academic development of the student occurs in relationship to the surrounding contexts of support. These contexts are seen as separate, yet related, aspects of the student's environment and are defined by the closeness of the relationship to the student. This distinction is used in this investigation to define the support components that affect student success. A well-defined example of this theory, used to demonstrate areas of development for English

language learners, is titled, *Educational interventions for refugee children: Theoretical perspectives and implementing best practice* by Anderson *et al.*, (2003). This book utilized Bronfenbrenner's theory as a tool to systematically review research and theory to describe the interacting systems and reciprocal relationships of pre-migration, trans-migration, and post-migration developmental experiences of refugee children. Using the ecological areas described in Bronfenbrenner's work, they identified several areas relevant to the professional practice of teachers working with newcomer students. The authors argue that

Bronfenbrenner's theory provides a useful conceptual framework for considering the needs of refugee children as it allows us to consider the impact of personal and environmental factors on the development of refugee children. This is because at its core the theory conceptualizes development as the interactive life-long process of adaptation by an individual to the changing environment (p. 4).

The contribution of Bronfenbrenner's student ecological theory provides researchers with a conceptual framework to view the influential relationships that effect child development and growth in a comprehensive approach. This approach provided the organization structure for this literature review and undergirded the design of the study.

Theoretical Foundation

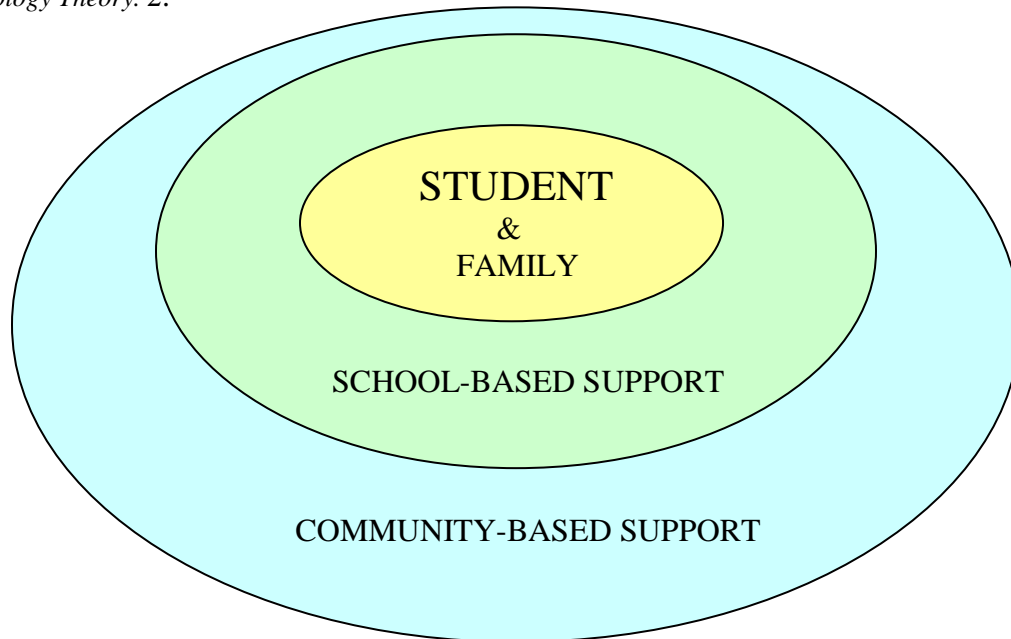
Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecology theory is fundamental to this study as it provides the conceptual framework for development of this research study. It was chosen because this model specifically connects the components of support for students into a holistic, relational support network design. Bronfenbrenner's theory has notably contributed to the field of developmental and educational psychology by focusing on the importance of student contexts and how they affect the student (Berk, 2000). This

theory simply and elegantly identifies the influence that environmental and contextual components have on student growth and development. Given the array of needs of immigrant students and their families, Bronfenbrenner's student ecology theory of development provides a sound basis for creating a support-network model (Anderson, et al., 2003) because it includes the components of student-based support from peers, teachers, parents/family, community, and the school.

For the purposes and scope of this review, the two main areas from Bronfenbrenner's theory are used to provide ecologically valid environmental contexts (Berk, 2000) in which to investigate the relationship of each variable. These components of Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory include:

- **Microsystem.** The microsystem includes anyone in direct relationship with the student on a regular basis. This would include family, peers, teachers, and other school personnel. As noted in the following diagram labeled as school-based support.
- **Mesosystem.** The mesosystem consists of the connections between the student's daily settings and surroundings and encompasses the connections between the Microsystems listed above. These settings include; the home, school, and community. Figure 2.1 illustrates components of the micro- and mesosystem.

Figure 1: Components of community, school, and home-based support systems in Adapted Student Ecology Theory. 2.



Based on this model, components in each area are reviewed in the literature from the illustrated categories and provide the structural presentation of this literature review.

These areas of support include:

1. Support from the student's family,
2. Support from the student's school, and
3. Support from the student's community.

Parent and Family Support

According to ecological theory, one area of support critical for student development is the support and influence from parents and family. This section begins with an overview of key findings from this well developed body of research (Bempechat, 1992; Epstein, 1991; Epstein, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Hoover-Dempsey,

Bassler & Burrow, 1995) and narrows the focus to research with English language learners. Over thirty years of research confirms the importance of parent involvement as a fundamental area of support for students and a powerful influence on their achievement in school (U.S. Dept. of Education 1994). Findings from *Strong Families, Strong Schools: Building community Partnerships for Learning* (U.S. Dept. of Education 1994) substantiate that controllable home factors account for almost all the differences in average student achievement across states. Studies of individual families show that what the family does is more important to student success than family income or education (Barton & Coley, 1992). This is true whether the child is in preschool or in the upper grades, whether the parents finished high school or not, or whether the family is rich or poor (Henderson & Berla, 1994). Parent involvement has proven to increase a child's chance of success in school (Becher, 1984; Epstein, 1995; Garcia-Reid, Reid & Peterson, 2005; Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler & Burrow, 1995) and includes such factors as: parental influence, expectations, aspirations, and monetary support (Fan & Chen, 2001; Ramos & Sanchez, 1995).

Parental involvement in a student's life plays an important role in many ways (Henderson & Berla, 1994; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). According to a review of 49 studies on the effects of parental involvement and children's academic achievement, findings show that when parents are involved in their children's education, children earn higher grades and receive higher scores on tests; they attend school more regularly, complete more homework, demonstrate more positive attitudes and behaviors, graduate from high school at higher rates, and are more likely to enroll in higher education than students with less involved families. Despite the vast evidence of positive effects of

parent involvement in schools, Henderson and Mapp (2002) report that parental involvement is still largely ignored in schools. Many schools do not systematically encourage family involvement and parents do not always participate when encouraged to do so, or participate in ways that are sanctioned by educators. School environments may actually discourage family involvement and unknowingly create barriers to participation.

Even though there may be barriers to parent involvement in their child's education, it is still one of the best long-term investments a family can make (U.S. Dept. of Education, 1994). There is also evidence that parent education programs, particularly those training low-income parents to work with their children, are effective in improving how well children use language skills, perform on tests, and behave in school (Becher, 1984). These programs also produce positive effects on parents' teaching styles, the way they interact with their child, and the home learning environment. According to Becher, the most effective programs emphasize the importance of the parent and the need for a close relationship between parent and teacher, as well as, instilling in parents a long-term commitment to involvement.

Related research on parent involvement from a 14 year study of four schools showed that schools that combined family involvement and parent training with preschool education for the child showed decreases in fighting, impulsiveness, disobedience, restlessness, cheating and delinquency among children (Wilson, 1994). Research has shown that schools that help families feel welcome and show them how to improve learning at home are likely to have more support from parents and more highly motivated students (Bempechat, 1992; Epstein, 1991; Epstein 1997).

Parent Involvement and Mexican-Americans

Parent involvement has been noted in the literature as an influential factor in the educational success of Mexican-American students (Antunez & Zelasko, 2000; Ramos & Sanchez, 1995). These studies show similar evidence in the importance of supporting the involvement of parents (Antunez & Zelasko, 2000; Ramos & Sanchez, 1995); however, there are often barriers that prevent this participation. Creating an effective partnership in which parents feel welcome and valued requires that schools work to break down many of the common barriers to effective partnerships, including barriers related to time, school structure, and training. In one study, survey data shows that parents who do not speak English at home are less likely to participate in school-based activities, and participate in fewer activities over the course of the school year (U.S. Dept. of Education, 1997). This may also be influenced by Hispanic culture which often regards the teacher with admiration and respect, and can result in parents entrusting their child's education solely to their teachers and not participating themselves, (Lopez, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001).

Parental support is directly linked to student engagement in learning with Latino youth (Garcia-Reid, Reid, & Peterson, 2005). Therefore, schools must break down any barriers that impede parental involvement and work diligently to increase parental involvement at school and with their children's schoolwork. Schools can do this by creating a welcoming and inviting environment at the school for parents, providing opportunities for parents to collaborate with the school and/or teachers to identify support needs of the students, keeping the lines of communication open, and understanding that parents do not have to be in the schools to be involved in their child's learning. Parents

can offer substantial support from home by reinforcing the importance of being in school, attending classes, and completing homework assignments.

Parent Involvement and English Language Learners

In many cultures, education is a luxury and not all children in a family are able to attend school if the family is poor and children are needed to help by working at a young age. Education and cultural expectations in the U.S. may be different and create misunderstandings by parents and teachers. This can cause parents to feel intimidated by the entire education system. Communication is essential in developing trust and understanding. To engage parents and encourage their participation in school, Perez and Torrez-Guzman (2002) emphasize the importance of considering parents as their children's first teacher and stress to how much the school needs and values their involvement. Learning more about the background of the families and stressing the importance of parental involvement needs to be understood through parents' presence in schooling, regardless of whether that presence is in a formal school space or in more personal, informal spaces, including those created by parents themselves (Perez, Drake, & Barton, 2005). Communicating and supporting this important role parents play in their child's education is essential step in understanding the family.

To further understand ways to increase communication and participation, a study by Cassity and Harris (2000) surveyed 23 parents to gain information on possible motivators and inhibitors to parental participation in school. The survey asked parents to rate topics based on the extent to which they felt comfortable to participate and welcomed by school personnel. Parents could also add comments and suggestions to the survey. The results of this quantitative study indicate that the most motivating factor was the

opportunity to ask about their child's behavior. This was followed by parents' desire to show commitment to the school, learn course information, and meet teachers. It was also welcoming to receive personal communication and invitations in the parent's native language. The second part of this study included 46 percent of participants naming lack of transportation and lack of time as the main inhibitors for participation in school activities. Forty percent of parents noted lack of Spanish speaking personnel. Limitations to this quantitative study include the small sample size and a non-random selection process which narrows the generalizability of the results. A recommendation would be to include interviews with the survey data to increase understanding of participant responses.

While there is an abundance of research linking student success to parent involvement, (Becher, 1986; Epstein, 1995; Garcia-Reid, Reid & Peterson, 2005; Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler & Burrow, 1995) there is much less research on the specific variables of parent involvement (Fan & Chen, 2001). For example, Fan and Chen (2001) conducted a meta-analysis to synthesize the qualitative literature about the relationship between parental involvement and students' academic achievement. They found parental aspirations and expectations as the most important factor to student academic success. Another noteworthy finding by Fan and Chen (2001) is that across the literature, the meaning of parental involvement was not always clear and consistent. They describe a key limitation of their study as the lack of operational definitions for parent involvement and academic achievement that "have probably led to some inconsistent findings about how beneficial parental involvement is to students' academic achievement" (p. 4). While there are numerous studies in the area of parent involvement, Fan and Chen (2001) state

the need for more research based on the lack of empirically based, or evidence-based studies and the inconsistency between findings. And while there may be a lack of empirically based studies, the greatest gap in the literature is the lack of connections between the support systems. Even the meta-analysis of literature by Fan and Chen does not include a comprehensive view of a support network and its crucial components. Research has clearly shown the importance of parent involvement in their children's education. Schools that help families feel welcome and show them how to improve learning at home are likely to have more support from parents and motivated students (Bempechat, 1992; Epstein, 1991). Creating an effective partnership in which parents feel welcome and valued is a crucial component of support in students' lives.

School-Based Support

Another important area of support for students and their families is school-based support. This section focuses on studies with English language learners and includes the areas of support from school programs, teachers, and peers. According to the literature, school-based support seeks to reinforce, support, and assist in the linguistic, academic, and or social growth of the student (Bohon, Macpherson, & Atilas, 2005; Cooper, 2002; Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2005; Monteel, & Cortez, 2002). This support for student growth was highlighted in a large scale study by Scribner and Reyes (1999). This study included five main components for "high-performing Hispanic student" success (p. 191). These components include: a.) creating a systems approach that looks at what works, what fits, and the specific barriers faced by students, b.) setting high expectations for students, c.) promoting the idea that all children can be successful in

school, d.) creating a shared vision and the sense of community, and e.) providing diverse learning opportunities for all students.

Scribner and Reyes (1999) maintain the finding that in order to create “high-impact schools” with “high-performing Hispanic students” (p. 208) the issue of relevance is fundamental. “Relevance (being of perceived value to the student) is the ultimate determinate of stake holder engagement in the Hispanic students’ educational experience” (p. 208). This empowers students and should be reflected in the organizational structure of the school. This study makes some valuable conclusions; however, it is limited in that it does not list the specific procedures involved in gathering the data. The description of participants and their schools is sufficient, but unfortunately the process for attaining and examining the information is not clear.

School Programs

One area of research where schools are making a difference is in providing newcomer programs for students and their families (Hertzberg, 1998; Short & Boyson 1998; Short, 2002). Short and Boyson (1998; 2002), who have reviewed numerous programs through case study research, found that newcomer programs generally revolve around a set of common beliefs. One belief is that the unique literacy needs of English language learners are addressed more effectively in sheltered classes. Another belief is that a welcoming and nurturing environment is beneficial to older immigrant students (those of secondary school age, 12-21 years-old) who may have limited prior experience with schooling. A third belief is the need to provide middle and high school immigrant students with core academic skills and knowledge that fill gaps in their educational background. It will also move them closer to their age-level peers, better preparing them

to participate in mainstream classrooms. Finally, there is an assumption that the chances of educational success for immigrant students are enhanced when connections between the school and students' families and communities are established and reinforced (p. 35). While most programs cited in Short and Boyson (1998) have positive results to report from newcomer programs, a few share the political concerns with the issue of segregating students and the ramifications of time spent outside of mainstream classes.

Based on the aforementioned positive aspects of this study, Short (2002) examined the factors that need to be considered when designing programs for newly-arrived English language learners. Using data from interviews, questionnaires and site visits, she concluded that students need a planned program, such as a newcomer program as a way to meet their needs. These programs meet students' needs by improving their literacy skills and filling in the gaps in their previous schooling so that they are able to succeed in grade-level classes and eventually graduate from high school. The limitations of Short's study include a sparse description of study procedures and data reporting limited to middle and high school. It would have been helpful to include elementary newcomer program information.

This discussion of newcomer programs is continued with important findings from Feinberg's (2000) research and is based on a review of 32 schools with newcomer programs. In this review, Feinberg noted both positive and negative aspects of newcomer program design. These include the advantages of focused language and content instruction in newcomer programs for immigrant students which can compensate for the disadvantages of segregation. This occurs in programs designed around supportive environments with bilingual staff and leadership who understand the linguistic and

cultural issues faced by newcomer families. Feinberg warns that some schools use newcomer programs “in a substandard way, attempting little more than to hide these students and their needs from public view” (p. 220). While several program features are highlighted in this review, it lacks in clear description of procedures and criteria used in its conclusions.

Many studies report the positive aspects of school-based support programs; however, some focus on the issues and challenges immigrant students and their families face with schools, language, and culture. According to Moles (1993), teachers unable to communicate with non-English speaking parents may increase barriers by making assumptions about the family such and their ability to communicate with parents. Also, even those family members who speak English often have difficulty communicating with schools because their life experiences and perspectives are very different. This makes the role of the teacher, and the support they can provide, even more important to newcomer students and families.

Teachers

Teachers are key players in fostering student engagement (Akey, 2006; Garcia-Reid et al., 2005). They work directly with the students and often are the most influential in a student’s educational experience. Teachers can create an environment of achievement and success in their classroom, developing interactive and relevant lessons and activities, and by being encouraging and supportive to all students. According to Akey (2006), it is crucial for teachers to “create collaborative, supportive environments with high but achievable standards” (p. 32) because it greatly effects students’ engagement in school and learning.

According to Dale (1986), limited English proficient students and their parents need a network of support to familiarize them with their new surroundings, to learn about school culture and customs, routines, rules, and school-related services to promote success in the educational arena. This network, as shown in Valenzuela's study (1999), can begin with teachers who care about students and try to understand their needs. In her study, Valenzuela clearly defines these teacher-student connections and how crucial they are for students as they create their understanding of the world around them. Her study also illustrates the differences between teachers who truly care about their students and are invested in the success of their students with those who students find uncaring. The following is an excerpt from Valenzuela's study of two students commenting on the caring ways of their teachers:

Ms. Novak is the best teacher I ever had. The way she laughs at us makes us happy, you know, like she *really* likes us. I learn easier that way... (p. 101).

The second student shared:

I never got bored in her class. And I learn so much. I came to respect her even more after she helped out this friend. She wanted to drop out of school and missed a lot of homework and tests. Other teachers flunked her but Ms. Aranda helped her catch up. If something like that came up with me, I know I could go to her with it (p. 102).

Valenzuela also described the ramifications of having teachers who lack in caring for his/her students. The excerpt below shows one student's frustration in the classroom:

Once this bad Science teacher asked me in front of everybody to stop raising my hand so much in class. And all the students laughed at me. I was trying to learn and he was a new teacher...hard to understand. I felt so stupid... Teachers say that they want to talk to you, but I notice that they really don't. I used to get mad about it, but now it's like "What's the use?" Not gonna change nuthin' (p. 72).

Valenzuela argues the premise that all people share a basic need to be understood, appreciated, and respected. Teacher attitudes and ability to provide a caring environment can make a difference in student motivation and learning.

To promote a caring environment and increase communication, Campey's (2002) work describes some of the key components of support. These include: school-wide cultural celebrations, providing translation services for forms, events, and conferences, daily lunches that reflect cultural and religious dietary requirements, developing "buddy" systems for new students, and providing culturally and linguistically appropriate materials. While these ideas are seemingly related, the lack of empirical data in support of these ideas and no description of procedures for gathering and evaluating the information make it difficult to replicate the study. Albeit, his work concludes with intuitively sound advice by stating that creating an environment of positive academic, social, and emotional development will benefit all students and by asking the right questions and really listening to students and their parents will create stronger partnerships and allow teachers and schools to better serve their needs.

In another study, Valdéz (2001) furthers the discussion of the role of support from teachers. Her two-year study found that teachers in schools with large numbers of newly arrived immigrant students are presented with several challenges. Some of the challenges mentioned in her work include: challenges to devise ways of educating newcomer students in mainstream environments and encouraging administrators who need to find regular content-area teachers willing and capable to work with such students or hire specially trained teachers for them. Additionally, schools must establish English as a second language programs, newcomer programs, and sheltered programs along with other

kinds of support mechanisms that will help students learn both English and subject-matter content. Valdéz (2001) concludes with a list of recommendations similar to the meta-analysis of Garcia (1991), which follows.

In the work of Eugene Garcia, (1991) a set of common attributes were identified in a meta-analysis of studies related to teacher and school variables that increase success for immigrant students. The three main variables identified from the meta-analysis were as follows; purposeful communication between teacher and students and among fellow students (was emphasized), teachers who are greatly committed to the educational success of their students and served as student advocates, and principals who are very supportive of their instructional staff. Overall, research shows that teachers have an important role in supporting newcomer students and their families. A related area of support is helping students with homework.

Homework

Several studies indicate the importance of providing assistance with homework (Bauer, & Spillett, 1998; Delgado, 1998). Bauer and Spillett's study found it to be one of the most influential factors of student success for Hispanic immigrant students. Parents in the study listed it as their main concern and the factor that was most related to their child's academic achievement and self-concept. Many parents felt inadequately equipped to help their children. "Fourteen of the sixteen participants said that their lack of English proficiency and limited educational attainment prohibited them from effectively helping their children" (p. 12). While this study is descriptive and included a culturally and linguistically appropriate interviewer, it was difficult to determine how the data were interpreted.

In a related study, Delgado's (1998) work supports the discussion of the importance of providing help with homework. In his study of twenty-four Hispanic families whose children were in elementary school, parents cited homework as the most important way that they could help with their children's education. They expressed their limited abilities to help them and desire for more support for their children. Also noted in this study, is that parents felt uncomfortable seeking assistance from Latino and non-Latino social services organizations. Recommendations include creating community-based social services within schools, holding meetings in homes or restaurants, and going beyond traditional ways of providing services to community members.

Peers and Mentors

Another support component in the literature includes the area of peers and mentors as role models and tutors. Several studies show that peer support can play an important role in student success and academic achievement (Xu, Gelfer, & Perkins, 2005; August, 1987; Cooper, 2002; Delgado, 1998). An example of this comes from a recent study by Garcia-Reid et al., (2005) which looked at the variables of school engagement among Latino middle school students. They found a strong correlation between peer-related protective factors and school engagement. These factors include identifying with a positive peer group, peer approval, and becoming involved in positive activities like school sports or clubs.

Peer support is also a factor in studies by Azmitia and Cooper (2001) and Cooper (2002). These studies investigated how families, schools, peers, and the community support students' academic achievement as they transition from elementary to junior high school. Both of these longitudinal studies included both qualitative and quantitative data

to support the findings. Research from the first study showed that friends were seen as the “most important resource for dealing with issues in school” (p. 8) as well as influential on making decisions, both in positive and negative ways, providing emotional support, and an important resource with homework. The second study showed that peers were seen to have a significant influence on student engagement in school and goals for their future. One limitation of these studies is that they were funded and used to create a program which may include conflict of interest issues.

Mentoring students is another area of school-based support. In current literature, mentoring has been viewed as an important element in a student’s social support structure (Sanchez & Reyes, 1999). The increase in popularity is based on the consistent findings that mentors have an influence related to positive outcomes of children and adolescents in high-risk settings. This salient study included 162 Hispanic participants in one-on-one interviews and identified relatives as the strongest influence as mentors. According to the authors, this finding suggests the importance of family and the culture as influential factors in this group when identifying mentors in their lives. One limitation of this study is that the data comes from a larger study; however, the larger study was never published and cannot be retrieved for further examination of the study procedures, outcomes, and limitations.

Supporting the results of the previous study showing the importance of mentors, Rhodes, Grossman, and Resche (2000) agree that mentors can provide immigrant youth with structure and supervision, and create important connections with their new culture. Substantiated by the work of Suárez-Orozco (2001), Rhodes et al., (2000) comments on

the disconnection between immigrant youth and their parents as they go through the often difficult transitions. The study recommends (p. 3) mentors as a way to:

- **Compensate.** Because immigrant adolescents' parent and other adult relatives may be unavailable due to long work hours or emotional distress, the guidance and affection of a mentor may help to fill the void created by parental absence.
- **Bridge.** As an adult who has been in the United States longer than the mentee, the mentor can also provide information about and exposure to American cultural and educational institutions. This mentor can also help the mentee negotiate transitions.
- **Foster identity development.** Mentors, particularly those who share similar background with their mentees, can serve as role models in the challenging process of developing a bicultural identity. They can exemplify the ways in which the student can preserve and celebrate elements of the ethnic identity while still incorporating features of the more mainstream culture of the United States.

Rhodes et al., (2000) also addresses the importance of only using mentors who are able to comprehend the cultural and social issues and needs of the student. She recommends careful recruiting, training, and matching of mentors to mentees. Based on research regarding peer and mentor support, the consistent findings are overwhelmingly positive. No empirical evidence was found to show conflicting results, and suggest that peer and mentor relationships are a powerful avenue for providing support to newly-arrived students.

While many programs across the country have been working to increase the connection between home and school, (e.g., Monteel, & Cortez, 2002; Cooper, 2002; Reyes, Scribner, & Paredes-Scribner, 1999; NCELA, 1998) these programs often have similar foci, and few provided information on working with new arrival immigrants with little or no English background. Epstein, a leader in the field in this area, has found that, the more schools and families can work together, the better it is for the child, especially

for the students who are considered “at-risk” (1995; 2001). This is no longer a novel idea for schools as the recent, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation of 2001 requires schools to promote and support parents.

The scholarly work presented has shown the components of school-based support and included school programs, supportive environments, peers tutors, interpreters, and mentors. The common theme of this section is that while research can be found in the previously mentioned areas, the paucity of literature continues to highlight the lack of comprehensive evidence-based, theory driven, research on support networks. This theme continues in the next section in a discussion of community-based support.

Community-Based Support

Community-based support is third main area of support critical for student development and includes community services, social services, community members, neighbors, extended family members, and peers (Brooks & Kavanaugh, 1999). There are numerous research studies in the area of community involvement that show positive results when communities invest in the lives of immigrant students and their families (Garcia-Reid, Reid, & Peterson, 2005; Reyes, Scribner, & Paredes-Scribner, 1999; Strug & Mason, 2002). Despite the challenges faced as newcomers to this country, the role of a cohesive, culturally supportive community can make a crucial difference in a.) helping students maintain positive aspirations, b.) making cultural transitions, and c.) the academic success of students (Shields, & Behrman, 2004; Valdez, 1996; Epstein, 1995; McCaleb, 1994).

Community-based support has shown to make a difference by including immigrant families in support networks and utilizing the strengths of these families as valuable assets with, “funds of knowledge” in schools and communities (Moll, 1994; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992). According to Chavkin and Gonzalez, (2000) research on the success of Mexican-American students in the U.S. is directly linked to collaborative community programs that recognize and capitalize on the assets and strengths of Mexican-immigrant youth and their families.

An important example of this kind of support comes from a large-scale study by Brooks and Kavanaugh (1999). This case study included families from eight large schools in southern Texas with Hispanic populations of 66percent or higher. The purpose of their project was to identify “best practices in developing and maintaining school-community relationships” (p. 61). The results of this study define three models of support within the communities. These include a.) the community as a resource model, providing economical support for schools, b.) the traditional community model where schools serve as the center of activity for the surrounding community, and c.) the learning community model which sees the school as the center of a larger community of learning. Within these different community-based models, the beliefs of the community differ in that, what is seen as “best practice” for one school was not seen as “best practice” in another school (p. 64). This insight was based on how the community viewed the role of participation. While the views of community participation differed, the common theme throughout was based on recognizing the value of collaboration within communities and schools (Brooks & Kavanaugh, 1999). This model offers valuable insight into community-based collaboration. It assumes that schools and communities will want to

engage in collaboration. Unfortunately did not include ways to increase motivation toward change and the process of collaboration. Drawing on the previously cited work of Delgado (1998) would suggest that it would also be important to build trust between parents, schools, and community members to increase participation.

Another example of collaborative community-based support comes from community-based organizations (CBOs). CBOs are defined as community groups committed to helping people obtain health, education, and other basic human services (Adger, 2001; Dryfoos, 1998). One benefit of CBOs partnering with schools and other organizations, is the ability to “broaden the base of support” for language minority students (Adger, 2001). These partnerships support academic achievement not by imitating schools, but by filling in and reinforcing the supports that schools often assume students already have in place.

This supportive relationship between families and the community was also noted in the study conducted by Adger (2001), with sixty-two CBO school partnerships. This study described functions of CBO partnerships at the preschool and elementary level with the programs and services provided to parents and families to prepare children for school. At the secondary level, CBO programs include tutoring (in the students’ first language), leadership training and mentoring, help with social issues (teen pregnancy and gang involvement), and promoting higher education goals. The study concluded that these CBOs were successful in providing adequate resources, program flexibility, and responsiveness to the clients. An important distinction in the findings from this study include that CBOs function to support, not supplant, school programs and services and while this study provides interesting conclusions, the limitations of this study are worth

mentioning. These limitations included participants not returning surveys, and not all sites included in the study were visited by the investigators.

Collaboration is a common theme throughout the literature on community-based support (Adger, 2001; Brooks & Kavanaugh, 1999; Delgado, 1998; Epstein, 1995). Similarly, the goal of a two and a half year-long longitudinal study of Puerto Rican parents examined the views and suggestions of parents on how the community, schools, and social services could better collaborate to support the academic achievement needs of these students (Delgado, 1998). In this case study of extensive interviews with 24 participants, it is important to note that Delgado found that Hispanic parent involvement with formal community and social services is limited due to linguistic and cultural barriers. The study also found that participation increases with services that provide assistance in their native language. During this two-year study, the schools became an important support system for the parents and a major resource in their lives by assisting families with such things as interpreting government related forms, giving out winter clothing, providing opportunities for parents to get involved in the classroom and helping with finding job opportunities. Suggestions from the parents included providing social services at the school, increasing communication, and more learning opportunities. It is important to note that the schools had bilingual personnel to assist the families of these schools and probably added to their comfort level and willingness to participate. While the conclusions of the study are helpful, the limitations include the inability to generalize beyond the scope of the setting. This is based on the dropout rate of the participants down to 13 by the end of the more than two year time period. Also, the study focused on adult perceptions, and information regarding actual support received was not assessed.

However, this study does provide important foundational work for the current study by identifying some of the important support need variables.

Overall, it is important to note that there is a plethora of information available for those interested in creating community-based programs. The gap in this literature exists in that the majority of the studies are not evidence-based. Many are evaluation studies for the purpose of continued funding (e.g., Sosa, 2000) or program evaluations (e.g., Adger, 2001). There is also the ever-increasing need for additional research with community-based programs and services specifically designed for immigrant students and their families (Lopez, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001). The diverse social, cultural, linguistic, and academic needs paired with the paucity of literature on effective parental involvement practices for immigrant families further the need for more research that looks at the relationship between available support and accessibility to this support.

Issues of Accessibility

In order for support networks to be effective, immigrant students and their families must be able to access the support. Understanding the issues involved is helpful in designing programs and support systems that will truly make a difference. For these reasons, this section begins with a discussion of barriers that may hinder support.

While studies show that parent involvement is helpful across all populations (Henderson & Berla, 1994), the families of children being educated in our nation's schools today are extremely diverse. Many immigrant families do not speak or understand English. This language barrier may pose a special problem for low-income families who have little or no education themselves (Morra, 1994). Families also have

different views of school, teaching, and their own role in their children's education. Teachers unable to communicate with non-English speaking parents may increase barriers by making assumptions about the family. Even family members who speak English often have difficulty communicating with schools because their life experiences and perspectives are very different (Comer, 1988; Moles, 1993).

These barriers affect students in many ways. Students must not only learn about a new culture and language, they also need to acquire the content area skills and abilities of students their age (Green, 2003; Anderson, et al., 2003). Freeman, et al. (2002) consider this "gap" as one of the biggest challenges facing the second language learners in U. S. public schools; namely, these students need to not only learn English, but the age-appropriate curriculum in order to achieve academic success. These barriers include linguistic, social, and cultural factors and are noted to have a direct effect on immigrants and their academic achievement in school (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Schmid, 2001; Ogbu, 1993; Jaret, 1999; Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991).

Social Capital

In order for these components to be successful, one must also understand how social capital affects the student and their families' ability to access community and school-based support networks. The discussion of social and cultural capital originated from the field of sociology and first used by Peirre Bourdieu and Jean Claude Passeron in their work, *Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction* (1973). In Bourdieu's, "The Forms of Capital" (1986), he describes these types of capital:

Social capital which is based on membership in group, and includes the relationships and networks of influence and support within the group. Cultural

capital is described as the forms of knowledge, skill, education, any advantages a person has which give them a higher status in society, including high expectations (p. 3).

Bourdieu (1986) further defines social capital as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (p. 248). Portes (1998) clarifies Bourdieu’s definition by stating that, “social capital is decomposable into two elements: first, the social relationship itself that allows individuals to claim access to resources possessed by their associates and second, the amount and quality of those resources” (p. 3). He also shares the relevant perspective of differentiating between resources and accessibility as shown in Bourdieu’s work, “...it is important to distinguish the resources themselves from the ability to obtain them by virtue of membership in different social structures” (p.5).

While historically Bourdieu initiated much discussion on this topic, Lin (1999) clearly adds to the discussion and use for this study by defining social capital simply as, “resources accessed in social networks” (p. 471). He also classifies these resources into two types, personal resources and social resources.

Personal resources are possessed by the individual who can use and dispose them with freedom and without much concern for compensation. Social resources are resources accessible through one’s direct and indirect ties...and social resources exert an important and significant effect on attained statuses, beyond that accounted for by personal resources. (p. 467)

In Lin’s (1999) social capital model of status attainment, he illustrates how access to services through network resources, increases capital and mobilization of these resources. This in turn further increases individual (human) capital. Lin’s work includes an impressive review of 34 studies reflecting a convergence of thought in the field.

“Research has provided consistent support to the proposition that social capital, in the form of social resources, make a significant contribution to status attainment beyond personal resources” (Lin, 1999, p. 481). Lin also acknowledges the limitation of using only studies in English for his synopsis, but acknowledges growing amount of research in Europe not used in his work.

Utilizing social capital theory can enlighten the discussion of resources available with resources accessible. However, there may be barriers to attaining such resources due to factors such as; language, transportation, and childcare. These barriers may prohibit or inhibit use of services. Lin (1999) notes that, for the “disadvantaged”, social capital is restricted and mobilizing resources less likely to occur. Understanding these issues and using the information to positively influence support networks is twofold. First, we must be aware of the issues of capital and how it affects students and second, we must determine ways of increasing capital through group membership to benefit and support newcomer immigrant students and families.

In schools, cultural capital can be seen as the language that is used, the curricula used, and the values they hold. Social and cultural capital play an important role in understanding the research with immigrant populations by adding the dimension of thought and understanding to their existing networks and how they operate (Monkman, Ronald, & Theramene, 2005). Furthermore, support networks are represented in the research around social and cultural capital by showing how these networks can increase capital among Hispanic immigrant groups (Perna & Titus, 2005; Lareau, 1987).

McNeal (1999) explores this issue of social capital in relationship to parent involvement in schools. His quantitative study of over 15,000 participants involving

parents, students and teachers builds on Lareau's (1989) work and assertion that schools have standardized views of the proper role of parents in schooling. These views further inhibit parents and students with unequal resources to equally participate in their child's education and are seen as a form of cultural capital. McNeal (1999) defines social capital for members in this group as consisting of three distinct elements;

- Form: Described as the many structural aspects of social ties and relationships within a group.
- Norms of obligation and reciprocity: described as the sense of investing in something with the expectation of a return on that investment and including a trust in the reciprocity of the investment.
- Resources: described as resources available within the network, as well as, potential resources that can be gained as a result of the relationships in the group. (pp. 119-120)

McNeal's (1999) longitudinal study examined the effect of parent involvement on student behavior and performance in two year intervals. The results of this study showed that parent involvement significantly reduces incidents of problematic behavior yet did not show equivalent results for achievement. The most salient issue from this research is his discussion of the lack of research in the area of the form and resources available to families and how social networks can provide access to more resources. This perspective of social capital is also shared by Bourdieu (1986) in his argument that "social capital is in effect a multiplier of an individual's own capital as a result of the resources and other forms and stocks of capital available through the collectivity [of resources]" (p.120). This is especially helpful to parents who may need additional support as they acculturate into their new environment.

Bilingualism is also seen as a form of social capital that is helpful for students. In one study Feliciano (2001) found that bilingual immigrant students seemed to be more

resilient learners in high school and thus less likely to drop out than their peers who only spoke English. Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch (1995) add that bilingual students may have advantages in acquiring support. They found that bilingual students, proficient in both, English and their L1, achieved higher grades and better academic results in school than their peers who only spoke English.

In addition to linguistic and academic benefits of L1 maintenance, bilingual students who are proficient in their L1, use their L1 language ability as a link to the cultural values of their ethnic communities, which have been found to promote emotional and social balance in immigrant children's self-perception and identity (Kohnert & Derr, 2004; Wong-Fillmore, 1991). These connections between languages and cultures benefit and empower students.

Limitations to previous Research

This chapter reviewed key findings from the research in the areas of parent involvement, school-based support, and community-based support. Each area offers empirically driven research and guidance in how to support students and their families. This chapter also reviewed the important issues of accessibility in the forms of social and cultural capital. While this research clearly indicates the benefits for students who receive support at home, school, the community, there is still the need to further develop the area to determine which support systems are most effective. The gap in the literature is based on the need for theoretical development of these needs in order to better understand them and provide schools and communities with a comprehensive model including all of the components. Currently, most of the studies are centered on program

evaluation and development and few are evidence-based studies which further the concept of all entities working together to achieve the best possible learning environment for these students and their families. It is my desire to create this much needed model.

Conclusion

Language minority families with school aged children being educated in America's schools today are extremely diverse. The more schools and communities try to understand these differences and value how others see their roles, the better educators and others can begin to create new opportunities and involve students and their parents in comfortable, meaningful, and purposeful ways. Communities and schools need to promote collaborative learning communities and create avenues of trust and shared understanding to support parents in an active role in their child's education.

This chapter used the three components of support relating to student development from Bronfenbrenner's student ecology theory. This included the main areas of influence for students including their family, their school, and their community. Each area included seminal work relating to English language learners needs for support. Issues of access to systems of support were also addressed as an important aspect of students and their families receiving support; academically, linguistically, and socio-culturally. The research studies and findings in this literature review substantiate the previously described need for a holistic approach of looking at the combined needs for support of English language learners in small city communities, like the one in this study. Using a holistic approach, this study focused on the following research questions:

How does a small city school and its community support Mexican immigrant K-12 students and their families academically, linguistically, and culturally during their first years in the United States?

Sub-questions addressed in this study include:

1. What are the main needs of newcomer students and their families?
2. What type of support, if any, do the school and community currently offer these families?
3. Which areas of support have been most beneficial? Why?
4. What needs of students and their families have not been met?
5. What recommendations do stakeholders have for improving support?

The next chapter describes the qualitative methodology, known as grounded theory, used in to attain information regarding these questions.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

In order to better understand the types of social, linguistic, and academic support systems that are currently available or have been beneficial to the language minority families in this community, this study will employ grounded theory methodology (Charmaz, 2000; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) as the primary method in inquiry. Though not often used in the field of second language learning and teaching, this qualitative research methodology, the inductive methods employed for systematic collection, and analysis of data, will lead to the construction of an empirically based theoretical model (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), which is needed in our field (Hancock, 2001). The term empirical is used in the context of qualitative studies when the research procedures such as those used in grounded theory are rigorous (e.g., Bronfenbrenner and Evans 2000).

This chapter is organized into five main sections. The first section describes the research approach used in this study and provides background on how theory is generated using grounded theory methods. The second section describes the research participants and their setting. Included in this section is a description of the events that transpired over the course of this two-year investigation. The third section delineates the data sources and collection procedures employed in this study. The fourth section describes the systematic procedures used in data analysis. These rigorous procedures provide a way for the researcher to check, refine, and develop their ideas and intuitions about the data (Charmaz, 1995, p.28). These procedures are seen as central features of grounded theory

(Glaser 1978, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1990, 1998) and include constant comparative analysis, data coding, theoretical sampling and saturation.

The last section of this chapter offers a discussion of the trustworthiness aspect of the study. It includes measures taken to increase trustworthiness including; negative case analysis, and member checks.

Research Approach

Grounded theory is a qualitative research methodology used to generate theory inductively from research data. Using grounded theory methods, the data are systematically gathered and analyzed throughout the research process in order to identify major themes and relationships of a phenomenon, within a context or process, with the aim of generating a theory of the phenomenon (Corbin & Strauss, 1998).

The distinguishing characteristics of grounded theory methods (Glaser 1978, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1990, 1998) include: (a.) the use of constant comparisons throughout the data collections and analysis phases of research, (b.) the creation of analytic codes derived from data through open coding, (c.) the development of categories and their properties through axial coding which locates the relationships within and between the categories, (d.) the formation of substantive theories to explain behavior and processes through selective coding which refines the properties and parameters of each category (e.) the use of memos and diagrams, which are analytic notes made by the researcher during the process to further delineate the categories, and (f.) the use of theoretical sampling to further characterize, define, and guide the emerging theory.

While the major characteristics of grounded theory research are the set procedures for data collection and analysis (Creswell, 1998), it is important to note that these procedures are not structured in a way that dictates an ordinal manner. The data should dictate the process and concepts should be allowed to emerge, never forcing ideas or theories onto the data, rather confirming or disconfirming the data based on the similarity and relatedness of responses. The distinctive characteristics of each category are defined through continued efforts by the researcher to ask questions based on prior information. Furthermore, the grounded theory researcher does not approach the project with any preconceived theory in mind in order to allow the theory to emerge from the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Thus, grounded theory is an approach to qualitative research which posits that the theoretical constructs are “grounded” in the observational data and emerge from them rather than be imposed on them.

To support this “grounded” approach, there is also a need for the type of creativity in this process which allows the researcher to be open to view data from many angles and use different tools to see the data in alternative ways. Grounded theory methods seek to answer the questions of who, what, where, when, why, and under what circumstances, (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and begins with the researcher creating a basic description based on observations, interviews, and documents. Next the researcher begins conceptual ordering, by organizing data into distinct categories based on their properties and dimensions using description to clarify each category. At this point, the researcher begins theorizing these ideas and concepts and then formulating them into a logical system of relational explanations.

Participants and Setting

Research participants for this study included thirty-seven Latino parents with children enrolled in this community's local schools. All of the parents involved in this study are learning, or have learned, English as a second language. A home language survey (appendix A) was used to select participants for the study and gather important demographic information such as the following self-reported information: time in the United States, reasons for coming to this area, years of schooling, literacy levels, and language use in the home. To gain a broader perspective of the issues involved, 6 bilingual/ESL teachers, 1 bilingual paraprofessional, 1 program administrator, and 4 community members were also interviewed for this study.

Table 3.1. Research Participants

Participants	Ages	Time in U.S.	Criteria
37 Mexican immigrants (11 fathers) (26 mothers)	19-54	3 mos.-11 yrs.	Parents of students enrolled in the local school district.
8 School employees (6 ELL/Bilingual teachers) (1 Bilingual Para) (1 Program administrator)	N/A	N/A	Work in the school district.
4 Community members (1 Bilingual police officer) (1 Librarian) (1 Community Liaison) (1 Social worker)	N/A	N/A	Work and or live in the community.

Research Setting

This research study was conducted in a rural mid-west region of the U.S. Over forty years ago, this area was known for providing seasonal jobs to migrant workers. Each year many families would arrive from Mexico and work at some of the area's large farms. As the years passed, more families chose to stay year-round and settle into this

community. The numbers steadily increased as employers continued to seek employees to fill jobs outside of agricultural work³.

Today, the community has close to 6,000 residents. Like many Midwestern communities, this family-oriented place continues to build on its rich history of farming and manufacturing. It currently serves the area as an economic and social center for the moderately populated county. This community has seen a steady increase of immigrants over that past decade and according to recent statistics, one third of the population of this town is Mexican-American⁴, most of which have learned, or are currently learning, English as a second language. While integration between languages and cultures continues to provide challenges, it is a city full of pride and people willing to share its celebrated tales. Several participants made comments similar to the following regarding life in this community:

Está tranquilo. En cualquier lugar hay problemitas pero está tranquila la comunidad. No es como una ciudad grande. La mayoría viven tranquilos; pueden andar en la calle o en el parque y no hay mucho tráfico, no hay mucho ruido...It's peaceful. In whatever place there are small problems but the community is peaceful. It isn't like a big city. The majority live in peace; they can walk the street or in the park and there isn't a lot of traffic, there isn't a lot of noise.

Community members also spoke passionately about their local schools. The local school district has a long reputation of providing bilingual education to the numerous Mexican immigrant families that have settled here over the years. In the early 1970's the Bilingual Program began with one teacher working with the children of migrant workers. They implemented a late-exit program model which was designed to provide bilingual services to students at all grade levels. Increasingly, more and more families chose to

³ Based on Chamber of Commerce information. Give website. Write as complete sentence.

⁴ According to statistics from city-data website, located at: <http://www.city-data.com>.

remain and live in the community and the program grew to provide bilingual education classes to students in kindergarten through twelfth grade.

According to the participants, the Bilingual Program in this school district was strong and many families moved to this area as they heard that their children could continue to learn in their native language and learn English. This support was described as essential to the families in the community that wanted their children to learn English and maintain Spanish. The bilingual teachers in this district stated that they were regularly advocating for the program and that it was at times a struggle to keep the program going due to an English only political climate. When interviewed, one bilingual teacher said the following:

We worked year after year to keep the program going and to keep the quality of the program high. Students were doing very well and learning both languages...
...You know it takes longer to learn to read and write in two languages. It was so difficult to help administrators see that. (Female Bilingual Teacher)

This statement became even more significant when, during the course of this study, the school district decided to eliminate the bilingual program. Teachers were instructed to remove the Spanish materials from the classrooms. Books in Spanish were packed up into boxes and stored away into closets or given away. Bilingual teachers were directed to teach only in English and parents were informed that their children would be instructed only in English due to falling test scores in English. This frustrated many of the participants and was evident through several of the interviews (see chapter four).

The schools in this community face many of the same challenges of the numerous small communities across the mid-west with increasingly large numbers of immigrant

students learning English as a second language⁵. The timeliness of this project became evident during the course of this study.

Data Collection Procedures

The research was conducted in a funnel-like three phase process beginning with a broad examination of the described needs of Mexican immigrant families. Phase one was informed by a pilot study, used to understand the needs of families in this community and create the ELL Family Needs Assessment (See appendix B). This survey was given to all of the participants to establish the initial codes and categories and provide background information for the study.

This process continued in phase two with focus group interviews and specific questions based on the aforementioned needs of these families. Focus group interviews were held with parents, teachers, school staff, and community members. Interview questions originated from the needs survey from phase one, but were not limited to what was previously said. The researcher returned several times to continue the process of learning more about the emerging topics and themes. Each time the process narrowed to better understand and define the parameters of the research question.

The final phase of data collection included member checks with participants to refute negative cases and continue with questions to further define properties of the major categories. During this stage theoretical sampling occurred to provide saturation of information. From this phase, a conditional matrix, as shown in chapter four, (Straus & Corbin, 1998) was implemented to note relationships between categories and more clearly define characteristics of categories. To illustrate this process and the phases of

⁵ As listed at:<http://nces.ed.gov>

this study, charts have been created to elucidate this progression and explicate the themes that emerged.

Entry into the field

This study was conducted in a community where I lived and taught several years ago. As a licensed bilingual-bicultural teacher, in English and Spanish, I was able to communicate the purpose, tasks, and time commitment involved with the study in either language. Research participants were recruited through various venues in the community. These included adult English classes at local churches, the summer Spanish reading program at the public library, and the local “tienda”, a Mexican owned grocery store. Participants were asked if they would be willing to participate in the study and explained the purpose and scope of the study in Spanish. Interested participants reviewed and signed the consent form and home visits were set up for the interviews. Home visits were used to create a comfortable interviewing environment for the participants. A needs survey (appendix B) also was given to each participant before the home visit to identify variables in the study and refine questions for the interviews.

Upon entering each home, the research study was reviewed and any additional questions were answered before beginning the interview. Each interview with parents was conducted in Spanish and included up to six participants for each home visit.

Data sources

This qualitative research study incorporated surveys, focus group interviews, documents, and observations of community and school interaction as the primary sources for gathering data. Surveys were used to gain background knowledge from participants at the beginning of the study. Focus group interviews were used to explore the semi-

structured research questions. Documents of programs mentioned by participants were collected and observations noted during the entire study. Following grounded theory procedures, reflective memos were also kept during the entire study.

Data was first collected in the pilot study through a home language survey.⁶ This document is used in most U.S. schools to identify demographic information such as; time in the United States, years of schooling, self-reported literacy levels, and language use in the home. The first survey identified possible participants to participate in the study.

The second source of data collected was an ELL Family Needs Survey (Appendix B) which helped to identify the needs for support for each participant. These two documents were given to participants in English and Spanish and read aloud in small groups to those who were interested. Assistance was provided by a trusted Latina woman in the community to assist with language and/or writing needs. Participants were made aware that any answers could be written or told in English or Spanish and that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time during or after the interview.

Data was next collected through tape recorded, bilingual (English and Spanish) focus group interviews. Each interview was conducted by the bilingual investigator and all participants were included in a minimum of two focus group interviews. Each group consisted of 2-5 parents, was audio-taped, and lasted 40-60 minutes. The set of interviews was used to gather information based on the semi-structured interview questions (Appendix C) and informed by the surveys. The second interview was used to present information gathered from the first session and to verify with the participants that the researcher gained the correct understanding of the situation. Additional information

⁶ IRB Human Subjects Code Number: 0411P65490, approved on January 24, 2005.

was gathered based on previous comments from the group in an effort to achieve saturation of categorical information (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Observations and reflective memos were created for each of the interview sites with additional questions and directions for additional interviews. Notes from observations and reflective memos were used to describe facial expressions and environment, researcher's relevant thoughts and insights, and to formulate additional questions for further investigation.

Table (3.2) was adapted from the work of Anfara, Brown, and Mangione (2002). It shows the sources of data used in this study in relation to the overarching research question and sub-questions. The purpose of this table was to ensure that questions from each source of data collected would directly inform the research questions. For example, PS7 (Parent Survey, Question 7) pertains to the survey questions for parent participants in this study. Each question from the survey was compared with and related to the research sub-questions. This information also served as a foundation on which the subsequent interview questions were designed.

Table 3.2. **Research Questions in relation to Survey and Focus Group Questions**

Overarching research question: How does a small city school and its community best support Mexican immigrant K-12 students and their families; academically, linguistically, and culturally during their first years in the United States? PS= Survey questions for Parents (Appendix B) PF= Focus group questions for Parents (Appendix D) F= Focus group questions for Teachers, Administrators and Community members, (Appendix E) S= Survey questions for Teachers, Administrators and Community members (Appendix C)			
Research Sub-Questions	Academically	Linguistically	Culturally/Socially
1) What are the main needs of students and their families during their first years?	PS7, PS8, PS9, PS18, PS19, PS20 F1, F2 S4	PS5, PS6, PS7, PS8, PS18, PS19, PS20 F1, F2 S4	PS1, PS2, PS3, PS4, PS6, PS7, PS8, PS10, PS11, PS12, PS13, PS14, PS15, PS16, PS17, PS18, PS19, PS20, F1, F2, S4
2a) What type of support, if any, does the school currently offer these students and their families?	PS8 PF4, PF5, PF6 F5, F9, F10 S7, S10, S12	PS8 PF4, PF5, PF6 F5, F9, F10 S7, S10, S12	PS8 PF4, PF5, PF6 F5, F9, F10 S7, S10, S12
2b) What type of support, if any, does the community currently offer these students and their families?	PS9 PF4, PF5, PF6 F14, F15 S19	PS9 PF4, PF5, PF6 F14, F15 S16, S19	PS9 PF4, PF5, PF6 F14, F15 S16, S19
3) Which areas of support have been most beneficial to students and their families? Why?	PF,7, PF8, PF9, PF10, PF11, PF14, PF15, PF16, PF17 F6, F11, F16, F18, F19, F20	PF,7, PF8, PF9, PF10, PF11, PF14, PF15, PF16, PF17 F6, F11, F16, F18, F19, F20	PF,7, PF8, PF9, PF10, PF11, PF14, PF15, PF16, PF17 F6, F11, F16, F18, F19, F20
4) What needs of students and their families have not been met?	F7, F12, F17, F21 S9, S13, S22	F7, F12, F17, F21 S9, S13, S22	F7, F12, F17, F21 S9, S13, S22
5) Ideas or Recommendations for improvement in this area	PF12, PF18, PF19 F8, F13, F17, F22 S8, S9, S11, S13, S14, S15, S17, S20, S23, S24	PF12, PF18, PF19 F8, F13, F17, F22 S8, S9, S11, S13, S14, S15, S17, S18, S20, S23, S24	PF12, PF18, PF19 F8, F13, F17, F22 S8, S9, S11, S13, S14, S15, S17, S18, S20, S23, S24

(Adapted from Anfara, Brown, and Mangione, 2002)

Data Analysis Procedures

As mentioned, grounded theory methods provide systematic procedures for analyzing and collecting data. These rigorous procedures provide a way for the researcher to check, refine, and develop their ideas and intuitions about the data (Charmaz, 1995). They are seen as central features of grounded theory (Glaser 1978, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1990, 1998) and include data coding, constant comparative analysis, theoretical sampling and saturation. The following paragraphs further describe each of these procedures and how they were used in this study.

Data Coding

Data coding is described as the “analytic processes” through which data are minutely examined, conceptualized and compared, and ultimately integrated to form theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; p. 3). The first step used in this study is called open coding (p. 103). In this initial stage, data is reviewed and coded into as many categories of analysis as possible. While coding an incident for a category, the researcher must compare it with previous incidents in the same and different groups coded within the category. This technique was followed using a form of coding known as microanalysis, which is the detailed line-by-line analysis necessary at the beginning of a study to generate initial categories; including the properties and dimensions of these categories. This technique was used to begin the process of coding the data. Categories were created from the interview transcriptions, researcher notes, and surveys.

After the initial coding phase, a second type of coding, known as axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 123), which focuses on relating and integrating categories

and their properties was employed. In this stage, coding continues based on the categories, but the focus changes from the comparison of incident to incident to comparing incidents with the properties of the category. These properties are derived from the initial comparisons of incidents. During this stage, the properties of this category continually become more established as the circumstances are noted and compared.

The next stage of coding, used later in the research, is known as selective coding (p. 143) which further integrates the categories and defines the theory. This stage occurs at 2 levels; theoretical and categorical. Reduction of data happens by recognizing and removing the outliers. This reduction leads to consequent generalization forced by the constant comparisons and which may include literature and other professional areas. As this occurs, the theory begins to emerge based on two major requirements of theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 111).

- i. *Parsimony* of variables and formulation
- ii. *Scope* in the applicability of the theory to a wide range of situations, while keeping a close correspondence of theory and data.

At this stage, coding and analyzing of incidents becomes more select and focused. The categories become saturated and themes converge into beginning level substantive theory.

Constant Comparative Analysis

During the entire process of coding, another tool is utilized in grounded theory. It is known as constant comparative analysis. It involves a system of examining and refining variations in emergent and grounded concepts within that data (Patton, 2002).

According to Glaser, (1978) this process begins with the collection of data, followed by the researcher looking for key issues, reoccurring events, or activities which “emerge” as the categories of focus. The next step is to collect more data to provide further information on these categories; carefully noting the similarities and differences to further develop the “dimensions” of the category (p. 101). Dimensions are defined as the properties and variations within a category (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). During this time the researcher writes about these categories in the form of memos. Memos (p. 110) are defined as the researchers’ notes thoughts, descriptions, interpretations, questions, and ideas for further areas of analysis. The researcher continues to analyze the data and look at it from various perspectives and in order to look at the relationships, interaction, and social processes between the categories.

As this process continues with the constant comparison of categories, the researcher starts to generate theoretical properties, or concepts, of the category. The researcher begins to think in terms of the possible scope of the category; its dimensions, the conditions under which it is produced and or minimized, its major consequences, its relation to other categories, and any other properties it may have. As these concepts emerge from the data, there is an eventual shift in the process to less data collection and more confirming through analyzing the data. The following stages described by Glaser & Strauss, (1967, p. 101-115) include the procedures for coding data.

Theoretical Sampling

Another important tool in grounded theory is known as theoretical sampling. Strauss Corbin (1998) define it as the gathering of additional data on the basis or emerging concepts derived from the evolving theory and based on the premise of using it

to make comparisons (p. 201). The purpose is to “maximize opportunities” for the researcher to compare events and discover variations among concepts in order to verify how categories vary in terms of its properties and dimensions.

Theoretical sampling differs from sampling in quantitative research in that the grounded theorist looks for more examples of the category and does not have a set sample from which to gather data. Conversely, in grounded theory, the researcher continues to look for examples of the category and the number of groups or interviews is not necessarily known at the beginning. This procedure of gathering additional data is done in order to fully develop and understand the characteristics of each category.

According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), this process also includes using “slices of data”. These slices of data are defined as different types of data in which the researcher can view differences from different vantage points when developing the categories. An example of this would be to interview the students, teachers, and parents, each giving a different slice of data from their vantage point. Anecdotal comparisons can also be made by using data slices from other groups that offer useful comparisons. This is especially useful in starting research and developing categories. An example of this would be to compare similar circumstances with different cultural groups.

Theoretical Saturation

Theoretical saturation is defined as “the point in category development at which no new properties, dimensions, or relationships emerge during analysis” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.143). The sampling process does not end until the categories are saturated, which means that no new information is being gathered from the sample. This will occur as the researcher sees similar instances in the data over and over again. The

goal of the researcher is to consistently look for information in the data that highlights similarities and differences, or outliers, in the category. These differences help to define the category and its qualities (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 61). The researcher continues to gather data until no new relevant information seems to emerge regarding a category and its properties and dimensions. This is done in order to make certain that the widest possible range of characteristics of the category are discovered and characteristics and relationships among categories are well established and validated (p. 212).

Trustworthiness

The concept of trustworthiness refers to the internal and external validity of the qualitative research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Torres, 2004). It requires the researcher to demonstrate how they arrived at the theory analysis and conclusions, (Gilgun, 2005) and prompts the researcher to reflect on both decisions and behavior throughout the inquiry process. During this study, several measures were taken to insure quality. The following table, adapted from Anfara, Brown, and Mangione's work, (2002) is used to show these measures which address the concept of trustworthiness.

Table 3.3 Research Criteria for Assessing Qualitative Research Quality and Rigor

Qualitative term	Strategy employed
Credibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The primary investigator and interview facilitator is bilingual in English and Spanish; able to communicate in either language. • Team analysis was conducted with a native Spanish speaker in order to gain additional perspectives (both cultural and linguistic) on the “slices” of information. • Use of peer debriefing • Member checks were performed with each group. • Use of pilot study to inform present study
Transferability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide rich description • Purposive sampling • Detailed account of data analysis protocol
Dependability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an audit trail • Code-recode strategy • Triangulation • Peer examination
Confirmability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Triangulation • Practice reflexivity

(Adapted from Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002)

The issue of trustworthiness was addressed in several ways throughout the study. First and foremost, having a researcher with knowledge and understanding of the language and culture was paramount. The researcher also maintained a personal journal to record anecdotal information and intentional reflections from each interaction. Second, using a bilingual peer researcher and numerous member checks throughout the entire process helped to insure correct understanding of the information received. Finally the pilot study informed this study and provided a foundation for moving forward with questions. The following is a description of the pilot study and its results.

Pilot Study

A pilot study similar to the present study was conducted in the spring of 2005 to gain a better understanding of the types of programs that are available to English language learners and their families and to test the instruments and methodology for answering the proposed research questions. It was based on the perceptions of Hispanic parents with children enrolled in classes for English language learners. The research questions included the following.

1. How does the community currently support English language learners?
2. Which programs are most beneficial for students? Why?
3. Which programs are most beneficial for parents? Why?
4. How can the community best support language minority families?

The results of this study showed five main areas of support that emerged from the data using grounded theory methods similar to the ones previously described. Each of the following areas represents the common themes from the participants. These five basic areas of support included:

1. **Community issues.** This area included issues with interacting at the local stores, banks, and accessing government services. WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) was listed as very helpful, yet there were overwhelming issues of needing help with filling out forms, and knowing about services.
2. **School issues.** Many mentioned the benefits of having bilingual teachers in the schools and a bilingual office attendant to help them with any questions. They shared feelings of trust for the schools based on the ability to communicate with teachers.
3. **Healthcare issues.** This area included the need for translators in doctor's offices in order to be able to communicate their needs and receive proper treatment. Help with filling out forms was also important.

4. Housing issues. Participants shared feelings of being discriminated against when trying to locate housing. Some found assistance, but needed more English to pursue opportunities with housing programs.
5. Work-related issues. This area included comments of being ostracized by others at the work place because they didn't speak English. Also, negative feelings were expressed of missed promotions, or being paid less for the same job, based on lack of English skills. Feelings of competition between immigrants who had more English skills and those with less.

Each of these five areas converged into two main areas related to common characteristics of the themes and based on these characteristics, responses centered on 1) the acute need for more English and 2) the restrictions on their lives due to the lack of English skills. All of the participants expressed, in one way or another, the need to learn English. Based on these results, the ELL Family Needs Assessment was developed and used in the present study.

This chapter provided background information on the methods, procedures, participants, and setting used in this study. It included information on the pilot study used to inform the present study. Using these grounded theory methods, the next chapter presents the findings of this study.

Chapter 4

Results and Analysis

The preceding chapter discussed grounded theory methodology procedures and the theoretical framework by Bronfenbrenner (1979) used in this study to answer the following question and sub-questions: How does a small city school and its community support Mexican immigrant K-12 students and their families; academically, linguistically, and culturally during their first years in the United States? Sub-questions included:

1. What are the main needs of newcomer students and their families?
2. What type of support, if any, do the school and community currently offer these families?
3. Which areas of support have been most beneficial? Why?
4. What needs of students and their families have not been met?
5. What recommendations do stakeholders have for improving support?

This chapter presents the analysis and results of the study and is organized into six main sections. The first section of this chapter identifies the foremost needs of newcomer families during their first few years in the U.S., as described by parents, teachers, and community members. This section also provides an overview of participant responses (Table 2) in a Reflective Coding Matrix (Scott, 2004) highlighting the foremost needs of newcomer students in the areas of linguistic, academic, and social support.

The second section of this chapter builds on the needs of families and students by ascertaining the types of support currently in place for these families. It is based on the

aforementioned theoretical framework or Bronfenbrenner (1979), and looks at current support in place for newcomer students from the three main areas of school, community, and parents. This section also includes a description of participant responses regarding the school district's decision to discontinue the bilingual program, which occurred during the two year course of this study. The third and fourth sections further define support needs by focusing on the areas of support that have been most beneficial, and needs that have not been met. This leads to the fifth section which offers recommendations from all stakeholders involved in this study for improving support. The sixth, and final section of this chapter illustrates how the responses were combined into categories, patterns, and themes, based on grounded theory practices, as illustrated in a Thematic Code Mapping Analysis chart in table 5 (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002). This section concludes with the presentation of broad themes which emerged during the course of this study.

Research Question One:

What are the main needs of newcomer students and their families?

The central guiding question during phase one of this study was to determine what the main support needs of students and their families were during their first years in the United States. All 49 participants were asked to list and rate needs of new Latino families entering the community by filling out an ELL (English Language Learner) Needs Assessment survey (Appendix A). From this survey participants ranked needs on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being of greatest need for support or assistance. Participants were also able to add any area of need to the survey not already listed. All data were

tabulated based on the five point rating system and compiled into the following table (1).

These are the initial categories which provided the basis for further interview questions.

Table 4.1
Initial Categories and Codes of Student and Familial Needs

(Ranked in order of need)	
1.	Help with learning English, communicating with others, more opportunities to learn English, difficulties in taking classes.
2.	Help in communicating with doctors, hospitals, nurses, etc.
3.	Help in communicating with the school, being understood.
4.	Help for my children in school.
5.	Help with my children's homework.
6.	Help with transportation for my children in the winter, for after school events
7.	Help with legal issues, understanding police; understanding documents; who to trust with information.
8.	Help in understanding the school system and policies.
9.	Support for maintaining our language in the home.
10.	Help with social services.
11.	Help with visa; in becoming a citizen.
12.	Help in communicating at work.
13.	Help with learning about and using technology.
14.	Help in finding childcare.
15.	Help in the stores and businesses with communication; trust
16.	Help in setting up service for telephone, electricity, etc.
17.	Help with finding someone to confide in to discuss problems, issues, or concerns; need for a bilingual counselor.
18.	To learn ways of helping my children to be successful in school.
19.	Help with reading things in English.
20.	Help my children with sports, extra-curricular activities.
21.	Help in getting to know the community.

Open coding began in this phase and was based on both, structured and open-ended participant responses. In the next two subsections, support needs of families and students are described in greater detail. Each subsection begins with the perspective of parent participants and follows with teacher, school staff, and community member

perspectives. Differentiating the perspectives of participants aligns with the theoretical framework of this study (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Family Needs

Parent Participant Responses

When parents were asked about the main needs of support for their family, they overwhelmingly listed “help in learning English” (table 4.1) as the number one need for both themselves and their families. The ability to know and use English seemed to supersede all other areas, likely because knowing English would help in those areas. The second most important area of need for families focused on issues of communication. These issues included help in communicating with school, doctors, at work, and with police as expressed in the following quote:

Si, seria muy importante aprender inglés, porque el idioma es el principal. Con el idioma tu puedes hacer todo o básicamente todo. Y el idioma es lo que los tiene uno atados puede decir. No puedes ir al doctor, no puedes ir a una tienda, no puedes ir a un banco, no puedes ir a ninguna parte... *Yes, it is very important to learn English because the language is the main thing. With the language you can do everything, or basically everything. And the language [problem] is what ties one down [limits]. You can't go to the doctor, you can't go to the store, you can't go to the bank, you can't go to any place.* (Parent Participant)

Several parents expressed feelings of frustration and isolation in not being able to fully communicate. One of the participants expressed it with the following comment, “Para estar aquí, a veces me siento mal, bueno, como yo trabajo, trabajo....estoy aislada porque no puedo hablar su lengua...*To be here, at times I feel bad, well, I work, I work...I am isolated because I can't speak your language.*” This is a common theme for newcomer families as expressed in Ramirez’s work (2003) with Latino immigrant parents who...“are experiencing the realities of cultural miscommunication and isolation when

trying to find answers for themselves and for their children” (p. 47). This issue is further identified by The Center for Social and Demographic Analysis at the University at Albany (SUNY) which documented that twenty-six percent of all newcomer families live in households where no one over the age of 13 speaks much English (Hernandez, Denton, & Macartney, 2007, p. 6). These children and families offer both special challenges and opportunities for schools.

One example of these challenges was expressed during an interview with a recent newcomer attending English classes. He shared the following insight:

O, para mi fue difícil cuando yo me vine para este país. Viene lleno de muchos sueños y o viene con una venda en los ojos sin saber la realidad que es este país... ah... no puedo decir que es malo porque este país nos ofrecimos muchos oportunidades y tenemos oportunidades económicamente muchas cosas buenas. Es nada más de echarle ganas y saludar adelante, pero muy trabajoso y difícil esa cualquier persona que quiere venir para acá es muy difícil... *Oh, it was difficult for me when I came to this country. I came full of dreams with a blindfold over my eyes without knowing the reality of this country... well... I can't say that it is bad because this country offers us a lot of opportunities and we have a lot of good economic opportunities. All you have to do is put forth the effort to come out ahead, but it is troublesome and difficult for whoever comes here...* (Parent Participant)

One challenge, expressed by a mother attending adult English classes, described how the language shift among her children was affecting her family. In her story, she shared feelings of separation between her and her children. She expressed her frustration in not being able to communicate with her daughter as her daughter learned more English and refused to speak Spanish at home:

Es difícil, me gustaría [asistir a clases de inglés] más porque tengo una hija que casi no habla español, y... este... comunicarme más con ella. O sea no más con ella sino... como ahorita está chica y no quiere hablar español. No le gusta hablar, [en español] pero yo la entiendo mejor porque está más chica, pero a la mejor cuando este más grande... este... va a aprender... *It is difficult, I would like [to attend English classes] more because my daughter speaks very little Spanish, and...um... I would like to be able to communicate with her. I mean, not just her*

really but...like right now she is little and doesn't want to speak Spanish. She doesn't like to talk [in Spanish] but I understand her better because she is younger, but maybe when she is older...um... she'll learn. (Parent Participant)

This shift in communication can cause a gap between parents and their children and is part of a universal issue in schools today. Olsen (2000) states that, “becoming English fluent usually is accompanied by a loss of home language use, fluency, and development” (p.197). Without strong support for native language development, children in schools experience a gradual loss of their native language, thus creating a space between their immediate and extended family from their homeland.

Issues with communication transcended all areas of parents' lives. Several parents mentioned problems at their work and the need to be able to communicate with employers in English. One woman, who worked at a local factory on the assembly line, shared how scared she was because she did not know how to ask her shift leader how to turn off the machine if her hand got caught in it. She painfully spoke of the many times it almost happened, and the nightmares she had about it. Other parents added stories of communication issues at their job and the inequalities for those who did not speak English. Some of the participants reported that they were forced to accept wages below what others were paid in order to retain their jobs. One mother shared her frustration in getting different or better employment due to her lack of English:

Pero no como quiera no pasa del mismo trabajo. Si uno quiere garrar otro trabajo pero no lo consigue por eso, por solo el inglés. Si no puede, [hablar inglés] o sea una posición más alta...But the same thing doesn't happen at every job. If you want to get another job you can't because you don't know English. If you can't, [speak English] you can't get a better position. (Parent Participant)

Her story was not unique as others in the group agreed as she shared her story of trying to find better employment.

Issues with finding employment or getting a better job were addressed in a case study (Durán, 1996) including 11 Latino immigrant families which looked at the needs of newcomers. According to his study, having limited English skills was recognized by family members as a significant impediment to obtaining employment. Knowing how to search for acceptable employment posed in itself a significant literacy need. In addition, knowledge of job availability required being able to locate employment agencies or places where job announcements were posted (p. 4).

The theme of communication transcended into every conversation. When discussing family needs, all parents expressed the need to be able to better communicate with the school, their work, and the community. One woman tearfully shared of her dear friend, Sylvia, who went to the hospital one evening in severe pain. Sylvia was unable to communicate with the doctor about her pain and there was no one to translate for her. She was prescribed some medicine and returned home. Her friend sadly shared that Sylvia had apparently been misdiagnosed and died a few days later of an unknown cause.

In a report titled, *Understanding and responding to the needs of newcomer immigrant youth and families*, Gaytán, Carhill, and Suárez-Orozco (2007) share that many communities do not or are not able to provide the resources most needed by newcomer families. This makes a point for increasing services that teach English to newcomer families and cultivate independence from the availability, or lack thereof services.

Teachers, School Staff, and Community Member Responses

This section further identifies the needs of families, but from the viewpoint of teachers, school staff, and community members. When asked to identify the main needs

of newcomer students and families, all 12 participants (8 teachers and school staff, and 4 community members) listed English as the number one perceived need. Secondary to this, teachers listed role models, help with homework, and understanding the school culture as other important areas. In contrast, community members listed health care issues as the second most important need. Two other areas emphasized by community members included the need for counseling services and public transportation.

When teachers and school staff described support needs for newcomer families they shared a general concern for wanting to help and to welcome families. This included meeting the initial needs of registering children in school, making sure that they were placed correctly, and introducing the new students to peers who could translate for them. One teacher passionately articulated some of these issues in the following quote:

In my opinion, there are many things...[needed]; Parents need to learn English, They need help filling out paperwork. Parents need to learn how to support their children in an academic setting. Families need to feel included, accepted, and valued as a part of the district as they are,... not only after they assimilate, They need help and encouragement in learning the resources available for their children, i.e. the library, soccer programs, music lessons through the school, etc. so that they can participate in the society/community in which they live. (Teacher)

This teacher points to the vital need for assistance to be timely and that parents need to be supported and valued “as they are” upon arrival, not just after they “assimilate”. All of the teachers in this study expressed a continued need for bilingual services. One promising program providing this type of assistance is called Project CASAS (Schoorman & Velouse, 2003). Project CASAS was part of a large scale study involving eight schools serving over 4,000 immigrant students. It included a team of 6 multi-cultural liaisons and three bilingual and bicultural counselors working to create programs for newcomer students. Their goal was to empower newcomers by providing

support from people who are bilingual and bicultural. These bilingual counselors acted as “cultural brokers” (p. 315) between school, home, and peers. Parents were not simply told what to do but were assisted in learning about school and their options as parents. This program also included many community organizations which played a vital role in the success of the program. One of the interesting findings of this study was not only the importance of the bilingual counselors to the newcomers participating and integrating into the community, but success also depended of the responsiveness of the community.

In the current study, community member participants each told of experiences working with or assisting newcomer families in the community. They expressed a desire to better understand the needs of these families and described what they perceived as the major needs of these families. All of the community members in this study addressed the need for more Spanish speaking professionals or translators in the community as shown in the following responses:

Yes, they [newcomers] are always looking for somebody who speaks Spanish. Like doctors; that’s what they need...Services that are provided in their own language. (Community Member)

It’s like when one of the family members speaks English... all of the other family members will use them to communicate...often it is one of the children that translates. This can be difficult at times...to involve the children. (Community Member)

These responses from community members clearly recognize support needs for newcomers within this community. While expressing a willingness to help, participants were not sure how to provide support in these areas.

These perceived needs coincide with other research in the field (Gaytán et al., 2007; Tse, 1996). One such study speaks to the issue of having children as translators or “language brokers” as described in the work of Tse (1996). Tse shares that children

from diverse language backgrounds and at young ages (8 or 9 years old) often perform difficult and demanding tasks usually done by parents or other adults. These tasks include many of the ones listed by participants in this study.

School-based tasks include:

- Translating notes from the school for their parents
- Interpreting at parent–teacher conferences
- Talking to school personnel on behalf of younger siblings
- Relaying messages from parents to school officials

Community-based tasks include:

- Translating at the bank during transactions
- Corresponding with governmental agencies
- Translating rental agreements for housing
- Helping with job applications for family and friends

Not being able to communicate and needing to use young children as translators can clearly be stressful for families. Tse (1996) adds that in both school and community-based activities, “language minority students are asked to act on behalf of and sometimes even in place of their parents. As a result, when translators are not available, children are asked to make many decisions; for themselves, their siblings, parents and friends” (p. 16).

Student Needs

This section narrows the discussion of newcomer needs to a focus on students in school. Participants responded to questions specifically related to the needs of school-

aged children. Again, the data are presented first, according to the perspectives of parent participants and second, with teacher, school staff, and community member perspectives.

Parent Participant Responses

Learning English continues to be an important theme as parents stated several reasons for wanting their children to be successful in English. Many mentioned wanting their children to have a better life, with more opportunities, than they had for themselves. One parent wanted his children to learn it so they could teach him. He shared that it was too hard for him to learn in the community English classes because he could not read, but that his daughters could teach him at home. He proudly shared of how well they were doing in school and how he didn't mind the two hour daily commute to work so they didn't have to move and change schools.

Yo espero aprender [ingles]. Necesito que ellas, mis hijas, aprendan para que luego me enseñen a mí... Yo pienso que tener el interés y tener todas las ganas porque estamos en un país que no asiste si habla otro idioma. Mis hijas, su primer idioma es español. Entonces tienen que echarle más ganas, más interés para aprender inglés efectivamente... I hope to learn [English]. I need for them, my daughters, to learn so that then they can teach me... I think that having the interest and wanting it because we are in a country that doesn't help you if you speak another language. My daughters, their first language is Spanish. So they have to want to put more effort out, more interest to learn English effectively. (Parent Participant)

As this father candidly shared his own feelings and frustrations with learning English, his commitment to their education was undeniable.

All parent participants, ranked learning English as essential to their children's success in the United States. Other important areas of need subsequent to the first included; help in school, help with homework, and issues of transportation to school events and activities. One mother shared of how difficult it was having teenagers in high school and not having transportation for after school activities. She also shared of a time

when it was very cold outside. She waited and waited for the bus to bring her two youngest children home. The bus was over an hour late and she was so worried about her children. She did not know where the bus was or why it was so late. She mentioned that it was frustrating not knowing how to communicate in English with the bus company.

In another area, there was discussion about parents' desire for their children to stay in school and graduate. Most did not feel that there were opportunities for their children to continue to college. Parents wanted their children to go further than they had in school but were not aware of opportunities past high school. Most felt college was out of their reach and wanted their children to stay in school and complete high school.

Hay unos que no terminan high school porque no tienen papeles [legales] y piensan que no hay oportunidades para trabajos buenos o la universidad. Pero pienso que si había oportunidades en la high school que ellos irán... *There are some who don't finish high school because they don't have papers [legal] and think there are no job opportunities or college. But I think that if there were opportunities [for students to continue their education] in high school they would go.* (Parent Participant)

Recent research from the Immigration Policy Center (Gonzales, 2007) shows how immigrant students, particularly Latino immigrant students, have disadvantages in opportunities post high school. While most of the children have attended school in this country for much of their lives, without a means to legalize their status, they are seldom able to go on to college and cannot work legally in this country (p.1). The findings show that even while ten states have recently passed laws allowing undocumented students who graduate from in-state high school to qualify for in-state college tuition, undocumented students are still not eligible for most types of financial aid and only 5-10percent end up going on to college.

During the numerous home-visit interviews, it was very clear how much parents wanted their children to do well in school. Their faces lit up as they talked about the progress their children had made and more than a few parents proudly showed off their children's work that was hanging on the refrigerator or a wall. Several expressed the hope that their children would stay in school and graduate and all shared the need for their children to learn English.

Teachers, School Staff, and Community Member Responses

When asked about support for students in school, teachers communicated issues of support that related to the school culture. The student needs they listed were similar to parent and family needs because they saw help in communicating and understanding English as paramount. One teacher described some important student needs for someone just entering school.

Well, the first thing that happens to them is their kid gets a test in English and Spanish to see where they are going to be placed. I think they need to be appropriately placed in the right grade level, the right language dominance [English or Spanish]. That's the important thing, to be placed in an appropriate classroom that will meet their academic and social needs. Another thing that they [students] need is to know how to be able to survive on the playground. A lot of the times the people who are most intimidated are the children in first grade with the cafeteria ladies. They didn't know what they were eating. The cafeteria ladies said they had to take this and eat this... just some understanding about that would be important. (Teacher)

This is common experience for newcomers and schools can make a big difference in how they welcome new students by providing regular support to familiarize new students with school routines and expectations (Dale, 1986; Lasso & Soto, 2005). In addition the basic routines and schedules, students need more support. One teacher commented on working with older students and stressing the need for academic support for newcomer students with the following comment:

Well, if they come from Mexico, it seems like there are some areas... obviously learning English seems to be the priority...but depending on where they come from it still seems like the academic need is content at the middle and high school in the science and math areas. The teachers need training more in those areas to make sure that they use language and vocabulary.... (Teacher)

Meeting the academic needs of newcomer students is an especially important support area for students who arrive in middle or high school (Short & Boyson, 2004).

With less time to learn English and academic skills necessary to complete required course work before high school graduation, support from experienced teachers is critical to their success. Furthermore, in order to meet student needs, courses and curricula must be designed to accelerate their learning.

In addition to academic needs, teachers were asked how newcomer students adjust socially to their new environment. Teachers and school personnel seemed to have structured ideas for helping students with this need. The following comment was given regarding newcomers at the middle school:

At the middle school... let's say you are a newcomer. If you are a newcomer, socially they attach themselves to the kids that will make them feel comfortable. So socially they are not integrating themselves because of their language... it's pretty obvious. For some of the other kids it seems like more kids are getting into sports if their parents are doing it (coaching) at the elementary. Because what happens is socially if the parents are pushing them ... they are learning about sports and teams and competition... then also they are socially accepted... So it seems like if they could just do it [get involved in sports] more at elementary the parents would be used to it and socially they are going to fit in. (Teacher)

Many participants expressed how this increase in Latino leaders and role models was making a difference in the community. Students and their parents felt comfortable letting their child play soccer on the local team when the coach was Latino. This was a main point that many teachers expressed in promoting trust and involvement in community activities.

Overall, help with English, or being able to communicate in English was a main concern with parents, teachers, and community members. It is interesting to note that while teachers had much to add to the discussion of newcomer student and family needs, community members focused mainly on family needs. They did not add much to the conversation about supporting students in school other than conversations about students translating for their parents and the need for more translators in these situations. Learning English and providing access to English continues to be a present theme.

Research Question Two:

What type of support, if any, do the school and community currently offer these families?

Support from Schools

Parent Participant Responses

In gathering data regarding the parents' description of the schools in this community, parents immediately responded with gratitude for the teachers; particularly the bilingual teachers and staff. Numerous positive comments were made about the support from schools during the initial interview questions.

Si,...las maestras ayudan mucho. Se puede tener comunicación con los maestros con facilidad... porque son bilingües...Yes,...the teachers help a lot. We can communicate with the teachers easily... because they are bilingual. (Parent Participant)

The school para-professional in particular, was named by most of the participants as being a key liaison between them and their students. She is Latina and bilingual in Spanish and English and has worked in the schools for several years. She also grew up in this community and has earned great respect from the parents. This was noted as they referred to her as, “maestra” or teacher. Comments included:

Las maestras ayudan mucho. Bueno hay unas maestras como Liliana [pseudo nombre]...diciendo a los niños que si se pueden avanzar y cosas así...The teachers help a lot. There are teachers like Liliana [pseudonym] ...telling the kids that they can succeed and things like that. (Parent Participant)

It is noteworthy that parents see Liliana as a teacher because it is common for para-professionals in school settings to struggle to be seen as true teachers among the teaching staff. This was supported in the work of Chopra, Sandoval-Lucero, Aragon, Bernal, Berg De Balderas, and Carroll (2004). They found that paraprofessionals play an important

role in connecting newcomer families with the school and community. As in the case with Liliana, it was found that paraprofessionals also often reside in the same community as their students and often provide help in and outside of school.

Other areas of support were also mentioned by the parents. In the discussion of communication with their children's school, most of the parent participants expressed appreciation for the school district sending home papers translated into Spanish. They found this to be an important area of support. Comments included several similar to the following:

Tengo dos niñas y una va a la escuela y la otra va a pre-kinder y su maestra es bilingüe entonces ella ahorita le está dando todo la escuelita les enseña poco de inglés. Y a mi me mandan toda la información en español...*I have two girls and one goes to school and the other is pre-kinder and her teacher is bilingual so she now is teaching and teaches them a bit of English. And they send me all the information in Spanish.* (Parent Participant)

Receiving information in Spanish was supportive for many of the parents, but having someone they could call to ask questions and clarify information was expressed as very important to the participants.

Another area of bilingual support listed was peer tutors. Peer tutors are used in the middle and high schools and seem to be successful for newcomer students. In this setting, bilingual students are often asked to be a peer tutor for newcomer students and help them with finding scheduled classes, locating places in the school, helping with assignments, and being available to translate when the student or teacher needs help in communicating. Participants mentioned that this seems to be working out very well and they are proud when their children are asked to help out.

Hay maestros que dicen a mis hijas que necesitan ayudar a los nuevos estudiantes. En este caso María (pseudónimo), ella tiene quince años y aprende inglés pero también ella tiene el español muy fijo entonces por ella va a ser excelente porque

ella va a aprender la segunda idioma muy bien cuando ya tiene su primera. Va a ser una persona bilingüe como proficiente en los dos lenguajes...*There are teachers who tell my daughters that they need to help the new students. In this case with Maria (pseudonym), she's 15 and learned English but she also has her Spanish down, so for her it will be excellent because she will learn a second language really well when she has her first. She will be bilingual; proficient in both languages.* (Parent Participant)

While the parents were sincerely pleased with the efforts of the school district's teachers and staff, and proud of their bilingual children, many expressed concern over the recent changes in the program from a bilingual-bicultural program to the English as a second language program. This meant that their children would no longer be instructed in Spanish during the school day. This recent change in the programs offered to their children seemed to make many parents feel marginalized. Parents were not asked how they felt about the changes and were not sure why the program changes were made. Parents expressed a desire to share their concerns about the recent changes and for this to be included in this study. They said they were not included in the decision and did not understand why they were not asked before changes were made. Having said this, most felt the school district probably had reasons for discontinuing the bilingual program, but felt unheard, disregarded and frustrated with the process. Some of the parents expressed concern over these changes in the program and the effects on their children such as in the examples that follow:

Se confunden porque no entienden que son dos idiomas o que algo puede tener nombres diferentes en los dos idiomas y esto hace problemas...*They get confused because they don't understand that it is two languages or that something can have different names in the two languages and this causes problems.* (Parent Participant)

One parent shared the story of her children, where she noticed the difference in program models and how it affected her sons. It seems to have created discord between home and school language. She said,

El hijo más grande mío va muy bien en la escuela. Saca puros A's, no tiene problemas de preguntar o hacer lo que sea. El empezó en el programa bilingüe. Entonces el sentía seguro de si mismo. Ahora el problema que tengo con el hijo más chiquito es que a veces yo pienso que se confundo un poco. Y es pleno en la casa también porque no es que te dijo esto no es, no es amarillo el dice que es yellow. Pero también es amarillo. Y dice que su maestra dice que es yellow. Están diciendo una cosa a el que es una cosa pero el necesita saber que son mas que sola una cosa. Cuando fuimos a México por un mes, y el no hablaba mucho y después un tiempo empezó a platicar y platicar puro español. Entonces ya entendías como debías hacer...*My oldest son is doing well in school. Gets straight A's, he doesn't have any problems, or asks how do to something. He started in the bilingual program. He felt more secure in himself. The problem I have now with the youngest boy is that at times I think he gets a bit confused. This is obvious at home also, I'll say something is yellow in Spanish and he will say no that it is yellow, using English, but I tell him it is yellow in Spanish also. He says his teacher says it is yellow. They are telling him one thing is one thing but he needs to know that it is more than one thing. When we went to Mexico for a month, and he didn't speak much, and after a while, he started to talk, and talk in pure Spanish. Then he understood what he had to do.* (Parent Participant)

These parents are frustrated by their children not becoming bilingual and that this causes the children confusion and results in the children not speaking either language very well. This limited support for learning and maintaining Spanish language and literacy can be seen as devaluation of the Spanish language and Latino/a heritage. Valenzuela (1999) powerfully describes the negative consequences of U.S. schools serving Mexican and Mexican American students. From her 3-year study in a Texas high school, Valenzuela concludes: "I came to locate the 'problem' of achievement squarely in school-based relationships and organizational structures and policies designed to erase students' culture. . . . I became increasingly convinced that schooling is organized in ways that subtract resources from Mexican youth" (p. 10).

Parents also felt concerned that their children were losing their home language and culture. They expressed concerns that their children were not able to communicate with grandparents and other family members from Mexico. In the following quote, the parent is concerned that his children are able to communicate in both English and Spanish. Loss of first language is a valid concern for many immigrant parents (Gaytán et al., 2007). It often creates distance between parents and their children.

Los padres tienen diferentes opiniones porque unos no hablan inglés y quieren que sus hijos hablan inglés, pero, no están recordando que tal vez no van a recordar el español. Porque es puro inglés, puro inglés. Si vas a escuela aprendes inglés. Pero luego ellos regresan a sus abuelos o lo que sea y no pueden hablar porque no se pueden comunicar... *The parents have different opinions because some don't speak English and they want their kids to speak English, but they are thinking that perhaps they aren't going to remember the Spanish. Because it is solely English, solely English. If you go to school you learn English. But some return to their grandparents or whatever and they can't talk to each other because they can't communicate.* (Parent Participant)

Loss of native language was a concern of many parents as they expressed disappointment with the recent change in programming for their children. Responses included several discussions around the importance for maintaining their first language. They also expressed feelings of lack of opportunity or place to share their ideas and feelings about the change; how it occurred and why it occurred.

Yo pienso que todos los padres deben preguntar... Si los padres no preguntan no van a ver nada... *I think that all the parents need to question... If the parents don't question they aren't going to see anything.* (Parent Participant)

Overall, the conversation with parents led to many concerns about the recent changes in their children's schools. They felt that while the school district was trying to meet their children's needs, they failed to include them in this decision to take away native language instruction. Scribner et al. (1999), describe how important it is for

schools to create an environment of participation where each person is valued, and respected. Furthermore, “collaborative schools are places where people join together to serve the needs of all children, unencumbered by role differentiation...they are places where power is shared” (p. 41).

The next section continues the discussion with a look at support currently available in this community and its schools through responses from teachers and community members.

Support from Schools

Teachers, School Staff, and Community Member Responses

This section begins with a description of the school district (as provided by the district) and is one that could describe most any school district. It lends a positive picture of the district and its programs.

Our schools offer programs beginning with four year-old Kindergarten and continuing through Advanced Placement courses in the high school. High school students can also get advanced courses and training through articulated agreements with the Technical College. Our music and drama offerings showcase many talents and interests. Our foreign language and art programs accentuate our cultural diversity. And our sports and recreation teams keep our students actively engaged in cooperative events. Students in our college prep courses find the rigor necessary to compete at the finest colleges and universities across the country.

It is important to note that this description fails to directly include much information about the one-third of the student-body that is part of the Spanish speaking population.

One of the participants shared the following insight when asked to describe the newcomer families in their schools:

Well actually most of our ELL students come from families that are from Mexican heritage and background. Those are newly arrived;...about 14 percent are newly arrived in our community. We also have Mexican-American families that have lived here probably way back from the 70's when we had migrant programs. So there is a large population of Mexican-Americans – we're probably

at about 34percent district-wide of Mexican background. We do have a few families now that are Albanian and we also had a couple students that are from India the last couple years. (Bilingual Teacher)

It is interesting to note that with such a large population of native Spanish speakers, that the district did not involve parents in the decision to discontinue the bilingual program. Additionally, nowhere in the above mentioned school district description does it describe the large bilingual Latino population. The only statement from the districts website regarding diversity is “Our foreign language and art programs accentuate our cultural diversity”.

Nevertheless, according to recently published information⁷, this district has adopted some initiatives to meet the needs of all students in light of the recent deletion of the bilingual program. They created training opportunities for all of the teachers to learn more about ways of “meeting the needs of all learners”. The newsletter read:

Each student is unique and they all learn in a variety of ways and have varying backgrounds and needs. Our research has shown us that we have to look at ways to improve our delivery methods to our students to improve student achievement. Our collaborative teams give faculty a great chance to look the what, when, and why we teach what we do. This year’s in-service is designed to help teachers to improve the “how”. (Newsletter)

Teachers and staff members had both positive and negative things to say about the recent program changes. One teacher’s comments provide insight on both sides of these changes.

Now there are a couple good things that come from it (change in program). Mostly it’s that the kids are back in their community neighborhood schools. I think that’s a really good thing for all kids so that they are not isolated, segregated, whatever, and they are in the classrooms. So all the kids will have known each other and not have these segregated groups and that was a big issue in our district. The other thing is that the mainstream teacher is accountable so no longer will they just pull out [students] and teach and then the other teachers have

⁷ School Newsletter, fall 2006.

no idea what is going on and vice versa. Or they feel left out... so that's a real positive thing. (Teacher)

The teacher then commented on the other side program changes and how they were not involved in the decision to end the bilingual program.

I think the hardest of all of it is the fact that Spanish was just left and they said no Spanish and the way they approached it was very difficult. There's no process and the administrators all of the sudden decided that they were going to go meet with outsiders and they came back and they passed it with no input from any of us. They passed it through the board, and then parents really weren't given the information appropriately. You know, like we are going to make huge changes, let's have some open forum, and whatever. (Teacher)

The teacher also noted that all of these changes occurred one week after the May 1st walkout⁸ event of 2006. During this day, thousands of immigrants and advocates took to the streets U.S. cities around the nation to protest proposed immigration laws. Organizers of the event called it "A Day Without Immigrants" and asked all immigrants and others opposed to increased restrictions on immigration to, "flex their economic muscle" by boycotting all aspects of commerce, including going to work and school (p.1).

The teachers and staff expressed that many students did not come to school on that day.

They also described the events of this day how it may have affected their school's program...

You know on May 1st, where they had the Mexicans. So... because of what happened in the country with that walkout or boycott or whatever... the parents were already irritated by what was going on in the country. So a week later we had a meeting at the middle school and at the staff building... this was a week after that... so already they are a little irritated. Now they [the administration] say well... they are not going to be doing any Spanish... at any level. So they are pretty much saying we won't trust you for changing it like this. And they stuck to it though. The administration already agreed so we don't know how that was all pushed through. We don't know if it started with some superintendent or did it come from all the principals 'cause they were micro-managing. So if they were

⁸ Mexican Walkout Day as described at: <http://www.cnn.com/2006/US/05/01/immigrant.day/index.html>. Headlines read, "Thousands March for Immigrant Rights: Schools, Businesses feel impact as students, workers, walk out". Monday, May 1, 2006.

managing their buildings, they were all probably in favor of it. They say we've got to get those scores up, and the only way to do it is to do all English. So it is all English unless they need to use native language to explain something. (Teacher)

The frustration with some of the teachers was evident and clear in this quote.

Discussions regarding the recent changes from a Bilingual program to an ESL program were a point of passionate conversation for bilingual teachers. One of the teachers had just graduated with her Bilingual teaching license and was hired to teach in a bilingual classroom. After accepting the position, she was told that she would be teaching all subject matter in English. When teachers were asked what parents thought about these changes, they responded with...

Umm... I know some of them weren't too happy about it because they were saying things like that their children are coming home and speaking more English than Spanish. (Teacher)

I know that parents felt really left out and many still do not understand why we cannot teach in Spanish. (Teacher)

As mentioned previously, the research on parent involvement school overwhelmingly supports including parents in their child's education and has proven to increase a child's chance of success in school (Becher, 1986; Epstein, 1995; Garcia-Reid, Reid & Peterson, 2005; Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler & Burrow, 1995). Unfortunately, despite the vast evidence of positive effects of parent involvement in schools, Henderson and Mapp (2002) report that parental involvement is still largely ignored in schools. Many schools do not systematically encourage family involvement and school environments may actually discourage family involvement and create barriers to participation.

On a positive note, the schools in this district do have several teachers that are bilingual-bicultural and many trained in ESL (English as a Second Language) techniques. The ESL/Bilingual teachers have traditionally helped students to understand content-area material. According to some of the teachers the responsibility has been mainly on the ESL/Bilingual teacher for all subject areas. However, they expressed the recent shift in the program and that all teachers currently have ELLs (English Language Learners) in their classrooms.

Now they are limiting the Spanish. Now the books (in Spanish) are in my room. Nobody wants them or uses them. They are just in my room... they took them out of the library. (Teacher)

That's why they did the change that they did because they really want to focus on the students' reading English. So what they do is focus a lot more on English more than they do before... The problem is then they are focusing on the language more than the academics so then they get behind academically. (Teacher)

While several of the reactions to the program change were negative, some positive comments came out of the data concerning the program change. One advantage included a new sense of shared responsibility for ELLs. All teachers in the building now had ELL students in their classrooms.

Well now that the other teachers are getting bilingual students they are trying to do some other things and that just started last year. This year they are asking how can I do this or how can I help the kids understand this or that. They know that this coming year they are going to get a lot more students in their classrooms. Like before they were in a separate classroom and now they are going to be in the regular classroom. So they really have to have a lot of ideas about how to work with those kids...and sharing the responsibility is good. (Teacher)

This comment suggests a possible downfall to the bilingual program – that the bilingual children were not fully integrated into the school. Otherwise this new “advantage” would not have surfaced.

When asked about ways of helping newcomers get to know the school, teachers shared many ideas. One teacher from the elementary school responded with:

I did that personally. At the first meeting that I had, I explained a lot of the rules of the school (in Spanish) but a lot of the teachers didn't even want to have the first meeting with the kids. It is so important for them to know what is expected of them and what they should be expecting from school. So that's why I did it. It came from me. It's not like it's something as teachers we have to do. Another thing that I did was home visits. It was an option we had at conference times. You could go to their home instead of sitting in your room for conferences. (Teacher)

Teachers at the middle school help newcomer students by having the new student "shadow" or follow along with a bilingual student. This way they can ask questions as they arise during the first few days. One of the bilingual teachers explains it:

Well, we do shadowing for two days. One of the things that I do in middle school is that we have a homeroom just specifically for newcomers and I'm in charge of that. So as soon as they come in they are in it. 6th, 7th, and 8th come to me right away. I think the newcomers should automatically have a homeroom teacher that speaks Spanish. (Teacher)

Several of the teachers mentioned how important it was to support newcomers at the very beginning so they don't feel overwhelmed. As stated earlier, peer support (Azmitia & Cooper, 2001; Cooper 2002) is an important way to support newcomer students as they transition into school. Research from the first study showed that friends were seen as the "most important resource for dealing with issues in school" (p. 8) as well as influential on making decisions, both in positive and negative ways, providing emotional support, and an important resource with homework. The second study showed that peers were seen to have a significant influence on student engagement in school and goals for their future.

Another support program, provided by the school district, mentioned by both teachers and parents, was the Summer Reading Program. It was offered in each of the three area elementary schools. Twice a week children, and their parents, could come and

check out books, practice reading skills with volunteers from the high school and middle school. According to participants, the program was well attended.

Participants also described a program for students known as the Mexican dance program. Each spring, this program meets weekly to practice traditional Mexican dances. This well attended program usually includes 50-70 students each year. Participants described how the mothers would bring fabric back from Mexico and sew costumes for the final presentation at the high school. The group would also perform at the annual 5 de mayo parade in town. The following quote is from the originator of the program:

During my 3rd year as a bilingual first grade teacher, I introduced a Mexican dance program. We put on an all school assembly and an evening performance. This was a great way for parents to see that they, their children and their culture had something of value to offer the community, and to increase the awareness and respect of the monolingual students (through the assembly) for another culture. It was also a way to get families into the school and to be interested and excited about their children's participation. (Teacher)

Based on the information on support within school that was currently available, several mentioned services and programs that were teacher initiated. Many of the ideas of mentoring students and their families included translating information and providing access and understanding of school services. Communication continues to be an important theme in each area of support.

Current Support from the Community

The next section of responses describes support available from this community. It includes all aspects of the community; health related services, help from churches and community organizations, social services, community education, and help from community members.

Parent Participant Responses

Via interviews and survey data, parents expressed several things they felt were helpful to them in the community. It began with questions about the community. When parents were asked to describe the environment of their community, many responses were similar in nature and included mainly positive things to say.

Recently, the community hired a bilingual police officer. This police officer was able to communicate with parents regarding their children. Parents appreciated having someone they could communicate with and trust.

Bueno, a mi me gusta esta comunidad porque... hay... simplemente por la policía. La policía es muy estricta y, este, a mi me gusta eso porque así la familia, los muchachitos no andan en la calle. Como que si ve un niño por allí en la calle y llama la atención o si falta un niño en la escuela lo le hablan a uno y eso es bueno. ...Well, I like this community... because... simply because of the police. The police are very strict and I like this because the family, the little kids aren't out on the street. It is like if you see a kid out on the street you notice it or if a kid is absent from school they call you and that is good. (Parent Participant)

When asked how they communicate with the police officers, one parent eagerly responded “in Spanish”:

En español. Si. Ahorita hay en la policía hay barrios de solamente Hispanos y eso está bien porque ya se puede comunicar mas con ellos...In Spanish. Yes. Right now there is the police. There are neighborhoods solely Hispanic and this is good because you can communicate with them. (Parent Participant)

Several other areas of community support were mentioned by the parent participants. They included help received from churches, the local Adult English program, El Centro Hispano (The Hispanic Center), and local doctor's offices that have bilingual services available. Communication remained a significant topic throughout the responses. When asked about these services, participants responded with the following:

Sí...hay médicos que hablan o los hospitales tienen traductores que pueden poner el teléfono y ellos traducen. Por una cosa que no entienden se ponen su traductor. ...*Yes...there are doctors who speak (Spanish) or the hospitals have translators who are put on the phone and they translate. If there is something you don't understand they put the translator on.* (Parent Participant)

En las iglesias siempre hay alguien que nos pueden ayudar. La maestra nos enseñó inglés. Ella tiene clases para la gente que viene de México y ayuda. Es bueno porque hay alguien para cuidar a los niños. ...*Si hay ayuda, en la iglesia lo encuentras...In the churches, there is always someone to help. The teacher teaches us English. She has classes for those who come from Mexico and helps. It's good because there is someone to care for the kids. Without it, it is difficult to attend. ...If there is help, you find it in church.* (Parent Participant)

These quotes show how parents are able to seek out some services in the community where they can speak Spanish. In a discussion regarding English classes for families, many mentioned having taken the classes. Participants also mentioned a change in being able to enroll in classes, as well as, a change in the willingness of offering services to newcomers. In addition to the need for childcare, some of the comments related to things becoming more difficult for them:

Ahora si no tienes tu seguro social, no puedes entrar a las clases, pero antes no importaba quien venia. Y ahora tienes que hacer legal para poder ir a estas clases gratis... *Pues ahora la única cosa que ofrecen ahora están poniendo cada vez más difícil para entrar...Now if you don't have a social security number you can't get into the classes, before it didn't matter who came. But now you have to be here legally before you can go to the classes free. ...So now the only thing that is offered is being made more difficult to enter.* (Parent Participant)

Todos los servicios están poniendo cada vez más difícil...*All the services are getting more difficult.* (Parent Participant)

Están quitando muchas cosas que antes tenían las dos inglés y español. Están quitando el español...*They are taking away a lot of things that used to be both in English and Spanish. They are taking away the Spanish.* (Parent Participant)

These comments poignantly describe the changes in immigration policy over the last decade. According to Valenzuela, (1999) in an era of anti-immigrant hostility, it is important for policymakers to seriously consider the impact of any withdrawal of services

and resources from one of the most promising segments of the Latino community (p.263). Unfortunately, in many small communities, services continue to be limited or unavailable. This discussion continues in the next section with responses from school and community members.

Teachers, School Staff, and Community Member Responses

The question was asked, “What kind of support, if any, does the community currently offer students and families learning English as a second language? Participants each spoke of services available. Included in their responses were things similar to what parents had mentioned regarding English classes and support from local churches. One mentioned that there were a stores and restaurants with Mexican food and another described the Spanish story hour at the public library. One of the community members, a bilingual nurse stated the following about support at the local hospital:

Yo trabajo en el hospital y solamente hay tres de nosotros para traducir y trabajamos durante el día. Pero en la noche no había nadie para ayudar. Ya ahora tienen un sistema para que siempre haya alguien allá para ayudar. Pero antes no, no había nadie...I work in the hospital and there are only 3 of us to translate and we work during the day. But at night there wasn't anyone around to help. Now they have a system so that there is always someone there to help. Before there was no one. (Community Member)

The community was also described as a place that has seen a lot of change a lot over the past two decades. In the last decade alone, the Spanish speaking population has increased by 204 percent⁹ in the county alone. Many new Spanish-speaking businesses have opened up; including some “really good” Mexican restaurants.

We have seen lots of change. For the most part, this community has embraced the changes; some are not happy, but they probably just don't like change.
(Community member)

⁹ U. S. Census Bureau. (2000). *United States Census 2000* [Electronic version]. Washington, DC: Author.

There are many language and cultural issues of understanding and or misunderstandings. The local community is very white and very elderly and very conservative. (Community worker)

There are clearly issues within this rural setting for all of the community members. The perspectives of all the participants provided insight into the issues of changing communities. Many community members expressed a desire to better understand the needs of the newcomer population. Teachers added that more recently, parents were feeling more comfortable with enrolling their children in sports in the community. They even described a growing number of Hispanic coaches involved with the local soccer and football teams. The next section shows how teachers and community members describe the growing parent involvement within this setting.

Current Support from Parents

Teachers, School Staff, and Community Member Responses

All of the teachers had many good things to say about the parents. They spoke of the manner in which many Mexican families support their children and their teachers in the schools.

They are Spanish-speaking families and they work with the school... if I ask them to participate in activities they are there all the time and that's something that really surprised the teachers usually because they are Hispanic families they don't participate. It's not that they don't want to; it is because they are afraid of their language. But usually when I invite them or when I send letters in Spanish or speak to them in Spanish they are more willing to participate. That's what they need...somebody who is there and ready to hear what they have to say or to answer their questions. (Teacher)

This teacher shows great knowledge and skill in communicating with Hispanic parents. However, the fact that other teachers were surprised that Spanish-speaking families participate in activities suggests a school climate that does not necessarily always

welcome participation by immigrant parents, or makes assumptions about their willingness to participate in school activities.

When asked about the issue of, trust between the teacher and the parent, the teachers had many comments to share. All of the comments reflected a mutual respect for each other.

It only takes about a couple of days because they wanna know what you think and if you are really there to help them and to answer their questions. Maybe after one or two times talking with them that's enough. (Teacher)

Knowing the language definitely makes a difference. If they know the teacher will understand their language they are going to be open to communicate. I think that's the main reason. If the teacher doesn't know their language they will be afraid. (Teacher)

The families that I have are very respectful of teachers. They are just concerned about how their children are behaving in the classroom. That is very important to them. They even say, "If he is not behaving you can spank him." (Teacher)

In summary, the parents felt their children were supported in schools with bilingual teachers and programs. They felt the community was also a supportive place for their family and mentioned many community members who could translate for them.

Concerns from parents were in the areas of services and programs previously provided that had been discontinued. Teachers and community members had similar view points. Many expressed a desire to improve support and were not exactly sure how to provide it. They listed several support programs, especially effective for newcomer students. The following question continues this discussion.

Research Question Three:

Which areas of support have been most beneficial?

This section begins with a comprehensive list of areas mentioned by parent participants, as well as, teacher, staff, and community member participants. The list, as seen in table 4.2, exemplifies the areas that participants felt were most beneficial for newcomer families in schools and in the community. It is interesting to note that overall, parents mentioned people and programs that were bilingual as being most beneficial, while school and community members more often listed programs and services for newcomer families.

Table 4.2

Most Beneficial Areas of Support for Newcomer Immigrant Families

X = Support Area Identified as Very Beneficial for Newcomer Immigrant Families	Parent Participant Responses	Teacher, Staff, and Community Member Participant Responses
In Schools		
Bilingual Communication/Newsletters		X
Bilingual Paraprofessionals	X	X
Bilingual Teachers	X	X
Latino Role Models	X	X
Mexican Dance Program		X
Summer Reading Program (at the school)	X	X
Translators in school (at the front desk)	X	X
In the Community		
Adult English Classes	X	X
Bilingual Church Services	X	
Bilingual Community Programs	X	X
Bilingual Community Workers (nurses, store clerks, etc.)	X	
Dream Center (tutoring help and social services)		X
Family members living in the community	X	
Latino Role Models	X	X
Summer Reading Program (at the Library)	X	X
Translators in the community		X

Parent Participant Responses

Parent participants had many things to share regarding helpful people and programs in this community. These included bilingual teachers and staff, bilingual community members, community bilingual programs, and Adult English classes. When asked about programs or services that were most beneficial to newcomers, many spoke of attending the English classes and eagerly shared how helpful they were.

Los programas de ingles nos ayudan bastante. Porque la mayoría de nosotros no hablábamos ni una palabra de inglés. En México estuviera una escuela pero el inglés no era lo mismo de aquí...*The English programs help us a lot. The majority of us don't speak a word of English. In Mexico there was school but the English wasn't the same as here.* (Parent Participant)

This was also a key finding of the pilot study mentioned in chapter three. Parents wanted more opportunities to attend English classes. Unfortunately, during the course of this study, the community-based program which had been operating for almost a decade, ended. Funding for the program was cut and the classes were no longer offered in the community. Parents hoped for more opportunities to learn English and spoke of the possibility of one of the churches starting classes.

Another support that parents mentioned being very helpful for their children was the summer reading program at the public library. Once a week, all are invited to the library to listen to and share stories in Spanish. Parents also described a summer reading program at the elementary school. Students and their parents can come twice a week to check out books, play games, and win prizes. Parents mentioned how their children loved coming to the library to check out books and win prizes. One mother proudly exclaimed that her children “won a prize every time”. According to the program leader, she records what level students are reading at and guides them in their book selection.

When parents were asked, who was most helpful to newcomer families, once more, the majority of parent participants spoke of one particular person. Liliana, who works at the elementary school, is often the first person new families meet.

Liliana [pseudonym] has been the most helpful person to my family because she helps us with English and helps us in the school; she works in the school. She, for, como se dice traducir...[Researcher: Translate? She translates...] Yea, she translates for you at school. You can call the school and you know that she will be there to talk to you. That's nice. And you know that if your children, your children, need something, she can understand them. (Parent Participant)

Liliana is a very caring, integral part of the community and is known to take calls from parents (of students in school) on the weekends and evenings, and translates bills and information for families. She is revered in the community and has evidently been serving as a trusted community/school liaison for many years.

Parents also reaffirmed earlier discussion of the crucial role of the bilingual teachers. Several mentioned how comfortable they felt being able to communicate in Spanish with the teachers. During one interview, a mother showed a picture of her son with his kindergarten teacher, proudly displayed on the refrigerator. Through their responses, parents clearly respected and appreciated the efforts of the bilingual teachers and staff.

Another important person described by participants was the local priest. "El padre" [the priest] was described as very kind man who helps everyone in many ways. He is not Latino, but is bilingual and conducts a service each Sunday in Spanish. In addition to the help of "el padre," many of the parents found this to be a great gathering place to meet with other newcomer families and learn more about the community.

Si alguien necesita un departamento, un trabajo, o quiere asistir clases, el padre sabe donde...*If someone needs an apartment, a job, or wants to attend classes, the priest knows where...*(Parent Participant)

El Padre... yo casi voy siempre a misa de el. No se mucho de allí, pero tal vez allí pueden informarse y les ayudan... *The priest... I almost always go to his mass. I don't know a lot about the place, but each time one can get information and they will help.* (Parent Participant)

Some participants described having family members in the community. It was very helpful for them because they had a place to stay, someone to help them find a job, and learn about the places to go. Repeatedly, participants mentioned several essential school and community members working to make a difference for newcomers in this community. This form of social support is critical for newcomers (Antunez & Zelasko, 2000).

Teachers, School Staff, and Community Member Responses

When asked what was “most beneficial” for students and their families, teachers and community members immediately commented on the need for the Bilingual program, and continuation of the Adult English program. They also discussed the benefits of the Summer Reading Program, the Mexican dance program, and the Dream Center. An additional theme was help in communicating in all areas, and help in understanding school policies, rules, and school expectations.

One more area mentioned by teachers was the increase in Latino role models in the community. According to several, many parents were more comfortable to enroll their children in sports and after school activities because they trusted and could communicate with the coaches. This seemed to have a lasting effect and once the students got involved they stayed involved (Whether the coach was Latino or not).

Now there are Latino fathers that are coaching... it helps a lot. With soccer there is a lot of traveling involved and a lot of the parents don't realize that they will come to the home games because they know the field is here, but when it is somewhere else they don't know what to do or how to get there. (Teacher)

A community member spoke of the Dream Center in town and how helpful she felt it was for many of the high school newcomer students. She described the program's benefits in the following comment:

The Dream Center is also helpful. It is an after school program that is held on Wednesdays. That has helped a lot. That is provided support for everyone. They provide tutoring... the tutors are high school students. There are a lot of Latino boys and girls that are coming over. The coordinator of the program will find resources like doctors, dentists, etc. and they have a list of people that give free services. There was one day last year that they could come in a get a dental exam for free. It is a school district program. It is a collaboration with other services in the whole area that are willing to give back. (Teacher/Community Member)

Throughout this section, both groups of participants mentioned certain programs and people who were instrumental in supporting newcomer families. It is a disturbing trend to note the services described in this study, which are decreasing or are no longer offered. According to Delisio, (2001) services available to aid students and families in the various transitions have proven to be very crucial in the academic success of newcomer students, specifically Hispanic students. McCaleb (1994) adds that students achieve greater success when they have the support of parents and various community programs, especially for those students and families new to this country. This discussion continues in the next section by defining which needs have not been met.

Research Question Four:

What needs of students and their families have not been met?

Parent Participant Responses

Communication was a theme that came up repeatedly with parent responses. Help communicating in stores, at the post office, or at the bank. Some mentioned that certain places were changing and offering help in Spanish; at some social services such as WIC or sometimes at the doctor's office or dentist. Still the needs that were expressed centered on this theme when asked what needs were not being met:

Más que nada la comunicación. Porque no había tantas personas que pueden traducir a uno y era difícil. Era difícil llevar a los niños al medico...More than anything is communication. Because there weren't a whole lot of people who can translate and it was difficult. It was hard taking the kids to the doctor. (Parent Participant)

Other comments in the area of communication made by parents were centered on school. Many parents of students in the middle and high school needed more help in schools, especially in the front office. This included help in registering for school and signing up for classes. Parents mentioned that not all of the schools have bilingual help and this made communication and understanding of school difficult.

Another area of communication mentioned in the data centered on the need for help with essential tasks upon arrival. While many of the families immigrated to the United States to live with other family members, those who did not have family already settled into the area found things to be much more difficult. Some of the areas mentioned included:

- Filling out forms
- Applying for services

- Transportation
- Housing
- Finding a job

One parent described some of these issues in the following quote:

Si no tiene familia aquí, todo es más difícil. Pues, para cada cosa piden muchos papeles. Simplemente para tener un teléfono piden bastante. Y si uno no tiene papeles, es difícil. Es difícil saber en quien puedes confiar. Porque simplemente no saben lo que están firmando o lo que están respondiendo...*If a person doesn't have family here, everything is more difficult. Like, for each thing they ask for a lot of papers. To simply get a phone they ask a lot. And if a person doesn't have their papers, it's difficult. It is difficult to know who you can trust. Because you don't know what you are signing or what they are saying.* (Parent Participant)

All of the aforementioned needs relate to a need for increased communication and understanding of newcomer needs. Based on the research of Chavkin and Gonzalez, (2000) the success of Mexican-American students in the U.S. is linked to community collaborative programs that recognize and capitalize on the assets and strengths of Mexican-immigrant youth and their families. In the next section, responses from teachers, school staff, and community members continue to illustrate the need for a support network which identifies both strengths and needs of newcomer students and families.

Teachers, School Staff, and Community Member Responses

In the many areas of that support were mentioned, teachers shared similar views with parents as to the decline of some services. The following points were made in the discussion of which needs were not being met. Answers included:

- Counseling is needed for families in transition.
- Help with understanding U.S. customs and culture.

- Help with transportation
- Increased awareness of how to involve children in activities
- School newsletters and announcements in Spanish
- Help and support with parenting issues
- Help with (legal) issues, papers, forms, and bills
- Learning about the town and places to receive services
- Help with finding a home

Several of the teachers expressed helping parents of their students with some of the many forms of paperwork that were presented to them. Some of the issues, as described in finding a home, were expressed in the following quotes from two of the teachers.

Many families need help finding a place to live. They usually come to a place where there are two or three families in the same house. I have students who say they sleep on the floor. Like five or seven people in the same room. They don't have anything at home. They don't even know where the library is. They need to know where all the things are that they need like the library or park. They need to know how to get around. (Teacher)

Another thing that they need help with is help with papers. A family called me wanting to buy a house, but there is so much paperwork that goes along with that. There is so much junk mail that they receive and they need help dealing with papers that come in the mail or legal situations that people need help. I think they need somebody who can help them with that kind of legal information. Because they can't read the stuff that comes in the mail and they might need to sign something and they can't read. (Teacher)

All of this can truly be overwhelming for those involved. One community member discussed issues faced within the public library system when asked about the challenges and needs of the Mexican immigrant community.

The challenges are many. First, it's the simple but major challenge of communication between non-English speakers and a solely English speaking staff. This makes PR very difficult to get to this group. It further complicates

things in terms of offering the proper materials. Do we need to offer Spanish language items, or would learning English items or bilingual items be more appropriate? Even when we know which type, it's difficult to determine which Spanish or bilingual items are good ones, again because no one on staff is fluent in Spanish. The larger challenge is a cultural one. How does a library, a government institution, get the message across to the Spanish speaking community that they can trust us? We are not going to turn them in to immigration. We do not keep records very deeply, and the ones we have, are protected by laws to keep them private. We can exclaim these ethics all we want, but how do we establish a trust between that community who is skeptical for good reason and a library who is a government entity. The only interaction with government that many of the Spanish-speaking community members have is typically a negative one, or one they wish to never have. (Community Worker)

This section included several important areas of need from all participants. More social services are needed. Communication continues to be an important theme. Access to services along with understanding from parents and community members continues to immerse in the data. The following question will look at solutions from participants.

Research Question Five:

What recommendations do stakeholders have for improving support?

Ideas or recommendations from parents for improvement

When parents were asked to share ways that they support their children in school, many responded with a big smile and the pride was so evident. Many parents gave ideas on how they support their children in school. These ideas coincide with cultural aspects of Mexican culture and ideas of support. When asked what they can do for their children responses included:

- Supporting the school and making sure they are punctual and that they like school.
- Going over their homework, and maintaining the conversation about how things are going at school.
- By listening to them (children).
- Not taking a lot of vacations (missing school).
- Making goals for your children that they can achieve.

One parent shared her desire to learn English to benefit her child and to be able to communicate with the school. She spoke with great emotion and determination when describing the amount of time and effort she spent attending English classes in the community.

Yo estoy en las clases porque, cuando mi hija era chiquita tuve muchas problemas con el inglés porque no hablaba nada y eso es lo que me hace mas estudiar lo o mas o menos he batallado con eso, aquí. Por que más o menos lo hablo pero no como yo quisiera. Y en la escuela también para ir a hablarlo, pedir información o siempre yo se que me da mas trabajo, hablar lo para que me entiendan bien...I am in the classes because, when my daughter was small I had a lot of problems with English because I didn't speak any and that is what makes me study, that is more or less what I have battled with here. Because, I speak it more or less but not like

I would like. And like in school, I would like to go and speak to them, to ask for information or I know that while it is more work, to speak so that they can understand me better.... (Parent Participant)

This mother's perspective is shared by so many parents that want to support their children in schools. Many parents spoke of their fears of not being able to communicate with their children or their children no longer being able (or willing) to communicate in Spanish with family members in Mexico. Similarly, one mother shared her feelings of frustration and sadness of the times when her children would come home from school with friends, talking and laughing. She did not know what they were saying and said it made her feel less accepted. In a recent qualitative study on understanding the needs of newcomer immigrant families, Gaytán et.al. (2007) found that the aforementioned comments and feelings of distance between parents and their school-aged children is a relatively common experience for newcomer families.

“As the children matured and as they spend more time in the new country, parents worried about a growing distance between their children and themselves...For many, as the children's native language skills atrophied, communication about anything more than basic exchanges declined” (p. 11).

Parent's motivation to learn English, maintain home language, and culture were so evident in their comments and concerns. When asked about their ideas for improvement, parents eagerly responded with the following main suggestions:

- Offer more opportunities to learn English; more days, more times
- Have translators available
- Provide more information in Spanish and English
- Provide help with basic services; and access to services; finding a job
- Have someone to represent and communicate our ideas with the school district

The last comment that was shared by parents was the desire to be recognized as part of the community. This was articulated in wanting help in being understood and being heard. They wanted to know who to speak with about their concerns with the school. They also expressed the need for validation of presence in the community. As stakeholders, they want to be a part of the school and community and the decisions made within these areas that have an effect on their lives.

Ideas or recommendations from teachers, school staff, and community members

Teachers, school staff, and community members mentioned very similar ideas and comments when asked for recommendations. The following responses from participants represent the main ideas from this group.

1. Offer encouragement; help with homework, involving them in extracurriculars.
(Teacher)
2. Allow their children to do things that might not have been acceptable in their culture in Mexico (i.e. girls playing soccer and doing sports). Have more books in the house to encourage literacy. (Teacher)
3. English classes for parents are so needed. Help enrolling them in school and encouraging them, too. Sometimes the children are interpreters for the parents, so there is a strong need for them to learn English quickly. I would like the school to have a program for the parents. So the parents could go and learn English. Just two hours a day or something like that. I believe that a lot of parents would go. Many parents don't have money to pay for classes or have the time to do that. But if it was here at the school, it would be easier. A lot of people don't have cars or don't have anyone to care for their children. Many of the mothers are at home

while their kids are at school; they could go during that time to learn English.

(Community Member)

4. Valuing the bilingual/bicultural participant in stead of marginalizing them.

Educating the monolingual parents to be more open to bilingual families. Perhaps setting up a mentoring program that integrates families so that mutual learning is happening. (Teacher)

5. More Hispanic involvement in local government would help tremendously. I'd love to get a Hispanic community member on the library board the next time there is an opening. (Community Worker)

All of the participants expressed a desire to find ways to improve communication and support newcomer families with the issues they face. Many community members expressed that they did not really know how to best support these families, while most of the teachers shared numerous concrete examples of support that is needed. The work of Brooks and Cavanaugh (1999) offers many important suggestions in developing and maintaining school-community relationships. They assert that teachers, counselors, staff, and administrators should make efforts to proactively learn about the communities' needs, hopes, and fears in order to develop opportunities for learning that extended beyond school walls. Their work poignantly illustrates how a school's assumptions about its role in the community structure and define the relationship it ultimately builds with the community (p.92).

Summary of Responses

Within the data, many responses were given to increase understanding and awareness of the situation. The majority of responses centered on the need for

communication in all areas. Equally remarkable were numerous responses requesting more English classes and increased opportunities for all to attend these classes. Teachers and school staff agreed and hoped that the school district would initiate English classes for parents in their school.

Another topic that appeared to be in the forefront of all participants was the sadness of losing the bilingual program and what it meant for their children and students. Parents clearly wanted their children to learn and be successful in English, but did not want them to disregard their home language and culture. Parents also want to be recognized as part of the community. At the same time, most of the teachers, school staff, and community members in this study had a sincere interest in wanting to learn more about newcomers and ways to provide more support for newcomer families in this community.

Analysis of Results

To fully capture the ideas, thoughts, and responses of all participants in this study, the following Reflective Coding Matrix (table 4.3) was created to illustrate the foremost needs of newcomer students in the areas of linguistic, academic, and social support. Reflective coding matrices are used to capture the higher level of abstraction necessary to bridge to the final phase of grounded theory, analysis, selective coding and interpretation and ultimately to the theory generation” (Scott, 2004, p. 125). The matrix shows each of the codes derived from the initial analysis which began with categorical construction at the very beginning of data collection.

Table 4.3
Reflective Coding Matrix

Student Support Needs from:	SCHOOL	COMMUNITY	PARENTS
Academically	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Summer reading program ❖ Tutors ❖ Bilingual staff ❖ ELL Trained content-area teachers ❖ Peer helpers ❖ Role models 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Summer reading program ❖ Tutors ❖ Computer classes ❖ The Dream Center ❖ Role models 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Support teachers ❖ Look at child's work. ❖ Encourage them ❖ Parents want to be active in their children's education.
Linguistically	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Bilingual staff ❖ ELL staff ❖ Translating materials ❖ Hiring more bilingual staff ❖ Participation in school/community activities can be intimidating if only in English. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Bilingual Police ❖ Bilingual Doctors ❖ Translators ❖ El Centro Hispano ❖ Churches ❖ Adult English as Second Language Classes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Take English classes ❖ Want children to be bilingual; don't want children to forget Spanish language or culture.
Socially/Culturally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Bilingual/bicultural counselor ❖ Allow students to be Bilingual program ❖ Mexican Dance group ❖ Encourage leadership opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Churches ❖ Encourage leadership opportunities ❖ Make sure not to marginalize language minority groups. ❖ Latino role models 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Learn about the American culture ❖ Continue to communicate with children ❖ Issues of trust ❖ Understanding cultural differences
Support for FAMILIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Bilingual staff ❖ Work to create trust and understanding ❖ Translated forms of communication ❖ Communicate with families. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ English classes ❖ Bilingual Police ❖ Churches ❖ A community liaison ❖ Bilingual counselor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Parents join with other parents to learn from and support each other

Themes emerged during this process and included student and familial support needs. During the process, codes were compared and further defined. Table 5 illustrates how categories merged between the two participant groups and the three major areas of academic, linguistic, and socio-cultural needs to form unilateral themes. There were

three stages of analysis used which were adapted from the work of Anfara, Brown, and Mangione (2002).

1. The first stage, Content Analysis, was developed by further coding each of the areas by content.
2. The second stage, Pattern Variable Analysis, generated the categorical properties of each area with more distinct characteristics.
3. The third stage, Application of Analysis, further defines the properties of each area and brings out the “underlying patterns that form theoretical constructs” (p.32) about how support can be provided for students and their families.

According to Anfara, Brown, and Mangione (2002), the purpose of thematic code mapping is, “to present the reader with the larger consolidated picture that emerged from the process of bringing order, structure, and interpretation to the mass of collected data” (p.31). This process is illustrated in the following Thematic Code Mapping Analysis chart to show data from the current study. From this analysis, themes emerged (table 4.4, stage 3) which advance the development of the empirically-based model, shown in chapter five.

Table 4.4
Support Needs of ELL Students and Families Thematic Code Mapping:

Three Stages of Analysis					
Stage 3 – Application of Analysis					
Theme One		Theme Two		Theme Three	
Building Access (Access through Communication)		Building Skills (Significance of Learning English)		Building Relationships (Validation of L1 Language and Culture)	
↑		↑		↑	
Stage 2 – Pattern Variable Analysis					
Theme One		Theme Two		Theme Three	
C1= Communication with school C2= Communication with community/services C3= Communication with Employer C4= Access to services C5= Decrease feelings of Isolation		E1= Learning English to help in content-area subject. E2= Opportunities to learn English E3= Supportive in learning English		B1= Importance of retaining L1 (native language) language and culture. B2= Desire for children/students to be bilingual B3= Validation of voice in the community.	
↑		↑		↑	
Stage 1 – Content Analysis					
SCHOOL	Themes	COMMUNITY	Themes	PARENTS	Themes
❖ Summer reading program	E1, E2	❖ Spanish Summer reading program	B1,B2,B3 C2,C4,C5	❖ Support teachers	B1,B2,C1
❖ Tutors	E1, E2	❖ Tutors	E1, E2,E3 C2,C4,C5	❖ Look at child's work.	B1,B2,C1
❖ Bilingual staff	B1,B2,B3 E1, E3 C1,C4,C5	❖ Computer classes	E1, E2,E3 C1,C2,C4, C5	❖ Encourage students	E3.B1,B2
❖ ELL Trained content-area teachers	E1, E3 C1,C4,C5	❖ The Dream Center	C2,C4,C5	❖ Parents want to be active in their children's education.	B1,B2,B3, C1
❖ Peer helpers	E1, E3 C4,C5	❖ Role models	B3, C2	❖ Take English classes	E2,E3 C1,C2,C3, C4,C5
❖ Role models	E1, E3 C4, C5	❖ Bilingual Doctors	B3, E1, E2, C2,C4,C5	❖ Want children to be bilingual; don't want children to forget Spanish language or culture.	B1,B2,B3
❖ ELL staff	C1,C4,C5	❖ Translators	C2,C3,C4, C5		
❖ Translating materials	B3 C4	❖ El Centro Hispano	B1,B2,B3 E2, E3, C2,C4,C5		
❖ Hiring more bilingual staff	B1,B2,B3				
❖ Participation in school/community	C1,C4,C5				

Stage 1 – Content Analysis (continued)					
SCHOOL	Themes	COMMUNITY	Themes	PARENTS	Themes
❖ Activities can be intimidating if only in English.	C1,C4,C5	❖ Churches	B1,B2,B3 E2, E3, C2,C4,C5	❖ Learn about the American culture	E3
❖ Bilingual/bicultural counselor	B1,B3 C4,C5	❖ Adult English as Second Language Classes	E2,E3 C4,C5	❖ Continue to communicate with children	B1,B2,B3 C5
❖ Allow students to be Bilingual program	B1,B2,B3	❖ Encourage leadership opportunities	B3	❖ Issues of trust	C1,C2,B3
❖ Mexican Dance group	B1,B2,B3 C1	❖ Make sure not to marginalize language minority groups.	B1,B2,B3	❖ Understanding cultural differences	B1,B2,B3 C5
❖ Encourage leadership opportunities	B3 C1,C4,C5	❖ Latino role models	B1,B2,B3	Parents join with other parents to learn from and support each other	B1,B2,B3 C5
❖ Work to create trust and understanding	B3	❖ A community liaison	E2, E3 C2,C4,C5 C2,C4,C5		
❖ Translated forms of communication	B3 C1,C4,C5	❖ Bilingual counselor	B1,B2,B3		
Communicate with families.	C1,C4,C5				

(Adapted from Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002)

This chapter provided the results of over two years of data collected and analyzed using grounded theory methodology. Using these methods, data were collected, coded, and analyzed into connecting categories from sub categories as shown in the table (4.4) above. Identifying these connections between the categories helps to identify and characterize the components of the emerging phenomenon. Through this emergent process the following three themes became apparent. These themes are explained in detail and lead the discussion section of chapter five. They include:

- ❖ Theme one: Communication and Accessibility
- ❖ Theme two: Significance of leaning English
- ❖ Theme three: Validation of L1 Language and Culture

Chapter 5

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the types of academic, linguistic and socio-cultural support systems that were currently available or have been beneficial to ELL students and their families during their first years in the United States. A holistic approach was used to gather information from a wide range of sources including: parents, teachers, school administrators, and community members. This information was used to construct the initial foundation of an empirically-based model. This model intended to show ways that the schools, community, and parents in this small community supported immigrant students and their families.

In this chapter I will discuss the major findings and the themes that emerged from the data and their relevance to the field of second language education related to English language learners. Based on the findings of this study, I offer recommendations for program implementation, instruction and community connections. Also included are ways for schools, parents, and communities to create their own support-network for newcomer immigrant students and their families. This support-network may be particularly useful in less populated areas where language minority services are limited or unavailable.

The chapter continues with limitations of the study and future implications of the newly created support model. It concludes with recommended avenues for additional research in area of second language education.

Discussion of themes related to findings

This research study presents three major themes in the findings. As shown in chapter four, themes emerged (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) during the process of data analysis and were evident across all areas in the research study. Beginning with the Reflective Coding Matrix, (Chapter 4, Table 4.3) data was presented from each of the areas of focus in this study. These areas included student support needs from school, community, and parents in the areas of academic, linguistic, and social/cultural support. As categories formed and characteristics were defined, themes emerged to form the following major areas. Although not arranged in a particular order, these themes provide context for each of the main areas and will be explored in detail in this chapter.

- ❖ Theme one: Issues of Access
- ❖ Theme two: Significance of Learning English
- ❖ Theme three: Validation of L1 Language and Culture

Theme one: Issues of Access

Theme one included the major issues of access that students and families are faced with when they first arrive in this country. It includes the *immediate* needs of newcomers with issues of communication in areas such as, communicating with school personnel, health professionals, and obtaining services in the community.

This research study offers additional empirical evidence for the previous research findings (Antunez & Zelasko, 2000; Ramos & Sanchez, 1995) indicating that communication challenges often hinder parents' interactions with the school and the wider community. Communication is essential in developing trust and understanding, especially for newcomer families. Perez and Torrez-Guzman (2002) emphasize how

important it is for schools to create a safe environment and to show how much they value parents' involvement.

Within the small city community of the current study, many of the families expressed a sincere need for assistance in communicating with doctors, assistance with legal issues, and communication issues at their work. Most of the families did not need help with housing or setting up municipal services because they came to live with family members already settled in the area. But, for those who came without extended family, housing arrangements were very difficult. Many also described feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Issues with communication transcended all areas of parents' lives. Several parents mentioned problems at their work and the need to be able to communicate with employers in English. When discussing family needs, all parents expressed the need to be able to better communicate with the school, their work, and the community. To increase communication, it is also important to have bilingual and bicultural liaisons in the community to increase understanding through communication with issues of language and culture.

Support for students and their families, both linguistic and social, is crucial and the community can play an important role in welcoming new families. As shown previously, (e.g., Antunez & Zelasko, 2000) research in the area of community involvement, overwhelmingly shows positive results when communities get involved in the lives of newcomer students and families. Additionally, community organizations are recognizing that together they can accomplish more for the common good than they can

separately (Auerbach, 2002). This would be especially important in smaller communities where services, especially bilingual services, may be limited or non-existent.

The findings from this study show that parent participants expressed a need and wished for the ability to communicate with their childrens' teachers and other school personnel. Issues of communication with the schools included; assistance needed with enrolling their children in school, understanding the school policies, rules, and expectations, as well as, help in communicating with non-bilingual teachers and staff. According to newcomer research (e.g., Dale, 1986), it is important to provide students and their parents with ways to familiarize them with their new surroundings; to learn about school culture and customs, routines, rules, and school-related services. Access to this information is imperative to foster a positive, equitable environment for new students.

As one finding suggests, it is not only the lack of ability to speak English that makes communication challenging for these parents but also their more affective responses to living in a new country. Namely, parents also described the role of the bilingual teachers and para-professionals as significant to their trust and understanding of the schools. They mentioned that some of the teachers would even help them with additional issues not related to school. This included support in the following: help in communicating with doctors, reading and understanding documents received in the mail, help in translating and filling out forms and applications, and learning about opportunities available to them and their family. Several parents also described how one bilingual staff member even meets with parents after school and takes phone calls in the evening and weekends from parents with questions. The role of the bilingual teacher seemed to go far

beyond the typical teacher role. This coincides with Delgado's (1998) research which showed that parent participation increases with services that provide assistance in their native language. During this two-year study, the schools became an important support system for the parents and a major resource in their lives by assisting families with such things as interpreting government related forms, giving out winter clothing, providing opportunities for parents to get involved in the classroom and helping with finding job opportunities. Suggestions from the parents included providing social services at the school, increasing communication, and more learning opportunities. It is important to note that the schools had bilingual personnel to assist the families of these schools and probably added to their comfort level and willingness to participate. The lack of cultural knowledge has been identified as one of the factors that hinder some parents from participating in school functions (e.g. Moles, 1993). The findings of the current study suggest that this better understanding of the target culture was integrally tied to the enhanced self-confidence of the parents with regard to independently surviving in a new culture.

The support that was provided to the parents by teachers was reinforced as teachers also told stories of taking families to the doctor, or to social service agencies. One teacher's remarkable story told of a mother of one of her students, in labor, that called and needed a ride to the emergency room. The teacher took her, translated for her, and was present for the birth of the child.

It was not only the parents who felt that it was important to communicate in school and beyond. Teachers, school staff, and community members also expressed the importance of being able to communicate with parents. They expressed concern over

some of the possible barriers to having parents participate. These included providing transportation and child care for events and classes. Making sure parents found out about opportunities for their children and offering scholarships if needed.

This study showed that the need of communication and access to services was a vital area of support needed by newcomer students and their families. Schools and communities need to offer translators, translated materials, as well as, bilingual and bicultural liaisons, as a beginning line of support to meet immediate needs.

Theme two: Significance of Learning English

Theme two included the major issues and importance of learning English. The responses overwhelmingly showed a desire for their children to learn English and do well in school. This theme encompasses skill building in English, content-area knowledge, and increased autonomy.

The importance of opportunities to learn English was paramount in all of the conversations. All but one of the participants listed it as a top need. It was evident that many of the other issues could be alleviated with the attainment of English. This was reinforced by participants expressing a need for more opportunities to learn English; more days, more times, with child care and transportation. The ability to communicate in English is seen as a way to participate in life, to be independent and be treated with dignity. This can be explained by taking a look at the meaning of the word “educación” in Spanish. Valenzuela (1999) explains:

Educación is a conceptually broader term than its English language cognate [...] though inclusive of formal academic training, *educación* additionally refers to

competence in the social world, wherein one respects the dignity and individuality of others.” (p. 23)

Students must have equal access to opportunities to learn and barriers to opportunities should be addressed. These barriers affect students in many ways. Students must not only learn about a new culture and language, they also need to acquire the content area skills and abilities of students their age (Green, 2003; Anderson, et al., 2003). Freeman, et al. (2002) consider this as one of the biggest challenges facing the second language learners in U. S. public schools; namely, these students need to not only learn English, but the age-appropriate curriculum in order to achieve academic success. These barriers include linguistic, social, and cultural factors and are noted to have a direct effect on immigrants and their academic achievement in school (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Schmid, 2001; Ogbu, 1993; Jaret, 1999; Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991).

A significant part of this theme is the homogeneous response by parents, teachers, staff, and community members that English is important to participation and success in this community. Based on responses, some community members felt that the Mexican immigrant families did not desire to learn English. I did not observe this to be true in any of the parent responses. This may be related to communication, which is an interesting topic of study worth further exploration.

Theme three: Validation of L1 (first) language and culture.

Theme three included the areas expressed by participants on the importance of one’s culture, language, and identity. Parent participants emphatically expressed the desire for their children to be bilingual and not have to give up their native language and culture. They wanted their children to be able to communicate with grandparents and see

being bilingual as advantageous to their future. Support in this area is built through relationships to increase awareness and understanding of both languages and cultures.

A key element, as demonstrated in the work of Luis Moll and others, shows that community-based relationships have shown to make a difference by including immigrant families in support networks and by utilizing the strengths of these families as valuable assets within schools and communities (Moll, 1994; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992). According to Chavkin and Gonzalez, (2000) research on the success of Mexican-American students in the U.S. is directly linked to collaborative community programs that recognize and capitalize on the assets and strengths of Mexican-immigrant youth and their families. Delgado (1998) adds to this the importance of building trust between parents, schools, and community members.

The findings of this study provide further empirical evidence for the body of research emphasizing the importance of supporting students' maintenance of their first language proficiency. Its importance, from a linguistic point of view, lies in what is known as Cummins' (1979) "Developmental Interdependence Hypothesis", which theorizes that if the learner starts out learning a second language after developing high competence in his/her first language, attaining a high level of competence in the second language will be much easier. Furthermore, building skills in the second language also can serve to develop the native language. In addition to linguistic and literacy benefits, studies have shown that maintaining one's first language typically results in higher overall academic achievement. For example, Schmid (2001) summarized a body of research indicating that immigrant children who speak their parents' language as well as English fluently are more likely to succeed academically than children who become

monolingual English speakers. Also, Feliciano (2001) found out that bilingual students seemed to be more resilient learners in high school and thus less likely to drop out than their peers who only spoke English. Furthermore, bilingual students, proficient in both, English and their L1, achieved higher grades and better academic results in school than their peers who only spoke English (Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995).

In addition to linguistic and academic benefits of L1 maintenance, bilingual students who are proficient in their L1, use their L1 language ability as a link to the cultural values of their ethnic communities, which have been found to promote emotional and social balance in immigrant children's self-perception and identity (Kohnert & Derr, 2004; Wong-Fillmore, 1991).

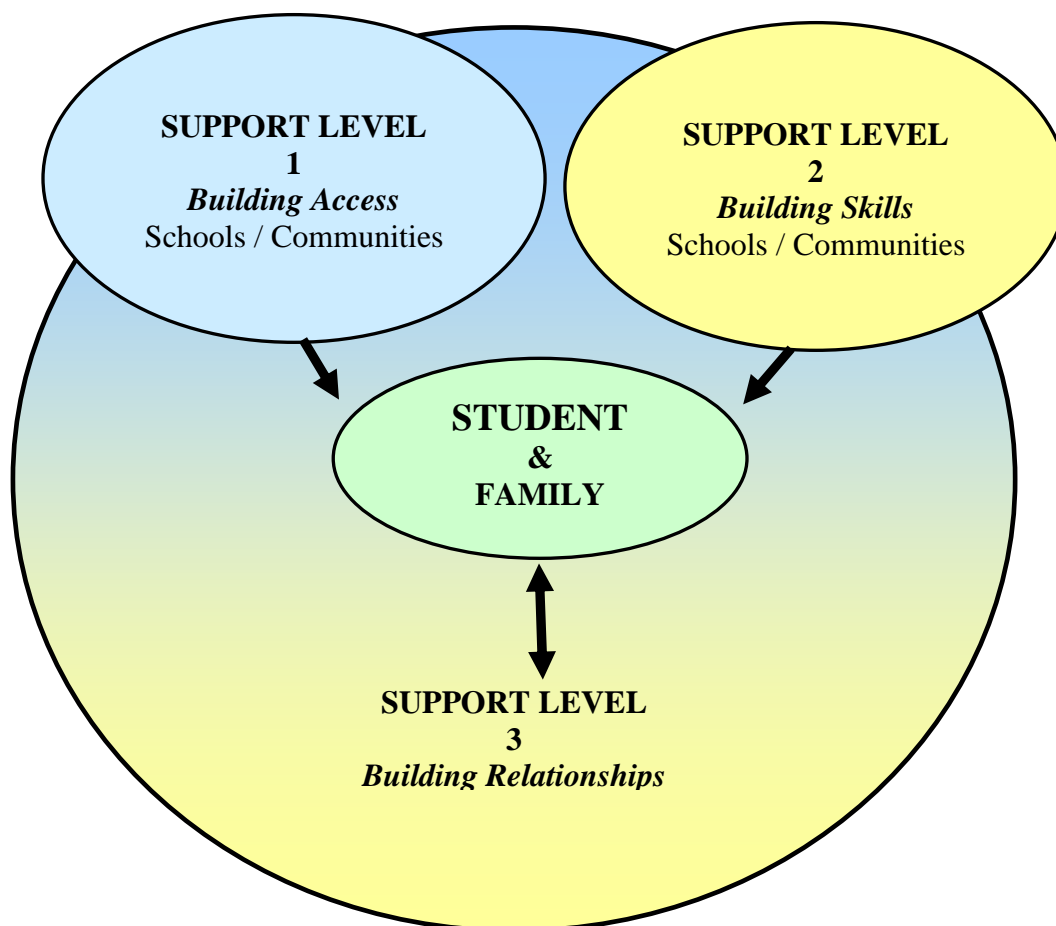
A Model for Support:

Meeting the Needs of English Language Learners in a Small City Community

From the aforementioned themes, a Model for Support was created based on the foundational work of Bronfenbrenner as mentioned in chapter two. This model provides the modified conceptual framework for this research. Figure 5.1, following, is a visual depiction of the model which is followed by a detailed description of its properties.

Figure 5.1:

A Model for Support: Meeting the Needs of English Language Learners



This model for support includes three levels of support:

The first level of support is titled, *Building Access*. It represents the theme in this study regarding issues of access to support. This level of support includes basic needs, such as transportation, communication with teachers, doctors, employers, etc. It also includes access to services such as community information, social services, transportation and the need to decrease feelings of isolation. This level in the model is described as one-directional, meaning support is given by one and received by another, to meet immediate needs of students and families. It is support that meets immediate or initial needs of newcomer families.

The second level of support is titled, *Building Skills*. This level in the model continues to support newcomer families through the added component of teaching skills that support students and families in becoming more independent. This area includes English classes for all family members, ESL (English as a second language) trained content-area teachers, tutors for students, and participation in school and community activities. This level in the model is also described as one-directional, as students and families are receiving help and learning about U.S. language and culture. This level of support is helpful in increasing autonomy of newcomer families.

The third level of support, and most significant level is titled, *Building Relationships*. This level of support values interaction and affords time for all stakeholders to talk about things that matter; to promote and develop mutual respect. In discussing the things that matter most, participants wanted their families to maintain their native language. They hoped their children would be able continue to communicate with

grandparents and relatives in Mexico. They wanted to be involved in the community and have a “voice” within the community.

This level in the model is considered to be bi-directional, meaning given and received by both. At this level, students and parents learn from, and teach, the school and community about their own cultural background. This is seen as an integrative level of service and learning. Kate McPherson (1989) describes this kind of service-learning as a unique expression of a school and its community as it provides a powerful way to integrate current educational practices with critical community concerns.

Recommendations

The aforementioned model contains three levels of support in a continuum that range from basic to relational. Based on the conceptual framework, (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) each area included in this study’s conceptual framework (parents, school, and community) can provide support at one or more of the levels of the support-network model. While the levels require increasingly more stakeholder involvement, it is not necessary to begin at one particular level in order to provide support at another level. For example, a church that would like to welcome newcomer immigrant families to their community could offer English classes (level 2), advertise the classes in Spanish, (level 1) and take time to listen to and get to know the families (level 3). They may also want to learn how to make some wonderful new dishes and ask newcomer families to participate in other church events (level 3).

An inspiring aspect of this research is that schools and communities could use the continuums as a reflective tool to determine if they are providing services at any or all levels of the model. They may find that they are providing a lot of support in one level

and not enough in another level. While these continuums are, at present, ideas and recommendations, it is hoped that with further research, that they could be developed into useful tools for program evaluation.

The following three pages include the support-network continuums. They are the recommendations from the participants of this research study, compiled and formatted into three areas. The first Support Level Continuum (table 5.1) includes recommendations for schools; the second includes recommendations for communities (table 5.2), and the last includes recommendations for parents and ways they can support their children in schools (table 5.3). Also included is a section (at the far right column) for school and communities to use for self-assessing the levels of support currently provided for students and their families. At this time, the continua are intended as a (non-standardized) reflective tool to note possible areas for growth and or celebration.

Table 5.1

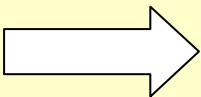
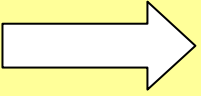

Support Level Continuum for SCHOOLS		
1 = No support currently provided 2 = Very little support currently provided 3 = Some support currently provided 4 = Adequate support currently provided 5 = Excellent support currently provided		
Levels of Support	Examples of Support	Rating 1-5
Level 1 Building Communication & Access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Translating materials ❖ Bilingual staff used for purpose of communication ❖ Providing a translator in front office ❖ Translated forms of communication ❖ Communicate with families via bilingual liaison. ❖ Other 	
Level 2 Building Skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ ELL Trained content-area teachers ❖ ELL staff ❖ Tutors ❖ Peer helpers ❖ Summer reading program (in English) ❖ Encouraging participation in school sports and extra-curricular activities ❖ Other 	
Level 3 Building Relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Working to create trust and understanding ❖ Finding out about students/parents' background ❖ Finding out about students/parents' goals ❖ Finding out about students/parents' current needs ❖ Hiring bilingual staff to support native language development ❖ Hiring a bilingual/bicultural counselor ❖ Using Latino role models ❖ Maintaining the bilingual program ❖ Promoting cultural activities (i.e. Mexican Dance group) ❖ Encouraging leadership opportunities ❖ Other. 	

Table 5.2

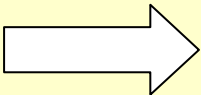
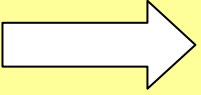

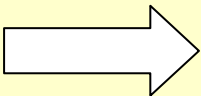
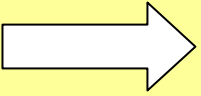

Support Level Continuum for COMMUNITIES		
1 = No support currently provided 2 = Very little support currently provided 3 = Some support currently provided 4 = Adequate support currently provided 5 = Excellent support currently provided		
Levels of Support	Examples of Support	Rating 1-5
Level 1 Building Communication & Access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Translating materials ❖ Having translators available in the community ❖ Providing translated forms of communication ❖ Communicating with families via bilingual liaison. ❖ Providing a community/ school liaison ❖ Providing transportation ❖ Offering childcare ❖ Other 	
Level 2 Building Skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Providing adult/family English as second language classes ❖ Recruiting after school tutors at the Public library ❖ Developing peer helpers ❖ Providing a summer reading program ❖ Offering free computer classes at the Public library ❖ Developing a homework help center (i.e., The Dream Center) ❖ Encouraging participation in community sports and events. ❖ Recruiting adult role models ❖ Enlisting churches to offer English classes and/or space for classes ❖ Other 	
Level 3 Building Relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Working to create trust and understanding ❖ Finding out about students/parents' background ❖ Learning about students/parents' goals ❖ Finding out about students/parents' current needs ❖ Employing Bilingual-Bicultural Police Officers ❖ Employing Bilingual-Bicultural Doctors ❖ Employing Bilingual-Bicultural Counselors/Social Workers ❖ Recruiting Latino Role models ❖ Creating an information support center (i.e., El Centro Hispano) ❖ Creating dual-language family programs (i.e., The Building Bridges Program) ❖ Allowing students to be in a Bilingual program ❖ Encouraging cultural activities (i.e. Cinco de Mayo Parade) ❖ Encouraging leadership opportunities within the community ❖ Other 	

Table 5.3

Support Level Continuum for PARENTS		
1 = No support currently provided 2 = Very little support currently provided 3 = Some support currently provided 4 = Adequate support currently provided 5 = Excellent support currently provided		
Levels of Support	Examples of Support	Rating 1-5
Level 1 Building Communication & Access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Support teachers ❖ Look at child's work. ❖ Encourage children ❖ Communicate with school/teachers via bilingual liaison. ❖ Other 	
Level 2 Building Skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Enroll in English classes ❖ Continue to communicate with children ❖ Learn about the American culture ❖ Get to know the community ❖ Attend school/community activities and events ❖ Other 	
Level 3 Building Relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Work to create trust and understanding ❖ Understand cultural differences ❖ Teach others about your culture ❖ Help to maintain L1 at home ❖ Be active in your children's education. ❖ Encourage children to be bilingual; not to forget Spanish language or culture ❖ Volunteer in school/community activities and events ❖ Support/ be a role model ❖ Encourage leadership opportunities ❖ Join with other parents to learn from and support each other ❖ Other 	

Valenzuela (1999) argues the premise that all people share a basic need to be understood, appreciated, and respected. A key finding from this study is that, parents mentioned people and programs that were bilingual as being most beneficial, while school and community members more often listed programs and services for newcomer families. Creating support is more than just giving services. It is creating an environment of positive academic, social, and emotional development that benefits all members of the community.

If schools want to support their newcomers, they should provide a welcoming environment; one that includes native language communication or at the minimum a kind smiling face. At one school where I worked, when a new family came into the front doors, the secretary would roll her eyes with frustration and say something like, “Here comes another one...”

Principals, how are your new families being greeted? What is their first experience like? The front line of people can make a difference in creating that ever important relationship with the parents. Also, how can these new families enrich your school? What can you learn from them? How can they help you?

Community leaders, how can local entities support newcomer families? Are there opportunities for involvement in decision making and planning for all members? How are community services working to recruit newcomer students into sports programs or extra-curricular activities? What services are available to help families get to know the community?

Libraries, how do you support these families? Do you provide summer reading programs? Are these programs bilingual? Do you have bilingual information and materials available for these families? Do you recruit bilingual staff?

Churches, how can you support newcomer families in your community? You may have a lot of space that may not be used during the week. Think about offering English classes during the week. It is a great volunteer opportunity for parishioners and way to serve those in the community. Think of ways to learn from newcomer families. How can the church help these families get to know the community, or find needed services? How can relationships be built? One program I created at my church was called, "Building Bridges". In this program, families who wanted to learn English were paired up with families who wanted to learn Spanish. Families committed to meeting two to four times a month. In this informal program, families got together for dinner, went grocery shopping, sat together at sporting events, etc. From this program, many families developed life-long relationships and learned much more than another language.

Schools, communities, churches, etc. can make a difference with newcomer families by providing support and learning about these new families. A community can be enriched by the many new aspects of language, culture, and experiences newcomers bring. All of this comes into the perspective of relationship. It is in relationship with others that we can truly understand and support others. If we really want to help newcomer students in school, we must get to know them, their needs, and abilities. It is only then that we can move forward to best meet those needs.

Limitations

It is important to address limitations of this work. As the researcher, I have tried to illuminate the intricate process of interpreting vast amounts of data in order to explicate the themes. In this process, the following limitations are noted:

1. The focus of this research study only included immigrant parent participants from Mexico and may only provide insight into one language minority group. Future research with other language minority groups, using the same survey protocols can provide more information and better capacity for transferability.
2. This focus of this research study was in a small city environment where bilingual services are often more difficult to find than in larger cities. The limitation is that not all cities are the same and not all offer similar programs. Replication of programs may be difficult.
3. The majority of interviews were conducted in Spanish. Several of the participants used a colloquial type of Spanish and were difficult at times for the researcher to understand as a nonnative speaker of a different dialect. For this reason, some participants were approached again to review responses confirm that their ideas were correctly portrayed. Member checks with all groups was carried out.
4. While I previously lived and taught in this community, not all of the participants knew me and I may have been perceived as an outsider. To help with this, I utilized the assistance of the community bilingual/bicultural liaison to initiate discussions with new participants.

Conclusion and Implications for Future Research

This dissertation answered the following question: How does a small city school and its community support Mexican immigrant K-12 students and their families, academically, linguistically, and culturally during their first years in the United States? It also answered the sub-questions of: What are the main needs of students and families? What type of support is most beneficial? And how can we improve support?

Using Bronfenbrenner's model (1979) as the conceptual framework for this study, the responses to these questions emerged through the data in three main themes. These three themes were evident in each of the ecological areas of the framework; family, school, and community. Theme one included the major issues of communication that students and families are faced with when they first arrive. The needs in this area are part of Support Level One in the Model. They meet the immediate needs of newcomers and meet the purpose of communication and understanding. This is an important level of support for schools and communities to create avenues of access to support services with newcomer families. Parents also provide support for their children in this area by communicating with their child's school, reviewing school work and assignments, and asking questions and meeting with teachers to increase understanding.

Theme two included the major issues and importance of learning English. The responses of parent participants overwhelmingly showed a desire for their children to learn English and do well in school. This theme is part of Support Level Two in the model and encompasses skill building in English, content-area knowledge and increased autonomy.

Theme three included the important issues socio-cultural issues of knowledge and understanding of language, culture, and values. It included a desire for their children to become bilingual and not lose their cultural and linguistic identity. The needs in this area are considered to be part of Support Level Three in the Model. Support in this area is built through relationships with others. The Third theme takes us into an even deeper stage. At this stage, knowledge of culture and understanding continue but with an element of value for the native language. Additive environments are nurtured and welcomed. Each group learns from each other which can transform the school and community.

While research clearly indicates the benefits for students who receive support at home, school, the community, there is still the need to further develop the area to determine which support systems are most effective. The gap in the literature is based on the need for theoretical development of these needs in order to better understand them and provide schools and communities with a comprehensive model including all of the components. Currently, most of the studies conducted have centered on program evaluation and development. Few are empirically based studies which further the concept of all entities working together to achieve the best possible learning environment for these students and their families.

As one of the first comprehensive empirical studies in the area, this research provides the groundwork for theoretical underpinnings of a support model. It is hoped that the findings of this research study resonate with others in the field and be replicated for further theoretical development.

Providing support to our newcomer immigrant students and families will make a difference in our lives and in our future. Supporting and encouraging all students and families to become part of our communities will only strengthen the fabric of the community as a whole. Penneycook (1994) points out that in order for us to move beyond where we are now, we must ask ourselves, “what sort of vision of society” (p. 299) we are teaching toward. Schools and communities must have an ethical understanding of how education is related to broader social and cultural relationships. It is in relationship with others that we can truly learn the most important lessons of all.

APPENDIX A

HOME LANGUAGE SURVEY

Nombre: _____ Edad: _____ Sexo: M / F

1. País de nacimiento: _____
2. ¿Cuánto tiempo tiene aquí en los Estados Unidos? ____ años ____ meses
3. ¿Cuánto tiempo tiene aquí viviendo en esta ciudad? ____ años ____ meses
4. ¿Dónde viviste antes? _____
5. ¿Cuántos años asistió a la escuela? ____ años
6. ¿Dónde asistió clases? _____
7. ¿Cuántos hijos tiene? _____ Edades de sus hijos _____

-
8. ¿Cómo es el ambiente de la escuela? Positivo o Negativo
 ¿Por qué? (Incluya detalles)

9. ¿Cómo es el ambiente de la comunidad? Positivo o Negativo
 ¿Por qué? (Incluya detalles)

APPENDIX B

ELL FAMILY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Por favor, Haz un círculo sobre del numero que indica el nivel de necesidad.

Por ejemplo: 1 = no hay necesidad, 5 = muchísima necesidad

1. Ayuda encontrar un lugar de vivir.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Ayuda en comunicar con los médicos.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Ayuda para encontrar trabajo.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Ayuda en conseguir servicios de teléfono, eléctrico, etc.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Ayuda para aprender inglés.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Ayuda para comunicarse con la escuela.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Ayuda para entender el sistema escolar aquí.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Ayuda para mis hijos en la escuela.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Ayuda con la tarea de mis hijos.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Ayuda con tecnología. (Por ejemplo: computadoras).	1	2	3	4	5
11. Ayuda con servicios sociales.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Ayuda para conocer la comunidad.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Ayuda con la transportación.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Ayuda con el cuidado de los niños.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Ayuda en las tiendas.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Ayuda con la ley o sistema judicial.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Ayuda para conocer alguien de confianza para discutir mis problemas.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Ayuda para mis hijos con _____.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Ayuda con _____.	1	2	3	4	5

Los tres **más importantes para mi** familia son:

APPENDIX C

TEACHER / PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR SUPPORT SURVEY

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this survey. This survey was created to learn more about the types of support that have been helpful to your students and their families in learning English and getting to know the community. I am working on creating a support-network model for English language learners and your input will be very helpful to me.

Please answer each question to the best of your ability; there are no wrong answers. All information will be kept confidential.

PART 1 - Background Information

1. Please describe your current position(s) in the school district.
2. What are some of the challenges of this position?
3. What kind of support is currently available to help you in your work?
4. Has this support changed in anyway over the years? If yes, how?

PART 2 - School-based support

5. How does your school currently support ELL students with;
 - a. Learning academic content-area material?
 - b. Learning English?
 - c. Learning about school policies and practices?
 - d. Learning about community services and resources?
6. In your opinion, what are the top 3 school-based needs for support that your students have.
7. How could your school improve support for ELL students?
8. How do you communicate with ELL parents and families?
9. How does your school currently support ELL parents and families?
10. In your opinion, what are the top 3 needs for school-based support that ELL parents and families currently have. Does your school currently meet these needs? If so, how?
11. What (if any) are barriers for ELL students to receive support from the school district?
12. What (if any) are barriers for ELL parents and families to receive support from the school district?

PART 3 - Community-based support

13. Rate the following community-based needs for support that your students and their families have when they first arrive. (1=No need, 5=Very high need)
- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. <u>Housing</u> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b. <u>Healthcare</u> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| c. <u>Learning English</u> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| d. <u>Education/School</u> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| e. <u>Employment</u> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| f. <u>Social services</u> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| g. <u>Counseling</u> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| h. <u>Transportation</u> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| i. <u>Legal Issues</u> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| j. <u>Technology</u> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| k. <u>Child care</u> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| l. <u>Getting to know the community</u> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| m. <u>Other:</u> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
14. How does this community (if at all) currently support ELL students and their families with their needs?
15. How could this community improve support for ELL students and their families with their needs?
16. How does the community communicate with ELL students and their families?
17. What (if any) are barriers for ELL students and their families to receive support from the local community

PART 4 - Parent/Family-based support

18. How do ELL parents/families currently their children with;
- Learning academic content-area material?
 - Learning English?
 - Homework?
 - Other?
19. In your opinion, what are the top 3 needs for support from their parents/family that your students have.
20. How could ELL parents/families improve support?
21. In your opinion, what percentage of ELL parents participate in school activities?
_____percent
22. What (if any) are barriers for ELL parents to participate in school activities?
23. How could parental involvement in school activities be improved?
24. Additional comments?

APPENDIX D

SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS Parent Focus Group Questions (en español)

SCRIPT in SPANISH:

Gracias por su participación en este grupo hoy. Quiero preguntar unas preguntas sobre de los tipos de cosas de apoyo que son o han sido mas provechosos para ustedes y a sus familias en aprendiendo ingles y conociendo la comunidad.

Después trabajando muchos años con inmigrantes, yo se que hay cosas que so muy difícil; como aprendiendo de la cultura aquí, hablando en ingles, buscando trabajo, comprando cosas, etc.

Yo recuerdo, por que viví en Ecuador por dos años. Estaba ahí para enseñar en una escuela ingles. Fue muy difícil para mí porque no sabía español. Había muchas veces cuando yo sentí mal porque no entendí la persona en la tienda o no sabía comunicar con mis vecinos y otros. Pero había unas personas que me ayudo mucho.

Con sus ideas, pensamientos, y opiniones, quiero crear una modelo de apoyo para comunidades que quieren ayudar familias nuevas y los aprendiendo Ingles.

Por favor, di me los nombres de ustedes y cuanto tiempo estar aquí (en los Estados Unidos) y si tienen hijos en el sistema escolar aquí.

1. ¿Cómo fue el tiempo cuando llegaron aquí?
2. ¿Había cosas fáciles o difíciles?
3. ¿Qué fue lo más difícil? ¿Por qué fue difícil?
4. ¿Al llegar aquí, (en Estados Unidos) había alguien en este comunidad o en la escuela que fue provechoso/a a usted o su familia/hijos?
5. ¿Quién es alguien que fue provechoso/a a su familia/hijos?
6. ¿Cómo fue provechoso/a?
7. ¿Qué fue más provechoso de esta persona?
8. ¿Había unos programas en la comunidad o en la escuela que fueron provechosos para usted o sus hijos?
9. ¿Qué es un programa o lugar que fue provechoso (a usted, a sus hijos, a su familia)?
10. ¿Cómo fue este programa o lugar provechoso?
11. ¿Qué son las fuerzas mejores del programa/lugar?

12. ¿Qué son las débiles peores o como podemos mejorar el programa o lugar?
13. ¿Si puede dar una calificación a este programa, que recibirá? ¿Por qué?
14. ¿Qué fue más provechoso cuando llegaron a este país?
15. ¿Qué fue más provechoso para sus hijos cuando llegaron a este país?
16. ¿Qué ha sido lo más provechoso sobre tiempo? ¿Por qué?
17. ¿Qué ha sido lo menos provechoso sobre tiempo? ¿Por qué?
18. ¿Si había una cosa que puede cambiar, que habría estado?
19. ¿Hay algo mas que quieren compartir?

Muchas gracias por su tiempo, y compartiendo sus pensamientos y opiniones.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION Of Parent Focus Group Questions

The following are possible questions for the focus group session. Others will be added, and noted, based on the responses of the group. The second focus group questions will be based on the responses from the initial group discussion.

SCRIPT:

Thank you for participating in this group discussion today. I would like to ask you a few questions about the kinds of things that have been helpful as you and your family are learning English and getting to know the community.

1. Has there been anyone in the community or at school that has been helpful to you or your family?
2. Who is someone that has helped you or your family?
3. How have they helped you?
4. What was most helpful about this?
5. Have there been any programs in the community or at school that have helped you or your family?
6. What is one program/or place that has helped you or your family?
7. How has this program/place been helpful?
8. What are the greatest strengths of the program?
9. What are the greatest weaknesses or how could it be improved?
10. How would you rate this programs effectiveness? Why?
11. What was most helpful for you when you first arrived in this country?
12. What was most helpful for your children when you first arrived in this country?
13. What has been most helpful over time? Why?
14. What has been least helpful over time? Why?
15. If there was one thing you could change, what would it be?
16. Is there anything else you would like to share?

APPENDIX E

Teacher/Administrator Focus Group Questions

SCRIPT (Background information –getting comfortable):

Thank you for participating in this group discussion today. I would like to ask you a few questions about the types of support that have been helpful to your students and their families in learning English and getting to know the community. You are free to answer any of the questions or decline to answer any of the questions. You will also be able to see your interview and edit out any response you feel did not accurately portray your thoughts. Do you have any questions before we get started?

SCRIBE: Write an E for Elementary; MS for Middle School, and HS for High School
--

BEGIN RECORDING

Welcome teachers. Could you each please tell me about your current position and years of experience in the district (*How long you have been here; how have things changed*)

1. Please **describe the ELL students** and families you work with in the district. (*Where did they come from? What background experiences do they come with? How much education do they come with?*)
2. What do you see as the greatest **academic needs** of your students? (*How might this differ at another level?*)
3. What do you see as the greatest **linguistic needs** of your students? (*Are they motivated to learn English?*)
4. What do you see as the greatest **social needs** of your students? (*Do they participate in after school activities? Socialize with other groups? Understand expectations of school?*)
5. What **types of support** do **ELL students receive** at your school?
 - a. **Academic Support**
 - b. **Linguistic Support**
 - c. **Social Support**
 - d. **Other** – *news letters/ parent communication in LI*
 - i. *Homework help?*
 - ii. *After school programs?*
 - iii. *Bilingual staff/paras*
6. What types of support are **most beneficial** for your students?

7. What types of support for students are **lacking or need improving**?
8. What **ideas or recommendations** do you have for improving support?

9. What do you see as the **greatest needs** of incoming **ELL families**?
10. What **types of support** do **ELL parents and families receive** at your school?
11. What types of support are **most beneficial** for ELL parents and families?
12. What types of support for ELL parents and families **are lacking or need improving**?
13. What **ideas or recommendations** do you have for improving support?

14. Are you aware of any **programs or services in the community** that help ELL students and their families? (*Adult English Program, Community Ed., Churches, Library*)
How have these programs/ services been helpful?
What are the greatest strengths of the programs/ services?
What are the greatest weaknesses or how could it be improved?

15. In your opinion, what are the top 3 needs of newcomers? What was **most helpful for your students** when they first arrived in this country?
16. What was **most helpful for families** when they first arrived in this country?
17. Is there **anything else** you would like to share?

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