



Parents Speak Out: Satisfaction Results from a Dual Language Family Survey

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Family Survey Project Collaborators

- Started in August, 2005 and is the work of the Dual Language Database Project, now the Dual Language Consortium:
- Albuquerque Public Schools
 - Adobe Acres Elementary School
 - Dolores Gonzales Elementary School
 - East San José Elementary School
 - Longfellow Elementary School
 - Truman Middle School
 - Valle Vista Elementary School
 - Wherry Elementary School
 - Zia Elementary School
 - Department of Language and Cultural Equity
- Dual Language Education of New Mexico
- University of New Mexico

Survey Development

- The Consortium Steering Committee chose these areas:
 - Demographics
 - communication between home and school
 - support of families and by families
 - involvement of families
 - the families' understanding of dual language
 - their expectations and perceived benefits of the program
- Items first drafted in English.
- Iterative item review process.
- Approved by the APS Research Review Clearance Committee and the UNM Institutional Review Board.
- The survey was translated by several translators, and a final Spanish version proofed by APS Translation Services.

Surveying Procedures

- Schools estimated the number of English and Spanish surveys they needed.
- Schools sent surveys home with students and collected them back from the students.
- Most families completed the survey in November, 2005.
- Incentives were provided to the schools based on the response rate from each school.



- Survey responses were entered into an on-line surveying system.
- Data entry “parties” were held with volunteers.
- Some data were entered by paid personnel.

Response Rate

- APS reported 1908 DL students in participating schools.
- 725 families participated and granted consent for their responses to be used for research.
- Response rate, thus, is 38%.

Why ask parents what they think and feel about the program?

- Strengthen learning-teaching partnership
 - Increase understanding of learning environments at school (parents) and at home (teacher)
 - Understanding of dual language learning
 - Different ways of understanding
 - Parental expectations affect achievement
 - There is considerable research on teachers and students; not so much on parents.
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Why parent satisfaction?

- With parent communication and satisfaction:
 - Higher long-term achievement for students
 - Better attendance
 - Greater enrollment in postsecondary education
 - Support learning at home, including homework
 - More positive attitudes at school/re: school
 - More positive behaviors at school
- Know specific areas of concern and address them



Who participated?

Who responded to the survey?

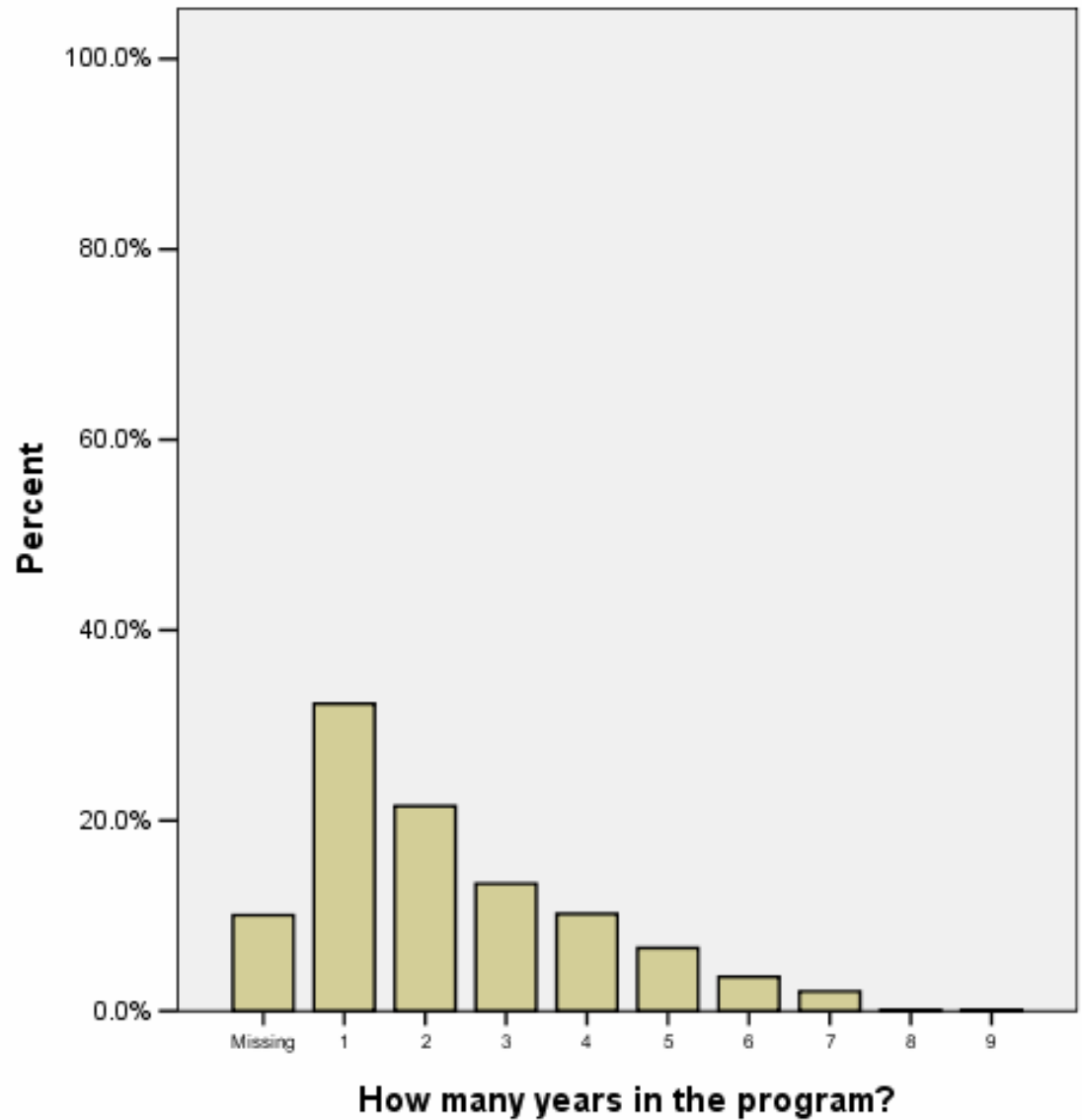
- What language do you primarily speak with the child?
 - Spanish 65%
 - English 27.3%
 - Both (not listed as an option) 2.6%
 - Other 3%
- Parental Language
 - English-dominant 18.6%
 - Spanish-dominant 44.3%
 - Bilingual 30%

Who responded to the survey?

- Parental Education Level
 - Up through high school 51.9%
 - Undergraduate Education 14.5%
 - Graduate Education 6.4%
 - Did not respond 27.2%
- Neighborhood and Transfer Parents
 - Neighborhood 54.9%
 - Transfer 22%

The Students

- Grade Levels Represented:
 - K – 2 49.2%
 - 3 – 5 32.4%
 - 6 – 8 17.5%



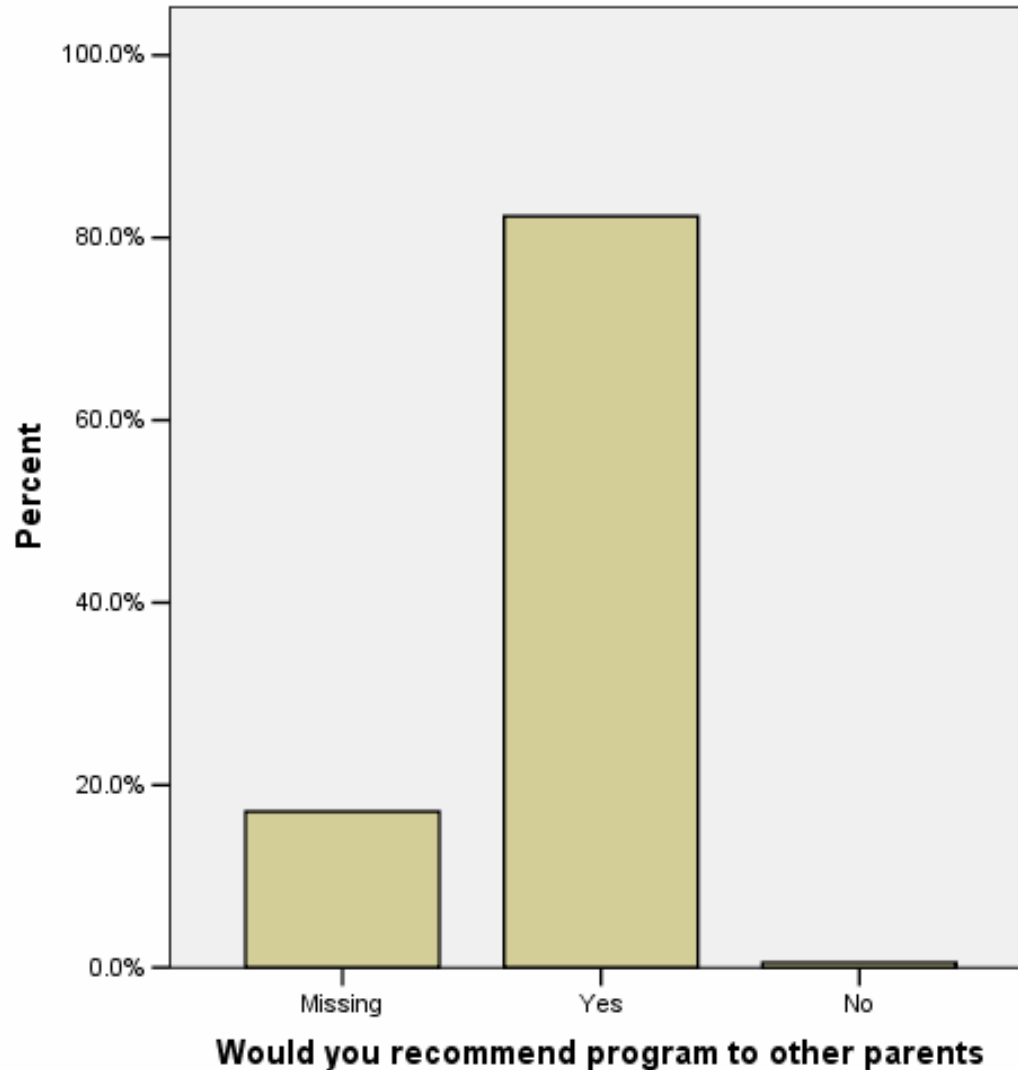
The Schools

- Seven elementary schools and one middle school participated.
 - Program Models
 - Most employ a 50:50 program model
 - One employs a 90:10 model
 - One has both a 50:50 strand and a 90:10 strand
 - Five two-way programs; three one-way programs.
 - Percent of English Language Learners ranged from 25% to 80%.
 - Percent of students receiving Free and Reduced Priced Lunches ranged from 60% to 100%.
 - All of the elementary schools are K through 5 programs except for two.
 - One is a pre-school through grade five program
 - One is a K through grade 2 program.
 - The oldest programs date back to 1996 while the newest began in 2005.
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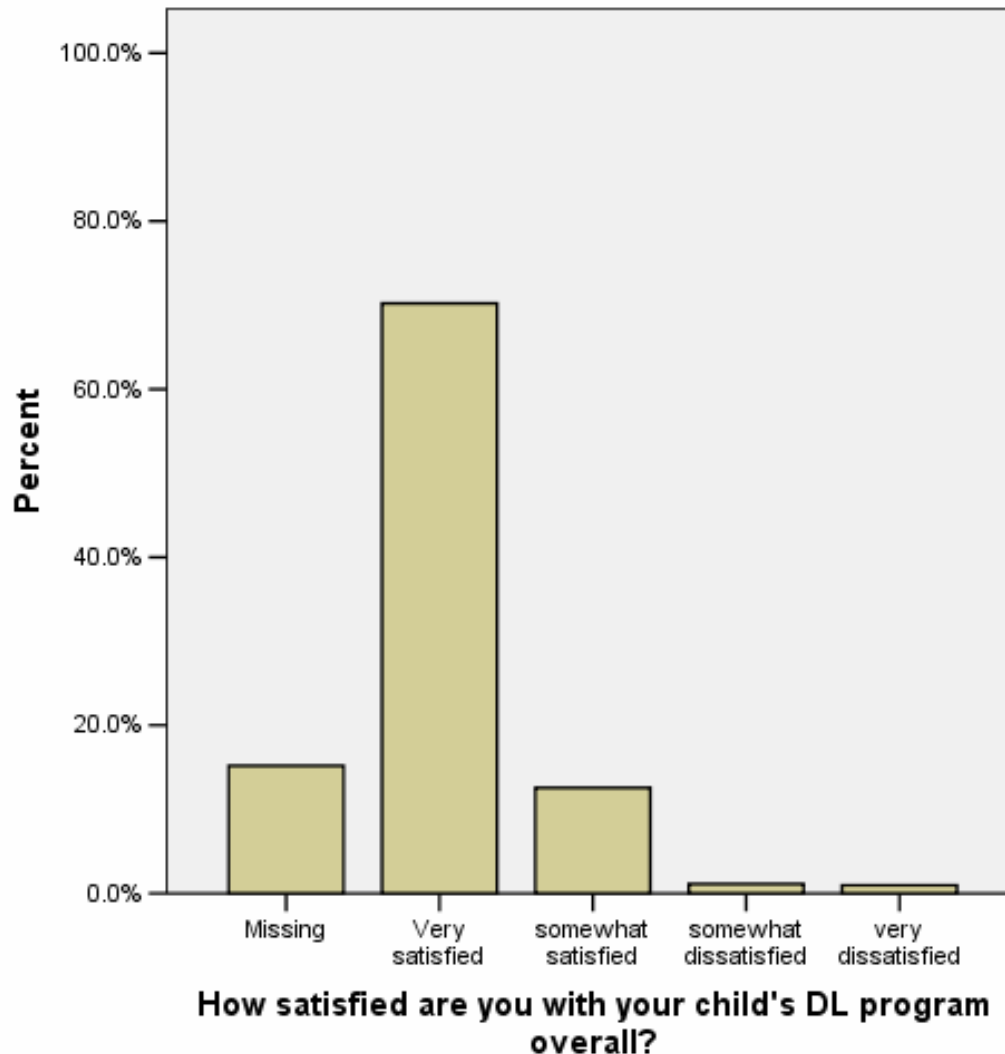


Overall Satisfaction

Only 4 of 725 respondents (less than one percent) indicated that they would not recommend the program to other parents.



70.2% of respondents were very satisfied with their child's dual language program overall.





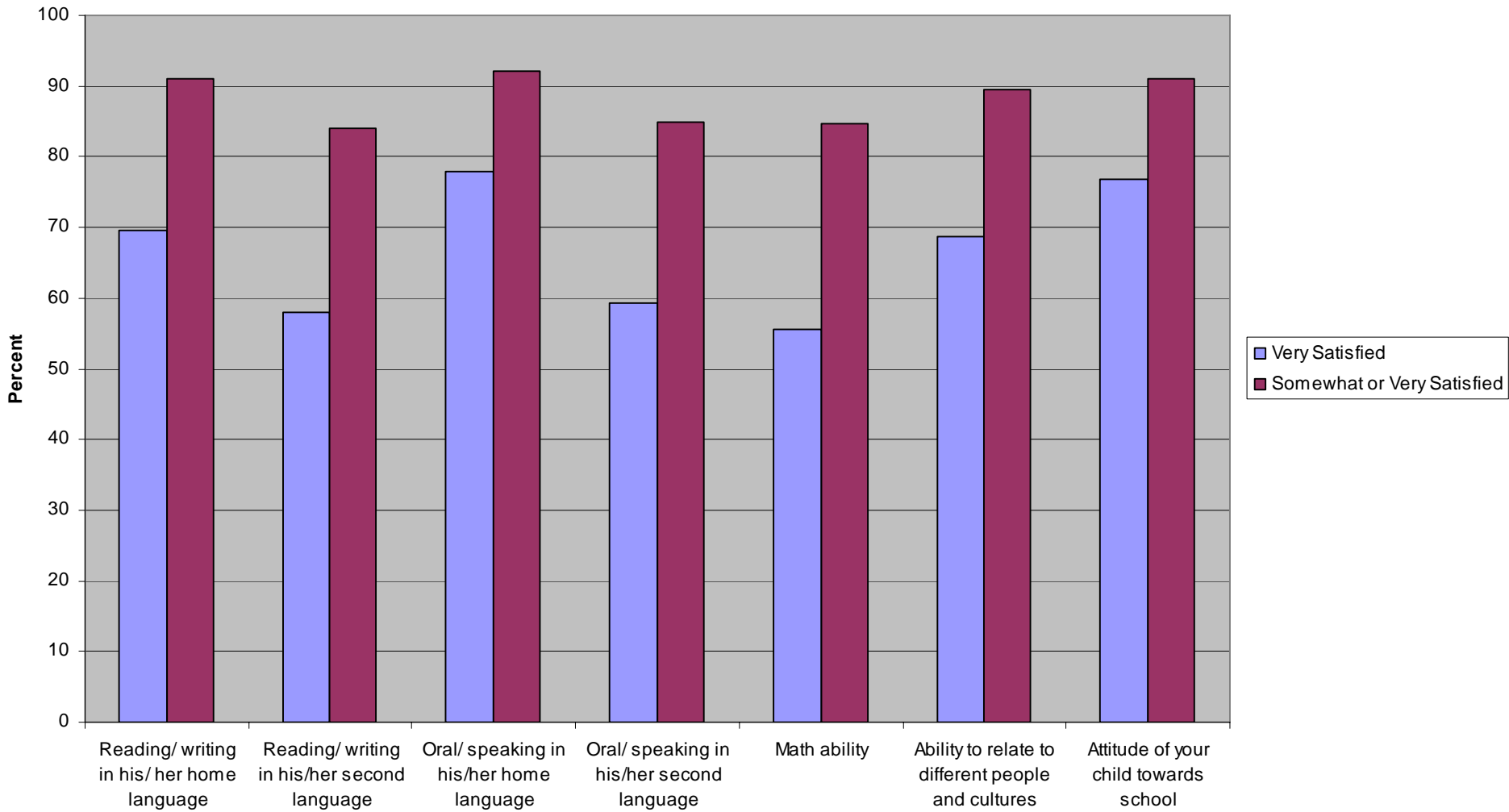
Satisfaction with the Child's Skills

Questions asked about:

- reading/ writing in his/ her home language
- reading/ writing in his/her second language
- oral/ speaking in his/her home language
- oral/ speaking in his/her second language
- math ability
- ability to relate to different people and cultures
- the attitude of their child towards school

Most parents are satisfied:

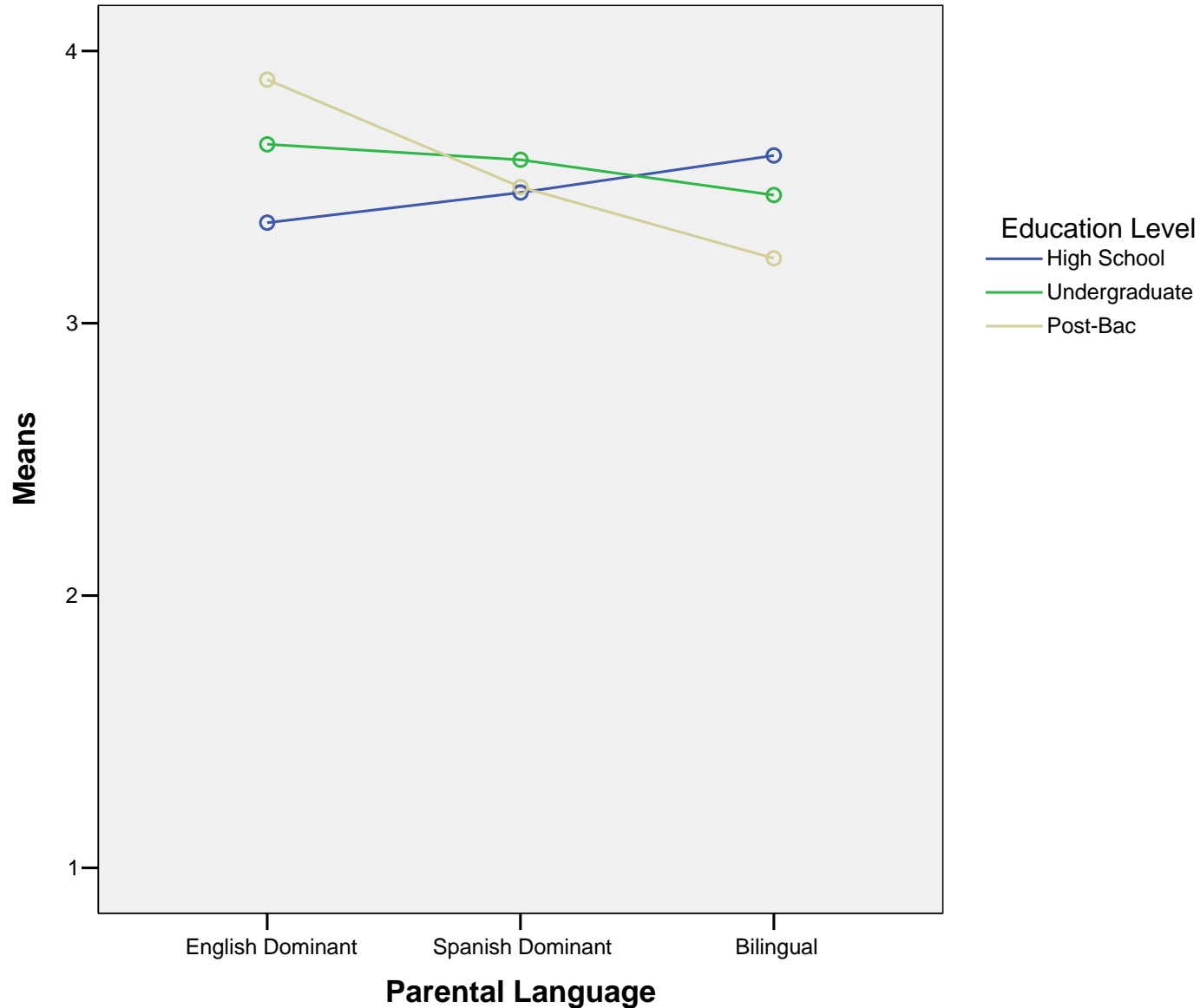
- Satisfaction was high and fairly uniform
- No differences seen between:
 - Neighborhood and transfer parents
 - One-way and two-way programs
 - Differing years in the program



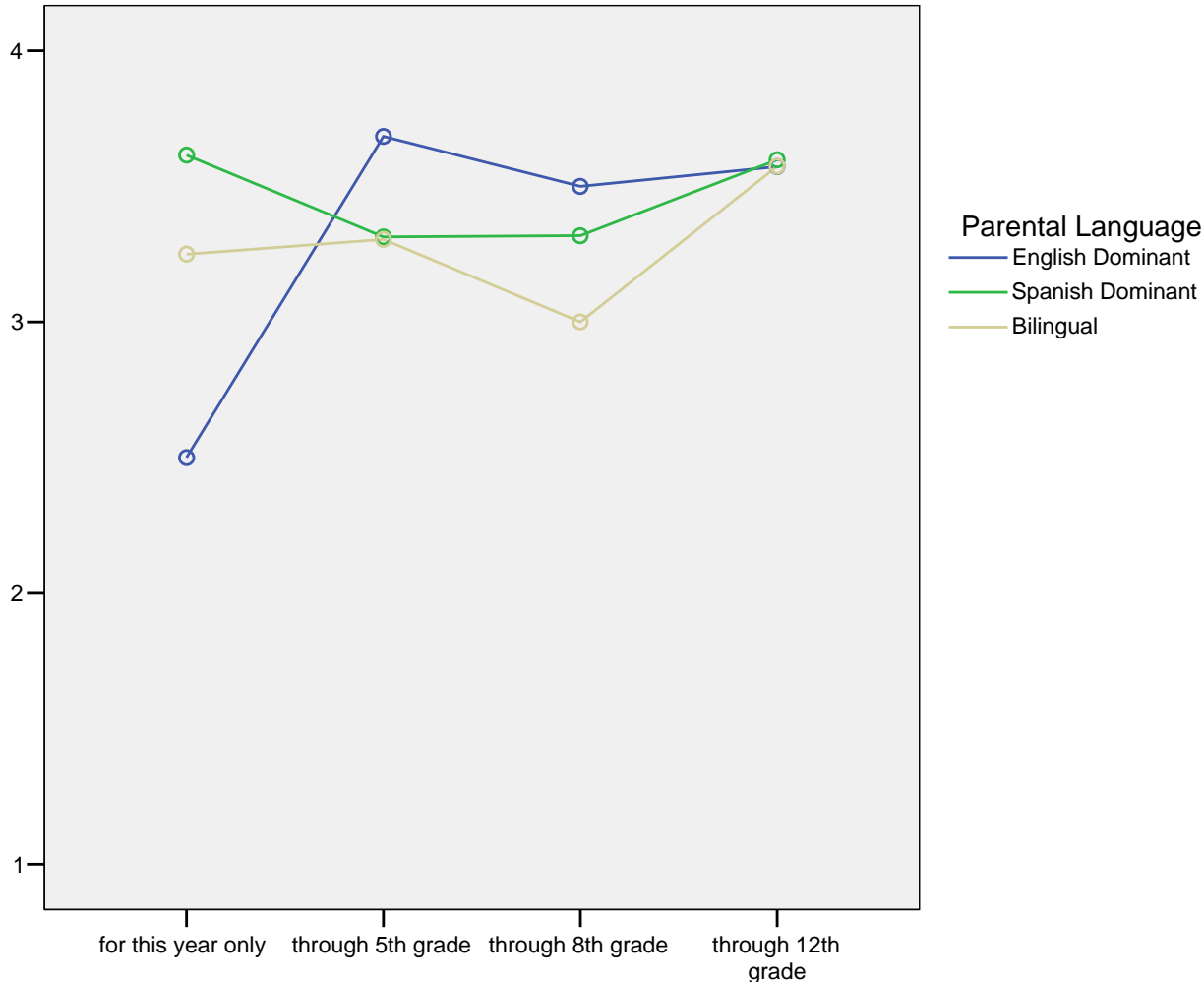
Comparative Satisfaction: Preliminary Note

- Some groups of parents were less satisfied than others.
- The average rating of satisfaction was always somewhere between “somewhat satisfied” and “very satisfied”.

Math Ability and Parental Education



Math Ability and Commitment



Among the English-dominant parents, those committed to keeping their child in DL for the current year only were less satisfied than other English-dominant parents.

I am committed to keeping my child in a DL program

Math Ability

- Parents who helped their children with number skills just a few days per week were less satisfied than those who helped their child several days per week or almost every day.

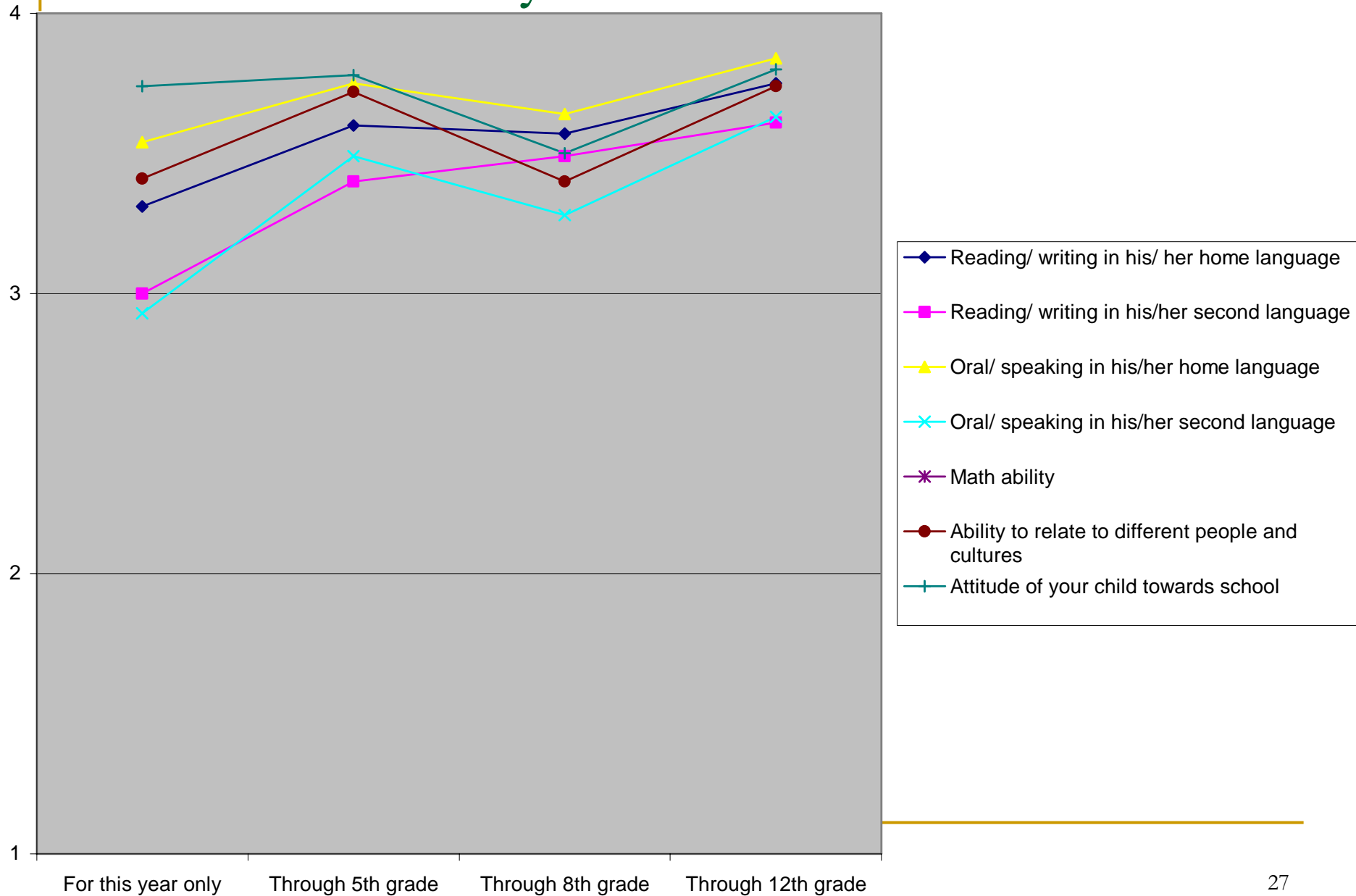
English Literacy Skills

- Spanish-dominant parents who said they don't know how long it takes to learn a second language really well were less satisfied with their child's reading and writing abilities in their second language than either English-dominant or bilingual parents.

Spanish Literacy Skills

- Parents who worked a few days a week with their child on reading/ writing in Spanish and reading together in Spanish were less satisfied with their child's reading and writing abilities in their home language than those who reported working almost every day on those activities.

Skills Generally



Summary of Satisfaction with Child's Skills

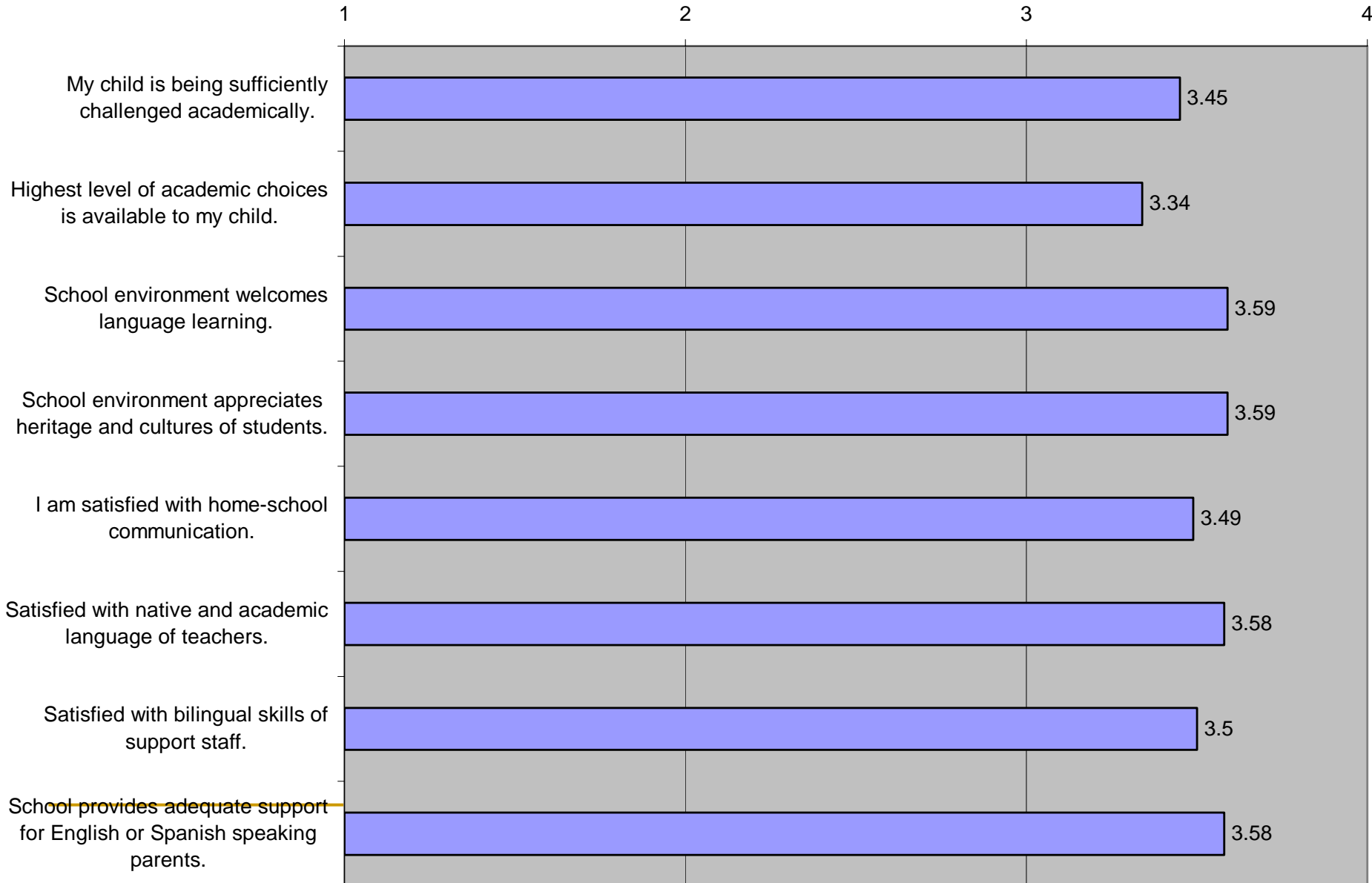
- Math ability comes up several times.
- Infrequent parental involvement at home with a particular skill relates to decreased satisfaction with that skill.
- Those parents committed to keeping their child in the program for the current year only are less satisfied with math ability as well as first and second language ability.



Satisfaction with the Dual Language Program

Fairly uniform and high satisfaction

Mean Ratings



Home-school Communication

- English-speaking parents less satisfied than Spanish-speaking parents.
- Was lower among English-speakers who were committed for this year only compared to English-speakers with longer commitments.

Support for Spanish or English speaking Parents

- English-dominant parents with high school education were less satisfied than Spanish-dominant or bilingual parents with high school education.
- Parents in two-way programs were more satisfied than parents in one-way programs.

Miscellaneous

- Middle school parents were less satisfied than elementary parents that the school environment welcomes language learning.
- Spanish-speaking parents were less satisfied that the school environment welcomes language learning than English-speaking parents
- English-dominant parents with a high school education or less were less satisfied with the native and academic language of teachers than were English-dominant parents with more education.



Areas of Concern

Of the 15 families indicating dissatisfaction overall:

- Nine of them (60%) are parents of students in their first year of a dual language program.
- Nine of them are in one-way programs.
- Nine of them are parents of elementary school children
 - seven of those are parents of students in kindergarten through second grade.
- Six are parents of students in middle school.
- Ten of them are Spanish-dominant parents, and 12 of them speak primarily Spanish with their child.
- Only three of them said their school did not offer them a choice of whether their child would be in the dual language program or not.
- Commitment
 - Four committed to keeping their child in dual language for this year only
 - Six report a commitment to keeping their child in the program through the twelfth grade.

50 families made some comment of concern in the open-ended questions

- language and language development
- math ability
- parental ability to help child's development when parents are not bilingual
- parents who prefer English when children prefer dual language
- home-school communication
- academic challenge

Language and Language Development

- “She is having a hard time with speaking in Spanish, but she likes the challenge and really wants to learn it.” – Fourth grade, Bilingual Parent
- His school “has much to offer with the staff and academics. However, I think that my son's oral language development in Spanish is coming down, but can be improved by using more small groups & cooperative learning with less 'teacher talk.' “ – Fourth grade, Bilingual Parent
- “Porque pienso que necesita mas atención en el lenguaje porque se confunde mucho con las palabras pero yo pienso que con ayuda aprenderá.” (“Because I think that she needs more attention in language arts because she confuses words a lot, but I think with help she will learn.”) – Third grade, Spanish-dominant Parent
- “El idioma español es lengua materna de mi hijo, estoy satisfecho. En inglés necesita mas ayuda y siento que no la tiene.” (“Spanish is his mother tongue, and I am satisfied with that. In English he needs more help and I feel he doesn't have it.”)—Sixth grade, Spanish-dominant Parent

Language and Language Development

- “No estoy completamente satisfecha porque el español que aprenden los niños es diferente al que uno habla.” (“I am not completely satisfied because the Spanish the children learn is different from the Spanish one speaks.”) – Third grade, Spanish-dominant Parent
- “Porque sí, me gustaría que les dieran más oportunidad de participar en español a los alumnos que no hablan muy bien el inglés, y que les contará de igual manera su participación.” (“Because yes, I would like them to give the students who don’t speak English very well more opportunities to participate in Spanish, and that they count their participation equally.”) – Seventh grade, Bilingual Parent
- “It's an excellent group of mostly highly trained, mostly fluent, highly dedicated group of teachers. I've seen how much the children love the program and how much they get out of it. (The) school has done so much to meet (my son's) needs, the only difficulty being that the gifted program is only offered in English & now that he's there 1/2-time he worries he's losing his Spanish. Also, the new secretary doesn't speak Spanish & the Director does most communication in English (am messages, PTA meetings, etc.) It's a shift that worries me.” – Third grade, Spanish-dominant Parent

Math Ability

- “We would recommend the program because it encourages dual language learning and literacy and because it encourages maintenance of Spanish heritage language skills. We have reservations about the program because the teaching of math is done excessively in English and verbal skills...” – First grade, Bilingual Parent

- “We are very happy to have a dual language program that encourages maintenance of Spanish language skills and development of dual language literacy. We would like to see more Spanish used in the dual language program and in school-sponsored events and PTA activities. We are very concerned that the teaching of math is made very difficult for dual language learners because of the failure to take advantage of international mathematical notation.” – First grade, Bilingual Parent

Parents who are not bilingual

- “. . . I feel that I would need to be able to speak Spanish in order to maintain a consistent flow between each other for communicating. I feel I need to know the correct pronunciation of the work if (my daughter) didn't know how to say it.” – Kindergarten, English-dominant Parent
- “He likes learning Spanish. I am unable to teach him due to the fact I don't speak it. However, his roots are Spanish speaking so he finds it quite interesting. He feels smart that he can teach his own parent new words. I am undecided.” – Kindergarten, English-dominant Parent
- *Would you recommend the program to other parents?* “Maybe. It depends on whether the parents speak Spanish fluently. I have discovered that many of the english only speaking parents have a difficult time understanding the homework assigned to their children, so they grow frustrated by the curriculum.” – First grade, Bilingual family member

Parents who prefer English

- “My child is in the PreK program. He likes school very much. As for me, I would rather have him taught in English. I think school should be taught in English. As my son goes through school, he needs to know more English than Spanish. My child can't wait to go to school.”

Home-School Communication

- “It is a great experience. (There needs to be) more communication with teacher/parent. Have issues with some policies and the way teachers give grades to my daughter. If there is a problem with my daughter, I expect a phone call. Have yet to receive phone call but report card shows she has an attitude.” – Seventh grade, Bilingual Parent
 - “(I) chose very and somewhat satisfied. Just relocated to the school. So far the school is doing well. Although I think that there could be more communication between parents and teachers about what the school year is to be done and learned. And more things parents can help with at home.” – Kindergarten, English-dominant Parent
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Home-school communication

- “Because I didn't want my daughter to be in the 80-20. The 50-50 was fine but this year they put her in the 80-20 and now she is getting too confused in sentences and her grades are dropping. And also she is high in Spanish and low in her english so she will not like it in 3rd grade if she will continue to be failing.” – Second grade, English-dominant Parent
- “La escuela siempre ha tenido un gran compromiso con el programa dual. Temo algunos cambios recientes como el de no hacer los anuncios por la mañana en español. Tampoco me gusta la falta de interpretación de alta calidad en las reuniones del PTO y en comunicación por escrita. Adoro a los maestros - son buenísimos - gracias.”
 (“The school has always had a huge commitment to the dual language program. I fear some recent changes like not doing the morning messages in Spanish. I also do not like the lack of high quality language interpretation in the PTO meeting and in written communication. I adore the teachers – they are excellent – thank you.”)
– Kindergarten, Bilingual Parent

Academic Challenge

- “Because I think there can always be room for improvements. The early classes seem more disciplined and rigorous. The academic level seems to drop and the Spanish language spoken by the teachers becomes less mandatory.” – Fifth grade, Bilingual Parent
- “Because the faculty and staff are doing well to make this work. At times, there are delays or complications, but nothing that can't be solve promptly. I appreciate what they do! For one, I believe improvements are always needed, ie communication with the student is very important so that the student is comfortable and able, feeling safe as well as confident and attentive.” – First grade, English-dominant Parent

Academic Challenge

- “Knowing two languages enables cognitive developments, improved socialization skills and an appreciation of one's roots. She loves learning any language, as well as her previous teachers. Classrooms are overcrowded and materials are not critically engaging.” – Second grade, Bilingual Parent
- “Because I've seen my daughter go from kindergarten to 5th grade in the dual language program, and I've seen her progress and am very satisfied with it. She can read, write and speak it very well.” An additional comment from another question, explaining his/her answer of strongly disagreeing that the child is being sufficiently challenged academically: I feel she could be more challenged, and she was never retested for the gifted program.” – Fifth grade, Bilingual Parent



Conclusions

Main Themes

- Overall satisfaction extremely high
- Even those parents who, in specific instances were less satisfied, were still quite satisfied in an absolute sense.

Parent views differ on math ability

- Lower satisfaction and concerns in their child's math ability was found among the following parents:
 - Bilingual parents with a graduate education
 - Bilingual parents who say it takes five or more years to learn a second language really well
 - English-dominant parents with less than a high school education
 - Parents who spend less than a few days per week helping their child with number skills activities

Parent views differ according to their commitment to dual language

- Parents committed to keeping their child in the program for the current year only expressed lower satisfaction levels with the following:
 - Math ability
 - Reading and writing skills in the first language
 - Reading and writing skills in the second language
- This corresponds with what teachers and other school staff experience: parents are understandably concerned about their child's academic progress when it takes several years for that progress in both languages to reach grade-level.

Commitment to program is affected by home school communication

- Home-school communication was related to a parent's expressed commitment to keeping the child in the program for the current year.
 - English-dominant parents with a high school education.

Parents differ in home learning support and satisfaction

- Those parents who were seldom involved with school-related skills at home had lower satisfaction with those skills.
 - Math ability
 - Reading/writing in first language
 - Reading/writing in second language
- Again, there was nothing in their responses to indicate why this might be.

Limitations

- 38% response rate needs to be considered when examining satisfaction.
 - Who did not respond?
 - Literacy-based process
- Only one middle school in the sample.
- Four-page likert scale, filling in bubbles
 - Tiring
 - Hard to navigate
 - Range of experience participating in surveys



Implications for School Communities

Good. Better. Best.
Never let it rest.
Until your good is better,
And your better is best.

Implications

- Home-school Communication
 - School-level
 - Classroom-level
- Appropriate expectations
 - Of the child's academic progress
 - Of parents' involvement at home
- Be mindful of the Commitment Connection

For surveys, reports and more information
see www.duallanguagenm.org