

# State of Bilingual Education in Hartford: Opportunities for Growth



Josselyn Alejandra Zaldívar'20  
 Community Partner: Councilwoman Widaliz Bermúdez  
 Faculty Advisor: Prof. Aidalí Aponte-Avilés



## Abstracto / Abstract

This project analyzes which Hartford elementary schools currently have bilingual programs. There is a necessity to see the evolution of bilingual programs over the recent years. To gain a better understanding of how many students are learning English as a second language, I examined individual school reports between 2017 and 2018. Also, I analyzed the demographics of seven Hartford schools to determine why these schools have bilingual programs. Furthermore, I interviewed two officials from the Department of Education to understand the condition and background of this program in the state. Two key findings were that there are two different bilingual education practices within the Hartford Public Schools: transitional bilingual programs and dual language programs. Overall, these two bilingual programs differ in their purpose, duration and how much funding and resources they receive each year.

## Metodología / Methodology

- Researched literature on the history and contemporary bilingual program in Hartford CT
- Analyzed City Archives of Hartford Public School Annual Report
- Review literature on Bilingual Education in CT
- Review literature on the success of Dual Language Program in other states
- Analyzed primary source documents, including seven elementary schools 2017-18 annual report
- Analyzed the Connecticut State Department of Education, Programmatic Requirements and Best Practice Recommendation of the Bilingual Programs
- Interviewed:
  - Conducted interview with Daisy Torres (Director of Bilingual Education, Hartford Public Schools)
  - Hernan LaFontaine (First Puerto Rican Superintendent in Hartford, 1979).

## Agradecimientos / Acknowledgements

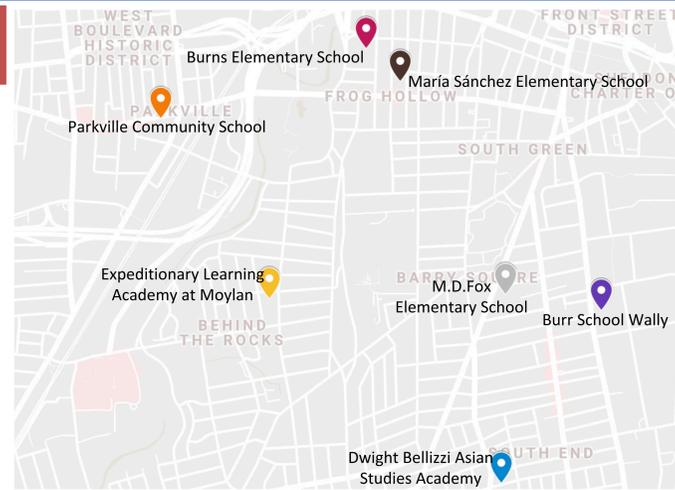
Councilwoman Widaliz Bermudez for supporting this research project. Also Hernan LaFontaine for advising and helping me research in the Connecticut Department of Education website.

In addition, Daisy Torres for being interviewed. Last, but not least, Professor Holt and my adviser Aidalí Aponte-Avilés for mentoring and making this project possible.

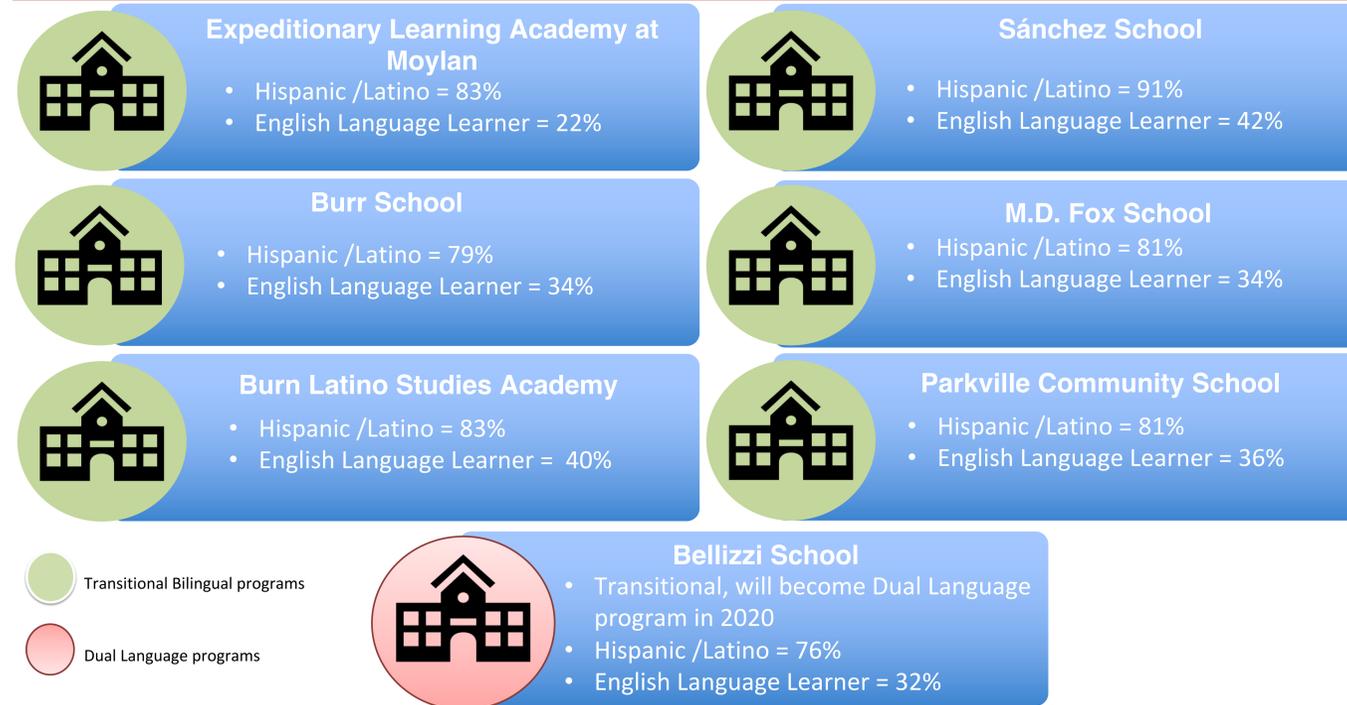


## Preguntas de investigación / Research Questions

1. What bilingual education programs are available in Hartford and what are the demographics of standard in these programs?
2. What are the differences between the transitional model used in Hartford and a dual language model?
3. What do successful dual language programs look like elsewhere?
4. What factors are required for Hartford to successfully move to a dual language model?



## Datos demográficos de las escuelas elementales en Hartford / Demographic of the elementary schools in Hartford



| Transitional Bilingual Program   | Dual Language Program   |
|--|---|
| Educate students in both languages (English and Native language) with the aim of developing proficiency only in English language | Educate students in both languages (English and Native language) with the aim of developing proficiency in both languages |
| Ensure students meet English proficiency and academic standards of each grade to be promoted or graduate                         | Ensure that district schools have condition favorable for establishing a dual language program                            |
| Increase instruction in English over the course of one year  | Aims to provide a wide reach to all stakeholders in the community: students, staff, and parents.                          |
| Consider Native language skills of eligible student  | Determine if the district has or is willing to use their resources for planning and implementing the program              |
| Consider including English-proficient students   | No time limit   |
| 30-month limit for program   |   |

## Educación de lenguaje dual en Utah / Utah's Dual Language Education

In 2008, Utah's Senate Bill 241 created funding for schools to begin dual language immersion program in Chinese, French and Spanish. Use a 50-50 model: instruction is divided between English and native language (Chinese, French, German, Portuguese or Spanish). Between 2018-2019, Utah had a total of 224 programs. Utah State Office of Education explained the purpose of the program to parents, administrators, and other stakeholders:

1. Effective communication, literacy, and cultural interaction.
2. Expectations for learners at different levels of proficiency.
3. Real world application of the language

Proven benefits of the program:

- Students achieve high proficiency in the immersion language.
- Improved Performance on Standardized Tests
- Enhanced Cognitive Skills
- Increased Cultural Sensitivity
- Immersion students are better prepared for the global community and job market where bilingualism is an asset.

## Resultados / Findings

**Community Support** - Dual language programs are only implemented in Hartford where the community and the schools/staff work together to request it.
 

- e.g. Bellizzi School

**Parents** - Most parents are not informed about either bilingual programs.

**Funding**- There is not enough funding to help accommodate every student who needs bilingual support.
 

- These programs only serve the Hispanic population, other languages have individual bilingual support.
- Extra bilingual tutor costs are funded under special grants: non-Spanish speakers work with tutors.

**Staff**

- Not enough certified teachers, lack of co-teaching support.
- Need for teachers who are proficient in both languages.

## Próximos pasos / Next Steps

- The Connecticut Department of Education needs to create a page with better information about the bilingual programs the school that provide them.
- Parents, need to be educated better about the bilingual program in order to get support.
- One way is to created surveys to inform parents.
- Also set up talks in libraries, churches, schools, in parents' native language.
- Hartford District need to inform parents about the benefits of the programs: Transitional Bilingual versus Dual Language.
- The state need to provide more funding to accommodate every student with need regardless of bilingual programs.
- More teachers that are proficient in both languages need to be certified.