



University of Colorado  
Denver

**DPS Exemplary Schools Case Study:  
Bruce Randolph High School**

*WORKING DRAFT 2*

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## DPS UCD ELA Exemplary Schools Case Study Overview

The Denver Public Schools (DPS) University of Colorado Denver (UCD) English Language Acquisition (ELA) Exemplary Schools Case Studies investigated DPS schools with a high density of learners of English as a second or additional language and high levels of students who qualified for a free or reduced price lunch that were experiencing the most success with English language learners (ELL students). The study was conducted by the DPS UCD Research Collaborative between December 2010 and March 2011. The purpose of the study was to identify school-wide practices that have been successful in supporting the achievement of these students. Six schools (two elementary, two middle, and two high schools) were identified on the basis of five criteria: (1) an open enrollment policy, (2) at least 40% of total enrollment consisting of ELL students, and at least 100 English language learners enrolled, (3) a total School Performance Framework (SPF) rating greater than 49% for elementary schools, and greater than 45% for middle schools and high schools, (4) at least 50% of students in the school qualified for a free or reduced price lunch, and (5) high gains on the CSAP and CELA tests for the past three years relative to other schools serving the same grade levels. Two additional elementary schools, which did not meet all criteria, but have good reputations among area educators were also studied. The case studies involved three sources of data: 1) photographs providing environmental scans of the language resources and supports for ELL students in the schools; 2) documents and public information (e.g., websites) as well as student performance data; and 3) interviews with school leaders, teachers, and other support personnel. This report will detail the practices uncovered at Bruce Randolph High School.

NOTE: This case study of Bruce Randolph High School is ongoing. These preliminary assertions and explanations are based on 6-12 interviews with staff members, photographic inventories, and archived data collected between December 2010 and March 2011 only. We anticipate that further study, e.g., observations in classrooms and additional interviews, will expand our understanding of the school's practices.

The following assertions emerged as key components contributing to the success of Bruce Randolph High School in working with learners of English as a second or additional language:

- The community at Bruce Randolph collectively values a culture of learning, a culture of reciprocity, and a commitment to innovation.
- These values are then enacted through consistent policies and procedures, continuous improvement, locally led professional development and substantial supports for teachers. These values and processes appear to be valuable levers in promoting the academic gains of multilingual learners at Bruce Randolph.

The following sections of this report will include a more in-depth explanation of the study, a brief history and demographic description of the school, and a more detailed narrative of the case study assertions and how the described practices are facilitating academic growth for ELL students at Bruce Randolph High School (to be found beginning on page 9).

## DPS Exemplary Schools Case Study: Context and Purpose of the Study

As of October 1, 2010, there were 26,761 identified English language learners (non-exited ELL students in grades ECE-12) enrolled in Denver Public Schools. Of these students, 17,544 received ELA services at a designated ELA program school. Spanish was the primary language for 15,246 (87%) of these students, while other common languages included Vietnamese, Arabic, Somali, Nepali and Karen/Burmese <http://ela.dpsk12.org/>

Denver Public Schools and University of Colorado Denver are working in collaboration on the DPS ELA Exemplary Schools Study to examine practices within DPS schools in which learners of English as a second (or additional) language are outperforming their peers in similar schools. The purpose of the study is to provide guidance to DPS and other districts in improving the educational performance of English language learners by describing practices currently used in six DPS schools in which English language learners are experiencing the most academic success. The primary research question addressed by this study is:

- *What are the school-wide practices of schools that are successfully serving a high number of English language learners?*

This study was formulated in accordance with the Department of Justice Court Order, which provides guidance to and approval of the DPS English Acquisition program, and includes guidance regarding research on the effectiveness of DPS ELA programs. One goal of this study is to identify practices that have been successful across different school contexts. This report focuses on the practices at Bruce Randolph High School.

### Study Design and School Selection Criteria

This study of school practices involved three sources of data: 1) observations/photographs of language resources in the school environment; 2) documents and public information (e.g., school websites, newsletters) as well as aggregate data on student performance; and 3) multiple interviews with school leaders, teachers, and other support personnel. In this preliminary phase, the study did *not* include students as participants.

A three-step process was used to select high performing schools for English language learners in DPS. For the purposes of this study, English language learners at DPS were defined as those students who were currently receiving ELA services, opted out of services, or exited from ELA services.

Step 1: In order to select the case study schools, schools were identified at the elementary, middle, and high school level, which met four criteria:

- 1) at least 40% of the school's total enrollment consisted of English language learners,
- 2) at least 100 ELL students were enrolled at the school,

- 3) at least 50% of students at the school qualified for a free or reduced price lunch, and
- 4) the school received a School Performance Framework (SPF) rating greater than 49 for elementary schools, and greater than 45 for middle schools and high schools.

For the SPF, every school in DPS that contains at least one grade that takes CSAP (grades 3-10) is assigned one of the following accreditation ratings every September using data collected during the previous three school years: Distinguished, Meets Expectations, Accredited on Watch, Accredited on Priority Watch (added in 2010) or Accredited on Probation. Ratings then relate to how much autonomy schools are given, the support needed, corrective action taken and compensation earned by principals, assistant principals and teachers. For this study, the SPF rating was used to ensure that the schools chosen were not on probation and were meeting expectations or nearly meeting expectations (for all students, not only ELL students).

Step 2: Performance data for English Language Learners on the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) Reading, CSAP Writing, CSAP Math and the Colorado English Language Assessment (CELA) were analyzed for each school for the past three years. Schools from the initial list, which were making the largest gains were identified, weighting gains in 2010 the highest, 2009 second highest, and 2008 third. Data presented in Table 1 below show the three-year weighted averages of the CSAP median growth percentiles for each school and average gain (Z score) on CELA. Based on these criteria, three schools at each educational level, for a total of nine schools, were identified as candidates for the case study.

Step 3: The student recruitment and retention policies at the nine schools were investigated to determine whether the schools had policies for admittance or dismissal related to performance, special education needs, or behavioral problems. In narrowing the selected schools to six, researchers agreed that at least one school at each level should be a comprehensive neighborhood school, as opposed to a charter school or magnet school. The six schools included Bryant Webster Dual Language ECE-8 (study focused on the elementary grades), Force Elementary, Merrill Middle, West Denver Preparatory Charter – Federal Campus (a middle school), Abraham Lincoln High, and Bruce Randolph High.

Once the schools had been narrowed to six high performing schools, two additional elementary schools of interest were selected based on a combination of their relatively high performance and reputation among educators in the district. Both schools added additional characteristics to the pool of schools, including learners of English from diverse linguistic backgrounds and concentration on math and science. These two additional “reputational” schools were Goldrick Elementary and the Math and Science Leadership Academy (K-3).

## History of Bruce Randolph High School

Bruce Randolph High School, located at Steele Street and East 40<sup>th</sup> Avenue in northeast Denver, opened in 2002. BRHS an “autonomy” school and a Beacon school, meaning there is

encouragement of innovation and reform initiated and developed by teachers and principals. Bruce Randolph includes both a middle and a high school. The focus of this study was on the high school.

Bruce Randolph recently received national attention when President Obama mentioned the school's success in his State of the Union address. This acknowledgement highlighted the efforts of staff and administration to "turn around" the school. In 2005, Kristin Waters took over as principal at Bruce Randolph, and in 2008 the school became autonomous, granting greater flexibility and control over personnel, budget, and the use of time. Cesar Cedillo served as assistant principal under Kristin Waters and succeeded her as principal in 2009. Bruce Randolph graduated its first class of seniors in 2010.

Bruce Randolph High School is a magnet school (not a neighborhood school); the middle school is a neighborhood school. Students must have choice records and attendance reasons for enrolling in the high school. ELL status is an acceptable attendance reason. Having this level of autonomy appears to play a large role in the success of the school. Bruce Randolph is an ELA-E designated school, indicating that the services for ELL students include supported English content instruction and English language development.

### **Demographic Overview of Bruce Randolph High School**

In the 2009-10 school year (the school year based on which schools were selected for the study), 387 students were enrolled at Bruce Randolph High School. The large majority of students at Bruce Randolph High were Hispanic/Latino (95%), and 84% of students spoke Spanish. Among the student body, 96% qualified for free and reduced price lunch. In the 2009-10 school year, Bruce Randolph received an SPF rating of 50%, indicating that they were accredited on watch. Last year Bruce Randolph met Annual Yearly Progress (AYP).

Of the students enrolled in Bruce Randolph High in the 2009-10 school year, 83% (320) were designated English language learners (including students currently receiving ELA services, students opted out of services, and students who have exited from ELA services). Among the ELL students at the school, 42 were designated as enrolled in ELA services, 51 had opted out of services, and 227 had exited from ELA program services. The large majority of the ELL students at Bruce Randolph spoke Spanish.

AMAO 1 (Annual Measurable Achievement Objective) is an indicator of English language acquisition. It represents the number of students who are making progress on the CELA exam. In 2010, 39% of English language learners at Bruce Randolph were making progress. Further, the three-year (2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10) weighted average gain (Z score) on the CELA for ELL students at Bruce Randolph High was 0.22 standard deviations above the mean, meaning they showed above average growth; this is compared to a state-wide gain of 0. Three year weighted averages are included here as these data are less subject to year-to-year fluctuations.

The three-year weighted averages of the CSAP median growth percentiles for English language learners (median growth percentiles indicate how well these students are growing in comparison with other students) were 65 in Reading, 67.3 in Writing, and 61 in Math, compared to the state

average of 50. The median student growth percentile is the middle score if the individual student growth percentiles are ranked from highest to lowest. A “typical” school would have a median student growth percentile of 50.

The charts below display student demographics (including primary home languages and ethnicities of students throughout the school), the CSAP and CELA growth scores of ELL students at the school, and the proficiency levels of Bruce Randolph High students on the CELA and CSAP. All non-exited English language learners (who include students who are opted out of services) take the CELA exam, which test students on four domains – Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. Students in grades 3 through 10 take the CSAP exam. The option to take CSAP in Spanish is available in 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grades.

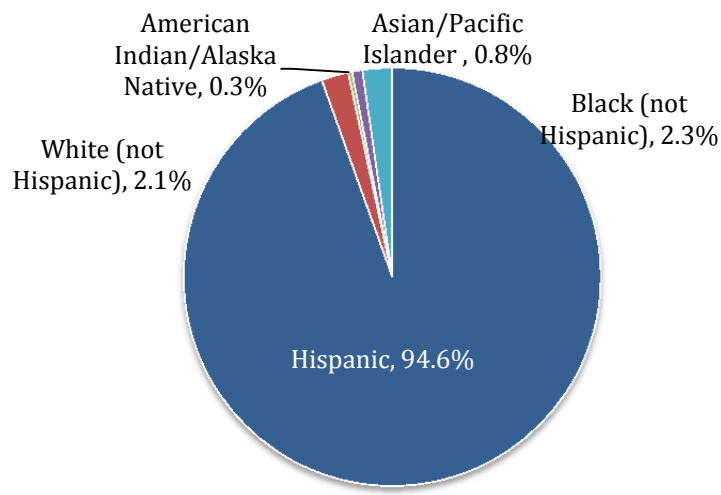
### Primary Home Language Spoken by Bruce Randolph High Students

LANGUAGE	
Spanish	83.6%
English	15.9%
Chinese, Mandarin	0.2%
Choctaw	0.2%
<b>Total (N=434)</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Administrator Portal pulled February 22, 2011 (the Administrator Portal uses data from the 2010-11 DPS October Count, matched with current student enrollment).

Note: Data describe students throughout the entire school, not just ELL students.

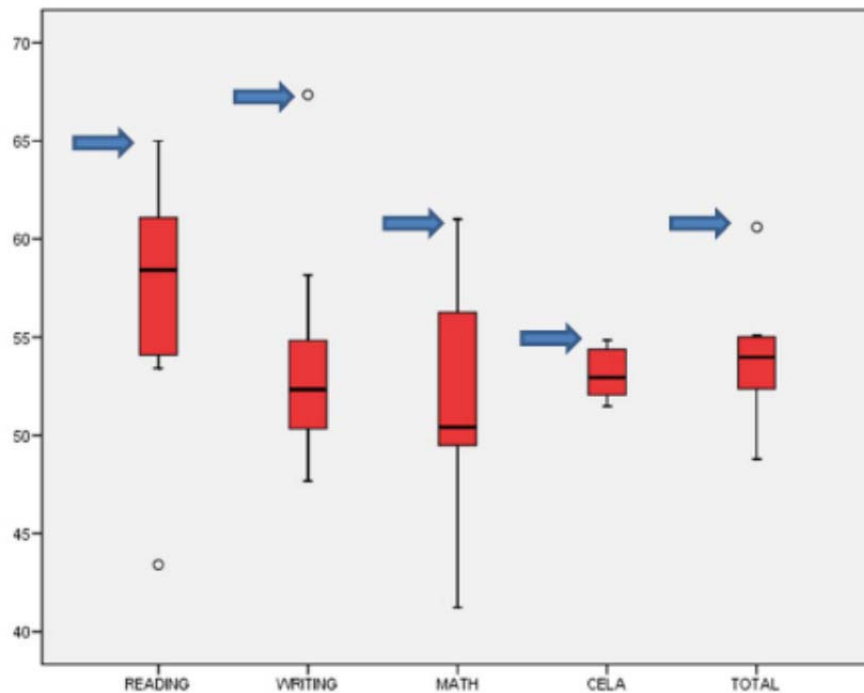
### Ethnicity of Students at Bruce Randolph High, 2009-10



Source: DPS Strategy Department, Count of Student Membership by Ethnicity by School, 2009-10 from October Count 2009.

Note: Data describe students throughout the entire school, not just ELL students.

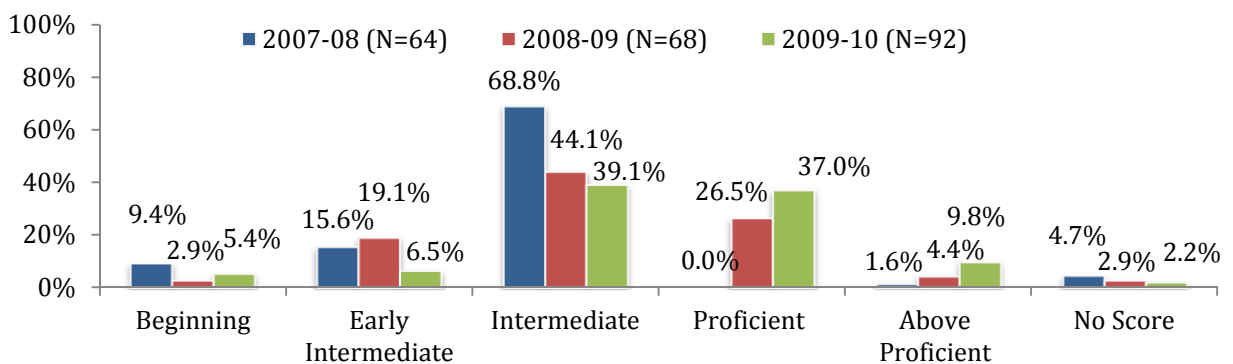
### Achievement Growth of English Language Learners 2008, 2009, 2010 (arrows refer to Bruce Randolph)



Source: Developed using data from the DPS AllScores repository.

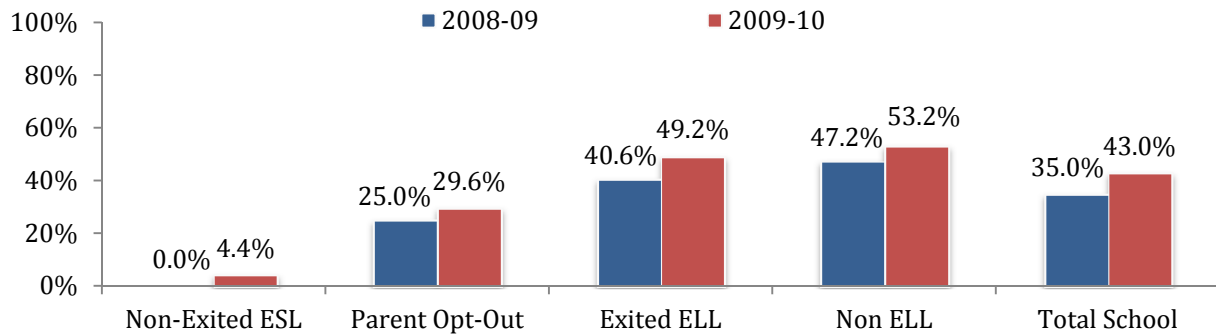
Note: Comparison includes 18 DPS high schools with more than 68 English language learners with CSAP growth percentiles.

### English Language Proficiency Level, CELA Overall



Source: DPS Department of Accountability, Research and Evaluation, CELA Report 2010.

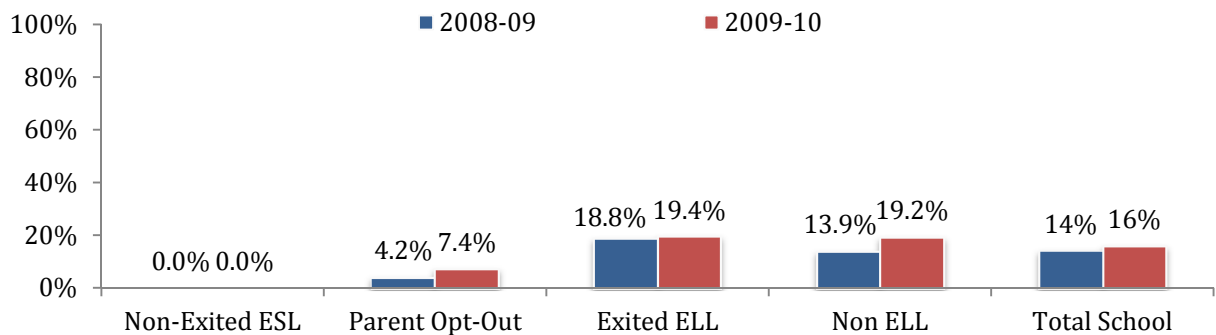
### Percentage of ELL Students Who were Proficient or Above on CSAP Reading



Source: DPS Department of English Language Acquisition, November 2010.

Sample Sizes: 2009 – Non-Exited ESL N=24; Parent Opt-Out N=24; Exited ELL N=133; Non ELL N=36; 2010 – Non-Exited ESL N=23; Parent Opt-Out N=27; Exited ELL N=124; Non ELL N=47

### Percentage of ELL Students Who were Proficient or Above on CSAP Writing

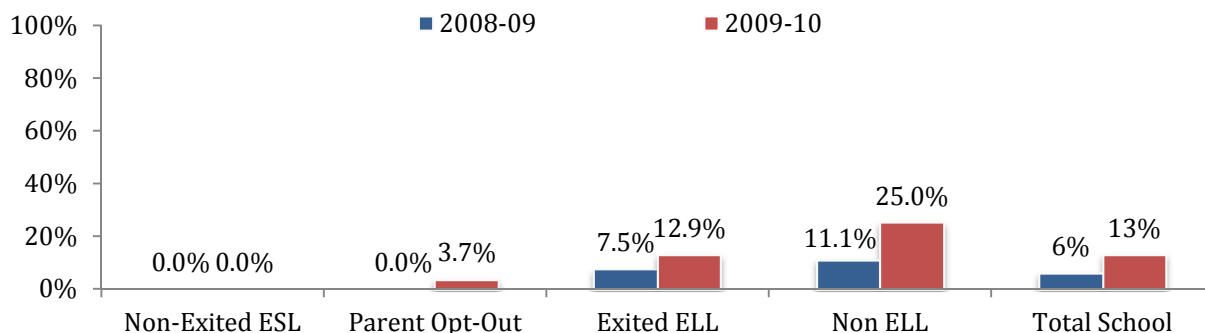


Source: DPS Department of English Language Acquisition, November 2010.

Sample Sizes: 2009 – Non-Exited ESL: N=24; Parent Opt-Out N=24; Exited ELL N=133; Non ELL N=36; 2010 – Non-Exited ESL: N=23; Parent Opt-Out N=27; Exited ELL N=124; Non ELL N=47



## Percentage of ELL Students Who were Proficient or Above on CSAP Math



Source: DPS Department of English Language Acquisition, November 2010.

Sample Sizes: 2009 – Non-Exited ESL N=24; Parent Opt-Out N=24; Exited ELL N=133; Non ELL N=36; 2010 – Non-Exited ESL N=23; Parent Opt-Out N=27; Exited ELL N=124; Non ELL N=48

## Findings

After multiple rounds of data collection including data checks with members of the Bruce Randolph community, the following values and processes have emerged as major levers in the current success Bruce Randolph is experiencing with multilingual learners.

- The community at Bruce Randolph collectively values a culture of learning, a culture of reciprocity, and a commitment to innovation.
- These values are then enacted through consistent policies and procedures, continuous improvement, locally led professional development and substantial supports for teachers.

Further, the leadership and staff at Bruce Randolph consistently express a commitment to continuous learning and improvement. Rather than saying “we have arrived,” they would prefer to say, “we’re on our way.” There is a strong sense of working collaboratively to constantly improve, and to build upon each success to ensure continual progress. For example, the first step in turning around the school was creating a nurturing and safe environment for students in which they could learn. As this environment took hold, staff then moved up the ladder of needs for the students and their families toward building a culture of learning and high academic achievement. This comprehensive, coordinated effort appears to work to address the “whole child,” building a Bruce Randolph community of educators, learners, and families.

The following sections will describe in depth these values and procedures in order to thoroughly describe these important levers and how they are facilitating improved academic outcomes for multilingual learners at Bruce Randolph.

## Culture of Learning

*At Bruce Randolph High School, the leadership, faculty, and staff display a commitment to creating a culture of learning for the students and the overall Bruce Randolph community. This is displayed through creating an intentional environment that is supportive of students, faculty, and staff where behavior expectations are clear, explicit, and consistent and well supported across all classes so that real learning can happen. Professional collaboration, high academic achievement, including pathways to college, and an overriding theme of life-long learning permeates every level of learner at the school from students to teachers to parents to administrators. All school stakeholders are viewed as on a journey toward betterment and structures are in place to support this journey at all levels (e.g., coaching and professional development for teachers; student input on learning; parent classes and community outreach; administrators communicating/soliciting feedback from all levels, etc.).*

Over the last several years, the leadership and community at Bruce Randolph have invested substantial amounts of time and effort to create a culture of learning so that students will feel safe and valued and be able to focus their energies on academics. It appears that this culture of learning has significantly contributed to the positive gains for multilingual learners at Bruce Randolph. In fact, the faculty, administration, and staff are only beginning to be intentional regarding best practices and differentiated instruction for multilingual learners. In the upcoming academic year they will be engaging in a new initiative focusing on better supporting multilingual learners. However, up until now the major focus has been on whole school efforts to develop a positive culture and climate that supports learning for all students.

The power of these initiatives to focus on creating a strong culture of learning at Bruce Randolph appears to draw on several efforts. First, there is a specific plan for student behavior with specific consequences that is used consistently across all of the classrooms in the school. This consistent effort to support positive student behaviors has helped to create a safe and effective learning environment where the students can feel safe and the real work around academics has become the focus for both students and teachers. In the Challenge 2010 document, Bruce Randolph's five-year strategic plan that is now currently being revised to become the Challenge 2015 document, it states:

Bruce Randolph School has certain consistent expectations for all students in all classes at all grade levels. These include opening routines for all classes, workshop procedures, dismissal procedures, formatting of student papers, student supplies, grading systems, timely feedback to students, grade reports to students and parents, conference documentation format, detention procedures, discipline interventions, and student data spreadsheets (Challenge 2010, p. 4).

Beyond this declared belief of consistency in terms of student behavior, there are tools in place that teachers, administrators, and students can refer to in order to understand expectations and consequences for student behavior. One of these tools is called the "Referral Ladder" which lists and describes seven steps students will go through when there are issues in terms of behavior. These consistent expectations that are clearly stated and followed appear to greatly contribute to the culture of learning that has been created at Bruce Randolph. Additionally, consistent rules are

explicitly posted in each classroom: be prompt, prepared, polite, productive, and positive. These rules are not just words on walls, rather they appear to be the clear expectations that if not met are dealt with through the steps on the referral ladder.

Second, there is an explicit and consistent focus on preparing all students to graduate and be prepared to successfully attend college without the need for remediation. Cesar Cedillo, the current principal of Bruce Randolph described this school-wide expectation by saying, “First and foremost, there is an expectation that you will learn at this school.” His emphasis was on the word “will” and then he discussed that the administration, faculty, and staff do not only believe that students can learn, but that they actually will because of the supports and expectations that are in place to ensure both student and teacher success.

In order to support these high expectations for student learning, teachers collaborate regularly to modify programs in order to meet the specific learning needs of the students at Bruce Randolph High School, especially for those students who struggle to succeed. Additionally, the high school curriculum at Bruce Randolph has been aligned to the Advanced Placement curriculum and therefore exceeds the expectations set forth by the state standards. Further, beginning in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, all students participate in a 30-minute college seminar that occurs every other day where students learn about writing admissions essays, financial aid opportunities, the experiences their teachers had in college, and other aspects of “college knowledge” (Smith, 2009). This commitment to college readiness is a dedication to student empowerment focused on providing students with opportunities and possibilities in terms of life choices after high school.

Third, part of the culture of learning is a collective culture that is fostered school-wide, but also at each grade level. In the Challenge 2010 document it states that, “Each class of students will be cultivated to identify themselves collectively as people who will graduate together, six years after they are assembled. The goal is 100% graduate rate” (p. 1). It appears that with these efforts to create a whole school culture centered on learning that is also reinforced with community development at the classroom level is strongly contributing to the positive learning gains for multilingual learners at Bruce Randolph.

Fourth, the culture of learning at Bruce Randolph extends outside the traditional boundaries of grade level classrooms. Parents of students may also participate in classes at Bruce Randolph that were specifically created to support their English learning both during schools hours as well as after school. Obviously there is great value to the community in providing such learning opportunities for parents, but these efforts have also broken down some of the barriers that traditionally prevent parents from varying cultural and linguistic backgrounds from effectively engaging in schooling processes. Parents at Bruce Randolph are also an explicit part of the culture of learning that has been created.

Coupled with this strong culture of learning comes clear expectations and the necessary structures that support success for teachers, parents, and students. All appear to benefit from having clear expectations in place and a transparent multi-step process for dealing with problems, issues, and rule breaking. By specifically cultivating a clear and collective culture of learning, Bruce Randolph is

operating at a whole school level and as a complete system to make innovations and implement changes systemically in order to optimize success.

## Culture of Reciprocity

*Leaders and staff at Bruce Randolph are working to create a culture of reciprocity, by which collaboration is valued and implemented at all levels. Decisions are made collectively with transparency and input from multiple stakeholders, creating a shared vision among the entire Bruce Randolph community. Staff not only work to involve parents but to empower parents, and teachers are valued and directly involved in their own development along their career path as educators. Additionally, time is built into the day to provide staff the opportunity to collaborate and work together to plan for instruction as well as meet with students.*

At the top of the Challenge 2010 document it states, “Cultivating individual expertise in a collaborative school” (p. 1). Our research suggests that these are not just words on paper. There is extensive collaboration at Bruce Randolph where students, teachers, parents, community members, staff, and administrators work collectively to support and sustain the success of the school. Additionally, at Bruce Randolph major decisions are often made collectively, with transparency, and with opportunity for input from all stakeholders. It appears that this culture of reciprocity is a significant lever in supporting substantial academic growth for multilingual learners at Bruce Randolph High School.

The current principal, Cesar Cedillo, has been at Bruce Randolph for six years. During his first four years at Bruce Randolph, he was the assistant principal and worked closely with the principal at the time, Kristin Waters. Two years ago, he became principal and believes that continuing the vision that began under Kristin Waters has been important for the success of the school.

The leadership approach applied by Principal Cedillo is that of collaboration, collective participation, and a comprehensive shared vision; he is a leader who thrives off of the input of others, he knows the right people to ask, and he listens with intention to continuously improve the school. Principal Cedillo persistently seeks stakeholder input on important decisions and has a leadership team that is comprised of representatives from a variety of community stakeholders to include teachers, students, and family members. Specifically, the school holds monthly meetings for parents and proactively seeks input and feedback from as many stakeholders in the community as possible regarding the mission and vision of the school, including the new strategic plan that is currently being devised.

With the strong vision and leadership that Principal Cedillo exerts, he allows for comprehensive ownership of the school’s success and development. Most notably, there is a concerted effort to engage with parents in all aspects of the students’ academic development. In addition to written notifications of content under study, the supplies students need, participation expectations, and other academic information, parents also receive weekly progress reports to inform them of their student’s academic progress, which they are required to read and sign.

In the Challenge 2010 document, the explicit involvement of parents is described:

Parents are welcome on the open campus at any time. The Bruce Randolph School community involvement plan includes: outreach to feeder schools, parent information nights, open houses, student shadowing, mailings, newsletters, student publications, press releases, partnerships with community organizations and the universities. Some partnerships cultivate relationships around social work interventions, mental and physical health support systems and future planning (p. 14).

Because of the strong leadership and vision of Principal Cedillo, this kind of extensive involvement of parents is possible. Additionally, Principal Cedillo is a native speaker of Spanish and a graduate of Denver Public Schools. He has the intimate knowledge of the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the families he works with which allows him to welcome, engage, and support effective parent involvement in the school's programs and practices. Further, he has placed such high importance on parental involvement that he locally funds a parent and community liaison position. Additionally, parental input has actual impact on policy and practice. The act of seeking input from community members by administration at Bruce Randolph is not just for show, but is coupled with action based on community input.

The parent and community liaison works closely with parents to support their advocacy and input into school processes, but also strives to find ways to support various community needs. For instance, as previously mentioned, parents of Bruce Randolph students may come to the school both during and after school hours in order to participate in English courses. These efforts not only support a community need for improved English communication skills among parents, but also make the school more accessible to parents because it is viewed as a learning environment for them as well.

Further, parents meet regularly at Bruce Randolph and in the community. These meetings with parents often serve as opportunities for community collaboration in terms of resource and information sharing. Additionally, many of the efforts the parent and community liaison engages in are led by parents themselves. For instance, the regular parent meetings are always led by parents and in multiple languages. Everyone attending the meeting who does not speak both English and Spanish has access to translation as whoever is speaking is encouraged to speak in the language in which they feel most comfortable. These efforts to provide comprehensive translation services position all parents, regardless of linguistic background, with the opportunity to both lead and engage.

The manner in which Bruce Randolph engages with parents exposes that the perspectives of parents are clearly substantially valued, as are their particular needs and strengths for effective school engagement. Student perspective and input at Bruce Randolph are similarly valued. For example, a local organization called "Project Voyce" works in the school and has participated in evaluating teachers, whereby students completed evaluations (a student generated survey) of all teachers and Project Voyce then provided feedback to teachers to support them in improving outcomes for all students based on this data. Project Voyce is a student led organization that ensures student voice is included in policy initiatives to improve schools in the Denver Metro area.

It is a highly valued group at Bruce Randolph that is often utilized to provide student input and perspectives on important issues, policies, and practices.

Further evidence of the culture of reciprocity is the way teachers are positioned as content experts and professional colleagues. School administrators speak very highly of their teaching staff and even refer to them as “rock stars.” In order to ensure that this kind of appreciation and continued faith in the expertise and qualities of the teaching staff continues, a great deal of effort is placed on the hiring process of new teachers. Through the hiring process, the administrators at Bruce Randolph seek teachers who will fit well into the school culture at and agree with the missions and goals laid out in the Challenge 2010 document. Additionally, the administration at Bruce Randolph seeks to hire teachers with teaching expertise and qualifications, but also specifically recruits teachers with the dispositions and skills necessary to build personal, positive, and strong relationships with Bruce Randolph students. It appears that this hiring process works well to attract the kind of teachers who can be successful at Bruce Randolph because there is a very low turnover rate and generally those who do leave do so because of changes in family circumstances such as relocation and pregnancy.

Once a teacher joins the team at Bruce Randolph, they are given substantial amounts of time to plan and grade, two periods a day in addition to a lunch break. Additionally, the administration has a policy of proactively valuing and protecting teacher time and therefore avoids requiring teachers to do work that administrators can take care of. Further, teacher time is well compensated when their work goes above and beyond the regular school hours and expectations. Teachers are paid to tutor students after school and are also paid for covering classes for other teachers during their own planning time. This kind of flexibility in terms of paying teachers for their time comes from the autonomy agreement that Bruce Randolph has with the district.

Essentially, teachers at Bruce Randolph are still a part of the teacher union and protected in terms of dismissal processes and the negotiated salary. However, through the autonomy agreement, the administration at Bruce Randolph has the opportunity to be more creative with the school’s budget and actually support teachers through additional stipends for the work they do above and beyond their regular work schedule. Not all schools have this kind of autonomy in terms of budget decisions, but it appears to be substantially supporting the successful efforts to improve student achievement at Bruce Randolph. However, other factors in the autonomy agreement play into that success as well, not just budget flexibility. The school also has scheduling and curriculum flexibility, which also appear to substantially support teachers and students through local decisions makers having the authority to make decisions that dramatically affect the school.

Further supports for teachers come from a consistent approach to classroom instruction that was developed by Bruce Randolph teachers and has over-time become implemented across classrooms and content areas. It began as an effort by the teachers in one content area department to learn from each other and develop a consistent approach to classroom instruction and became a school-wide initiative that teachers across all grade levels and content areas have utilized because they have found it to be effective.

Additionally, all teachers at Bruce Randolph work regularly with an instructional coach for their content area and new teachers have access to a behavior coach to help with classroom management. The interactions with these coaches are focused on improved practice and student outcomes and generally occur in professional interactions that help teachers to recognize and reflect on their own strengths while also setting goals to improve on areas of weakness. Teachers feel substantially valued through this work and expressed appreciation for opportunities to grow without fear of being labeled “poor” or “ineffective.” In fact, teachers reported that the culture of reciprocity at Bruce Randolph has created a safe space for their own innovative practice and honest reflection because they do not feel that any issues that may arise in their classroom will not make them targets for blame or put their jobs at risk. They felt there is a substantial community of eager supporters in other teachers, the instructional coaches, and the administrators to help problem-solve when difficult situations arise.

In addition to the extensive and innovative coaching model that is in place for teachers, professional development and instructional decisions at Bruce Randolph are based on teacher led initiatives. Every month teachers have professional development options to choose to participate in that were created by the instructional coaches, some of whom are also classroom teachers in addition to being instructional coaches. The instructional coaches know the teachers well and seek their input in terms of the types of professional development they would benefit from and then create the learning opportunities necessary to meet the teacher’s needs. These locally created professional development opportunities designed specifically to meet the immediate needs teachers have in their classroom practice appear to be exceptionally effective as well as the natural out-growth of a strong coaching and mentoring model.

Teachers at Bruce Randolph are clearly well respected, well supported, and very collaborative. However, teachers at Bruce Randolph also feel a great deal of responsibility to support student learning and growth. When they do not see the performance scores on various assessments that they would like to see, they take it personally and are eager to develop new strategies and approaches to push student learning and reach the goals they and their students have set for themselves. According to school administration, instructional coaches, and teachers, there is a strong commitment to learning and growth by all teachers at the school.

## Commitment to Innovation

*Bruce Randolph values continuous improvement. This is displayed through reflective practice and use of data to inform practice, continuously looking to develop innovative practices and new ways of working, and research driven practice and decision-making. At Bruce Randolph, there appears to be a systemic approach to building upon its foundation of programs and practices, learning from successes and challenges.*

At Bruce Randolph a great deal of attention is paid to collecting, analyzing, and utilizing data to inform, improve, and innovate instructional and school-wide practices. Teachers and administrators regularly analyze various kinds of data and engage in conversations around how to

improve their practices. This commitment to reflective practice across several realms is specifically described in the Challenge 2010 document:

Teachers and staff evaluate their learning experiences and effectiveness on the job each semester, in order to revise and refine the ongoing staff development over time. This includes annual student and parent evaluations of student learning and achievement, as well as considerations of the annual school climate surveys. Year-end formal evaluations written by teachers are used to inform decisions about the next school year's ongoing, embedded professional development (p. 14).

In addition to the practice of regular reflection and data-driven decision-making, several instances during our data collection at Bruce Randolph have exposed a deep level of commitment to improved, innovative practice. First, in our conversations it has been emphasized that while the school is proud of its accomplishments in terms of growth, not all students have reached proficiency on test scores, and that truly is the ultimate goal. The attention and improvements have been positive, but no one at Bruce Randolph is willing to stop trying, innovating, and pushing to higher levels of student growth.

Second, next year the school is beginning an explicit and focused initiative to better support multilingual learners and make culturally and linguistically responsive practices more intentional across all classrooms. The school is already doing great work with multilingual learners, but they are eager to collectively do substantially better.

Third, one of the first things that was discussed during our meeting with administration and instructional coaches is the desire for the DPS UCD Research Collaborative's research to help inform the Bruce Randolph community of ways they can improve their practice and hopefully reach higher levels of achievement. This is truly a community that continuously strives for improvement.

Finally, during our first interview with the administration and some instructional coaches, the instructional coaches had to step out early in order to keep their appointments with local elementary schools. They were visiting these schools in order to learn more about the feeder schools where their students who enter at 6<sup>th</sup> grade have been educated and to strive for improved practices at Bruce Randolph based on what they learn.

Continuous improvement and striving to higher levels of achievement completely permeates the work that the faculty, staff, and administration at Bruce Randolph are engaged in.

## Conclusion

Bruce Randolph High School through the creation of a culture of learning, a culture of reciprocity, and a relentless commitment to continuous improvement, have seen dramatic improvements in the educational outcomes for their multilingual learners. While the school still has work to do in order to help all students reach proficiency, great strides have been made through the integrated whole



school approach to educational improvement that all members of the Bruce Randolph community have had opportunity to engage in.

It appears that other schools can learn a great deal from the work occurring at Bruce Randolph in terms of creating supportive cultures for learning, engaging various stakeholders in the decision making process, and constantly striving to continually grow. While each of these levers for improved performance have substantial value individually, it also appears that none of them would be nearly as effective if they were not synergistically related to the work of the others. To truly improve schools for multilingual learners, it appears that comprehensive, whole school efforts, like those at Bruce Randolph, could have significantly powerful effect when replicated into other schooling contexts.

## References

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