

Standing Our Sacred Ground:  
One School Community's Struggle to Negotiate Restrictive Language Policy

by

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## ABSTRACT

This is a qualitative case study using ethnographic methods of how one school community has been able to negotiate Arizona's restrictive English only language policies. Drawing from classroom and school-wide observations, extensive interviews, and document collection, this case study explores three key questions in relation to this school's negotiation process: 1) What characterizes the curriculum for English learners (ELs) and bilingual students at the case study school? 2) How do key actors, processes, and cultural practices at the case study school support the negotiation of Proposition 203 and House Bill 2064? and 3) What are the perspectives of key school community stakeholders in relation to the curriculum supporting bilingualism and the policy negotiation process?

Findings show that by sharing certain key beliefs and practices, the school community has been able to work together, at times through struggle and perseverance, to negotiate for what they believe to be most important in school. They do so by sharing such key beliefs as the importance of seeing the whole child and teaching in ways that are real and meaningful. They also negotiate by engaging in a set of shared practices, which include: the use of Spanish campus-wide both for instruction and for the life and operation of the school, the cultivation of relationships amongst all school community members, and key curricular practices. These practices include providing a variety of learning experiences, especially those based upon the Arts, as well as a curriculum that focuses on providing opportunities to examine real world issues in an integrated and in-depth manner, to learn by integrating students' language, families, and experiences into the curriculum, and has a final goal of creating students who are critical thinkers, self-

advocates, and agents within their own lives. All of these beliefs and practices contribute to a strong sense of community.

It is this sense of community and the shared beliefs and practices, along with the increased agency this interconnectedness creates for all stakeholders, which has facilitated the successful use of parent waivers. These parent waivers have enabled parents to continue choosing alternative language education programs to those mandated by the state, namely integrated content and English instruction within the mainstream K-4 classroom and the Spanish/English dual language program option at the 5-8 grade levels.

## DEDICATION

Dedicated to the "Desert Breeze" School Community for all of your work hard each and every day to stand for what you believe to be sacred in school: whole children, real learning experiences, relationships and strong community, and the belief that every family's language, culture, and experiences should be an integral part of school.

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

I am bilingual  
Yo soy bilingüe  
I'm orgullosa  
to be bilingüe

--Poem by a former Desert Breeze<sup>1</sup> 4<sup>th</sup> grader

Gándara and Hopkins (2010) write that “English learner students struggle in school more than any other group of students except those who have been identified for special education” (p. 11). They add that, “From the time they enter school at kindergarten until they are in high school, if they continue on to high school, they fall far behind other children on virtually all academic measures” (p. 11). This is a serious national concern considering that approximately 10% of all students in the U.S. are students learning English as a second language, also known as English learners (ELs) or English language learners (ELLs) (Migration Policy Institute, 2001-2012).

How to best support students learning English in schools has been a topic of long debate. One of the critical questions centers upon which language education program is “best”— there are many options, some of which include variations of programs primarily using English, often referred to as “English only”; different types of bilingual programs which make use of English and the child’s home or heritage language; and different programs which teach exclusively in the child’s home or heritage language. One issue within the debate over program is what “best” means. Does it mean language proficiency

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<sup>1</sup> School name and all names of people are pseudonyms.

as well as literacy and academic achievement only in English or does it include proficiency, literacy, and academic achievement in the students' first language as well? At their heart, these questions are ideological questions. Ruiz (1984) describes three possible orientations to the question of language education: language as problem, language as right, and language as resource. If language (the students' first language) is seen as a problem or obstacle within education, then most often an English only approach is taken. However, if the students' home language is seen as an asset which can be developed and utilized as a foundation for learning English, then most often this leads to advocating for maintenance bilingual education.

In spite of research showing the positive results of one particular type of maintenance bilingual education - two-way immersion or dual language (Christian, 1994; Lindholm, 1990; Lindholm & Gavlek, 1994; Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Peregoy, 1991; Boyle & Peregoy, 1990a), a number of policies restricting bilingual education and mandating English-only programs have been passed in the United States over the past decade or so; namely Proposition 227 in California, Proposition 203 in Arizona, and Question 2 in Massachusetts. Since the passage of these policies, a great deal of research has been conducted on the results of their implementation. Findings show that within these English only models ELs continue to fall behind their proficient peers (Gifford & Valdés, 2006; Valdés, 2001; Valenzuela, 2005). These policies are also being found to have numerous negative consequences. For example, in a study on the implementation of the four-hour English language development (ELD) block, the specific form of Structured English Immersion (SEI) in Arizona, as mandated by House Bill 2064, Lillie et al (2010) found that this program was often characterized by the following: social isolation due to

the physical separation of ELs from non-ELs; the use of learning materials that were inappropriate for the ages, grade-levels, and interests of students; an over-emphasis on the use of correct language forms versus using language in authentic ways, such as for communication; lack of encouragement for students to draw upon their home language and learning experiences or “funds of knowledge” (Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez, 1992); and that ELs were not passing out of the four-hour ELD classes within one year even though this is one of the main stipulations of the policy. Findings such as these suggest that language education policies like House Bill 2064, need to be changed.

While harmful language education policies certainly need to be changed, recent studies are emerging, which demonstrate that such policies are not simply carried out, but negotiated at each level of interpretation and implementation. As “the final arbiters of policy implementation” (Menken and Garcia, 2010 p. 1) teachers have been shown to be at the heart of the language policy negotiation process. As those who implement policy at the classroom level, teachers may also be considered de facto “policymakers”. In order to learn more about the role and perspectives of educators and other key school community members, I conducted a qualitative case study using ethnographic methods in order to investigate how one school community, Desert Breeze (pseudonym), negotiates restrictive language education policies in Arizona. As such, it is also a study of school community agency.

### **Statement of the Research Problem**

School is said to reproduce social inequality (Apple, 2004). This is true if we look at the restrictive nature of the top-down mandates of Proposition 203 and House Bill 2064, the set of English only policies that affect Arizona schools today. However,



scholars also suggest that schools can also produce social change (Freeman, 1998; Friere, 1993; Giroux, 1997; McCarty, 2002). By focusing on how one school community has negotiated Arizona's restrictive language education policies, my study also looks into this possibility that schools can produce social change. How schools can affect social change, by working to ensure that educators build upon students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds or their "funds of knowledge" (Moll et al, 1992) is one potential area of broader implication of my study.

Through my study, I sought to learn more about language policy negotiation in schools to find out how the curriculum, key actors, processes, and cultural practices at the school support this process of negotiation are and to highlight the perspectives key community members hold in relation to this negotiation process in order to contribute to an understanding of school community agency. While a number of studies have been conducted on the topic of language policy negotiation, they have tended to focus more on the role of educators and less on the ways that educators collaborate with other school community members, such as parents and students, as a part of that negotiation process (e.g. McCarty, 2011; Menken and Garcia, 2010; Stritikus, 2001). While theorizing this process of negotiating language policy is already in development (e.g. Ricento and Hornberger, 1996; Johnson and Freeman, 2010; McCarty, 2011; Menken and Garcia, 2010) my study contributes to this theoretical construct by examining the negotiation process in the context of the particularly restrictive language education policies in place in Arizona, as well as by looking at the school community as a whole plays in policy implementation and negotiation.

## **Theoretical Framework**

My theoretical framework is one that takes a perspective of agency. This perspective acknowledges the potentially hegemonic forces at work within education policy, and more specifically, language education policy, as well as the constraints under which school communities operate, but which also recognizes the agency that people have to make choices about how they will respond to those forces. Since hegemony, ideology, discourse, and agency are key concepts within my framework, I will briefly discuss each and how it relates to the study of language policy below.

### **Hegemony**

Drawing upon Gramsci's (1968, 1971) work, Barker (2008) defines hegemony as "the process of making, maintaining and reproducing ascendant meanings and practices" wherein a crucial element is that "hegemony involves education and the winning of consent rather than the use of brute force and coercion alone" (p. 442). For Apple (2004), what is most crucial to understanding hegemony is how it "acts to 'saturate' our very consciousness" (p. 4). When we believe in, or at least consent to, the ideologies, discourses, everyday relationships, and structures at work in society, we help to sustain or reproduce them. Because hegemonic structures are, in part, maintained by people, this also means that hegemony is not absolute. Because we ourselves are the ones upholding the system, we can also change it. Within my framework, the tension between hegemony and agency is important to understanding how people are both constrained and oppressed by restrictive and potentially harmful policies but also how they have a certain amount of choice in how they interpret and respond to these policies. This results in a wide variety

of responses, which is one reason that more studies of language policy implementation and negotiation are needed.

### **Discourse**

Discourse can have a wide range of meanings. The general conceptualization of discourse that I will be drawing from comes from both Foucault (1972; 1977) and Fairclough (1989). According to Foucault (1972) discourse “involves the production of knowledge through language” and “gives meaning to material objects and social practices” (Barker, 2008, p. 90). For Foucault (1977) discourse disciplines or “regulates not only what can be said under determinate social and cultural conditions but also who can speak, when and where” (Barker, 2008, p. 91). Drawing upon Fairclough (1989), Freeman (1998) refers to discourse as the “ideologically structured assumptions and expectations about social groups that reflect and shape power relations in particular cultural contexts” (p. 17). Thus, for both Foucault (1972, 1977) and Fairclough (1989) discourse is form of power because it gives meaning to and regulates our understandings of the world. In applying the concept of discourse to the study of language education policy and the negotiation of that policy, discourse is a concept, which can help to explain why actors interpret and implement policy in the ways that they do. In other words, discourse is a way of thinking about the meanings and practices (ways of regulating) people attribute to policy.

### **Agency**

According to Barker (2008), while agency does include concepts such as “freedom; free will; action; creativity; originality; and the very possibility of change through the actions of free agents” (p. 234), these aspects are also socially produced or

determined in the sense that they are “enabled by differentially distributed social resources” (p. 234). In other words, how “free” we are to act is a function of the context in which we find ourselves. We are free, but we also face constraints and socially determined factors. Within my framework, it is important to note both freedom and constraint within agency because recognizing this dialectical quality helps to explain how the actions that people take to negotiate policy are also influenced by their socially produced situations or contexts. As Johnson and Freeman (2010) note, “[E]ducators play a vital role in dynamic, interrelated language policy processes... Still, language policies are capable of hegemonically setting discursive boundaries on what is educationally normal or feasible” (p. 14)

### **Policy Negotiation**

The process of policy negotiation is defined generally as the diverse ways in which key school community actors interpret and enact policy. Some of these diverse ways, as summarized by Menken and Garcia (2010, p. 4) include: “policy appropriation” (Johnson and Freeman, 2010); “contestation or resistance” (Shohamy, 2010), “challenges”(Bloch, et al, 2010); “responsiveness” (Berryman et al, 2010); and “reconstruction” (Zakharia, 2010). Thus, negotiation can mean different things and look differently in different settings. What all of these concepts of negotiation have in common is that in some way a new or alternative “de facto” policy is created from the official policy.

In addition to the above concepts, my theoretical framework draws upon recent work in the field of language education policy research, which focuses on “agency in implementation” (Menken and Garcia, 2010 p. 2) and views language policy “as a

practice of power that operates at multiple, intersecting levels” (McCarty, 2011 p. 3). Such multiple, intersecting levels have been theorized as a “metaphorical onion” (Ricento and Hornberger, 1996) whose many layers spiral both inward from a top-down national level through middle layers such as state departments of education, down to the heart of the onion, where educators work in classrooms of local schools. The “bottom-up” actions of teachers reshape the policy, into some new form, which then can spiral back out again across these layers. These actions and their resultant new forms of policy are what Menken and Garcia (2010) refer to as “stirring the onion,” while Johnson and Hornberger (2007) refer to studies of this dynamic process as “slicing the onion” in order to see how these layers interconnect and interact. Furthermore, by viewing language policy as a sociocultural process, which includes “modes of human interaction, negotiation, and production mediated by relations of power” (McCarty, 2004, p. 72), policy takes on a human face, and enters the realm of cultural analysis.

Therefore, to bring together these various theoretical threads, my framework has the following components: a) a critically-rooted perspective which emphasizes human agency b) a consideration of policy (and thus policy negotiation) as a sociocultural process and c) a selection of cultural analysis as an appropriate lens for understanding the human practice of making, enacting, interpreting, and negotiating policy.

### **Research Question and Sub-questions**

The purpose of this study is to learn more about the process of policy negotiation at the level of the school community as a whole by using a case study with ethnographic methods design. The result will be a descriptive portrait of the process undertaken by one school community to negotiate Arizona’s set of English only policies: Proposition 203

and House Bill 2064, which together restrict bilingual education and mandate a specific form of Structured English Immersion (SEI) in which English learners (ELs) are to receive a daily four-hour block of English language development (ELD) instruction. More about these two policies is included later in chapter three.

As mentioned above, the overarching question guiding my study is: How do school communities negotiate restrictive language education policies? By school community, I mean teachers and administrators (who I will also collectively call educators), students and their families, and other key school community members, such as alumni, former teachers, and others who are invested in the school. Specifically, I will be focusing on this question in the context of Arizona and my study will be guided by the following sub-questions:

- 1) What characterizes the curriculum for English learners (ELs) and bilingual students at my case study school?
  - a. What characterizes the dual language (Dual Language) program offered at the school?
  - b. What characterizes the pedagogical practices that support EL and bilingual students outside of the Dual Language program?
- 2) How do key actors, processes, and cultural practices at the case study school support the negotiation of Proposition 203 and House Bill 2064? (Within the term cultural practices, I draw upon Wolcott's (2008) discussion of cultural interpretation: "To describe what people in some particular place or status do, and the meanings they ascribe to the doing, under ordinary or particular

circumstances, presenting that description in a manner that draws attention to regularities that implicate cultural process” (p. 73).

- 3) What are the perspectives of key school community stakeholders in relation to the curriculum supporting bilingualism and the policy negotiation process?
  - a. What are the perspectives of key school community stakeholders in relation to the Dual Language program and the pedagogical practices that support bilingualism outside the Dual Language program?
  - b. What are the perspectives of key school community stakeholders in relation to the policy negotiation process?

### **Significance**

My research benefits a wide audience of formal policymakers, educators, families, and other community members invested in education. As an inquiry into the process of implementing and negotiating language education policy at the local level, it benefits formal policymakers by presenting them with a case study of how policy is interpreted and enacted by a sample school community. This is important for policymakers to understand because such research demonstrates how policy is not a static mandate, implemented exactly as written, but a dynamic and interactive process between formal policymakers, such as court judges, legislators, and superintendents of education, and de facto policymakers, such as educators, students, and their parents. Such a case study can raise their awareness of how school communities perceive policy and the reasons why they negotiate policy, potentially leading to a change in official policymaking procedures to include more input from local stakeholders. For example, Berryman et al. (2010) describe how, through ongoing action from Maori communities, a

movement known as “Tomorrows Schools” has provided the opportunity for school communities to “interpret national strategies and curriculum by developing their own learning policies at the school level” (p. 148).

My study also benefits educators, parents, students, and others invested in education by providing an example of policy negotiation at the school community level. As such, this case study can serve as an example of school community agency, an endeavor that many other school communities may wish to both hear about and learn from. On a broader level, by seeking to share this process with others, this study perhaps also highlights some of the ways in which school communities can work as agents of social change by creating alternative school policies and curricula, which instead of reproducing the status quo structures and processes which sustain inequality in schools, produce new meanings and relationships which lead toward greater educational equality. In addition to school stakeholders in general, my study benefits my study participants in particular, by providing a forum through which to voice their experiences and documents the key actors, processes, and cultural practices which have supported the negotiation of Proposition 203 and House Bill 2064.

Finally, my study contributes to the growing body of literature, which has already begun to reconceptualize and theorize language planning and policy as “processual, dynamic, and in motion... part of a larger cultural system and a ‘crucial aspect of human social life’” (McCarty, 2011, p. 2 and p. 17). In addition, Ricento and Hornberger’s (1996) metaphor of language policy as a “multilayered onion” provides a model of this dynamism as policy is interpreted and implemented by diverse actors across multiple layers of national, state, and local contexts. Our understanding of the role of educators is



changing, too, as conceptualized by Menken and Garcia (2010), who view teachers as “the final arbiters of language policy implementation” (p. 1). How my study contributes to the above developing theoretical framework is by including the role and perspectives of parents and students in this process, an area about which much less has been written. In addition, Gilmore (2011) suggests that individual ethnographies, when analyzed together become ethnology, collectively providing a foundation that can lead to social transformation: “providing deeper understandings of the many ways in which language use organizes and is organized by the social order, thus opening up more realistic possibilities for meaningful transformation and positive social change” (p. 122). My ethnographic case study adds to this foundation.

### **Overview of the Dissertation**

Each chapter addresses a key piece of my study. In Chapter 2, I present literature, which examines the key role that educators play in language policy negotiation as well as the ways in which they collaborate with others in this process of negotiation. In addition this chapter highlights how policy, and thus the interpretation and implementation of policy, may be viewed from a sociocultural perspective. It also presents the context for this particular study. Chapter 3 outlines the overall rationale for my chosen research methodology of an ethnographic case study and details the specifics of the particular methods I used for data collection and analysis. I also introduce readers to the research site and my own positionality in the work. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 discuss my findings in relation to my research questions. Specifically, chapter 4 focuses on the shared beliefs held by my participants. Chapter 5 describes a set of key practices in which my participants engage. Chapter 6 examines the roles played by school community members

in the creation of the key beliefs and practices in place at my case study school. I also highlight how these beliefs and practices increase agency for school community members. Finally, chapter 7 concludes with implications for research, theory, and practices and indicates future research possibilities.

## Chapter 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

#### **Teachers as Negotiators**

Two recent edited volumes, Menken and Garcia (2010) and McCarty (2011) focus on language education policy in practice. The theme of Menken and Garcia's (2010) volume is the central role that educators play in implementing and negotiating policy. The theme of McCarty's (2011) volume also encompasses the role of educators but additionally focuses on how ethnographic studies in particular can help to both illuminate and address educational inequality. Both volumes serve to provide a foundational collection of studies for continued research into language policy, particularly in the context of education, as will be described next.

All of the studies (Bloch et al., 2010; Creese, 2010; etc.) included within Menken and Garcia's (2010) edited volume focus primarily on how educators negotiate language education policies across a wide variety of contexts. They suggest that, "there is typically space for policy negotiation in classroom practice, as it is ultimately educators—particularly classroom teachers—who are the final arbiters of language policy implementation" (p. 1). In other words, as the ones who actually implement policy in the classroom, teachers become de facto "policymakers", often creating entirely new policies in the process. Furthermore, Menken and Garcia (2010) propose that in shaping these new de facto policies, teachers are influenced by a wide variety of factors, which they divide into two mutually influencing categories: internal forces, which include teachers' prior experiences or personal identities and external forces, which include the surrounding sociocultural and sociopolitical context. Regardless of the different

configurations of these internal and external forces, Menken and Garcia (2010) point out that “educators *always* seem to negotiate the language education policies they enact in their schools” (p. 4, original emphasis).

As described by McCarty (2011), the studies (McCarty et al, 2011; Nicholas, 2011; etc.) in her edited volume on the other hand focus on “social, linguistic, and educational inequality” as well as “the human interruptions of those inequalities and the emancipatory possibilities these interventions release” (p. 4). They are all ethnographic studies, “characterized by the contextualization of cultural phenomena socially, historically, and comparatively across time and space” (p. 10) and as such, they draw from the educational anthropological view of “education as a cultural process” (p. 11) as well as an ethnographic tradition which is “committed to social justice” (p. 11).

In reviewing the studies in both volumes, a striking pattern is that in most cases, teachers do not negotiate policy on their own. Rather, their negotiations are made possible through their collaborative efforts with other educators, students, parents, and other community members. However, even though these collaborations are frequently mentioned, the roles, actions, and perspectives of these other negotiators, in particular of students and parents, are usually not focused upon. This relative lack of focus on the roles, actions, and perspectives of students and parents appears to be a gap in the current literature on language policy negotiation in schools. Menken and Garcia (2010) recommend that “more multilayered and textured exploration” (p. 3) is necessary for understanding language policy. Keeping their call for further study in mind, as well as Hornberger and Johnson’s (2011) assessment that “the ethnography of language policy will not only continue to prove its worth in illuminating complex language policy

processes, but also its value in championing language diversity, multilingual education, and social justice around the world” (p. 286) the following review serves to briefly outline the studies that have been done on policy negotiation.

### **Partnerships**

As mentioned above, in the recent studies of teachers as negotiators of language policy, we almost always find teachers collaborating with others to act on behalf of their students. This section will highlight the ways teachers act in partnership with one another to interpret and implement policy. For example, Creese (2010) describes how two teachers, a content teacher and an English as an Additional Language (EAL) teacher, decided to redefine their roles from a more hierarchical positioning to one of co-teachers in an effort to remove the in-class division between English proficient students and students learning English. By attempting to equalize their standing in their students’ eyes, they sought to enact what they viewed as the true intention of a largely ignored national educational policy of inclusion in the United Kingdom, called “personalized learning”. Similarly, English & Varghese (2010) focus on how one teacher’s efforts in the state of Washington in the U.S.A. to establish more of a collaborative role with the ESL facilitator at her school, resulted in being able to provide additional resources for her EL students. In all of the above cases, the teachers acted individually or in partnership to either oppose a current restrictive policy or to enact an existing but little heeded inclusive policy, which in some but not all cases, led to change at an individual student or classroom level.

## **Varied Interpretations**

Several more studies focusing on teachers as policy negotiators also reveal how teachers often respond in diverse ways to the same policy, implicating the importance of continued studies of teachers' roles as de facto policymakers. For example, Stritikus (2002) found that teachers within the same school district and even within the same school interpreted and implemented California's Proposition 227 quite differently. At one school, a teacher used the policy as justification for prohibiting Spanish to be spoken in her classroom while another teacher eventually spoke out against the district's implementation of the policy. At another school within the same district, while both focal teachers supported the school administration's decision to continue with bilingual education, one teacher took an activist and advocacy position while the other teacher felt conflicted and thus, stymied, about the best way to implement the school's new dual language program.

Valdiviezo (2010) found teachers to be grappling with how to implement Peru's current language education policy promoting bilingual intercultural education, which revealed their conflicting underlying beliefs and ideology concerning both Spanish and Quechua. Some teachers glorified Quechua as a language of the past but saw little practical value for it in the modern world, especially in areas like math and science. Others, instead of defaulting to Spanish to teach content areas, such as math, where fewer materials and linguistic resources were available to teachers, actively sought out community input for learning more current Quechua terms and expressions for these kinds of concepts.

In both of the above sections on teachers as negotiators, the focus of the studies is on teachers. As such, the exclusive focus of the studies is on teachers' roles, actions, and perspectives. The roles, actions, and perspectives of parents, students, and other potential school community members are not focused upon.

### **Teachers and University Consultants**

This next section highlights two studies which foreground the collaborative work between teachers and university consultants. The partnerships of schools and universities represent another type of collaborative negotiation relationship discussed in the current literature of policy negotiation.

Bloch et al (2010) focus on how several schools teamed up with the local university in South Africa to support teachers as they struggled with implementing South Africa's new multilingual education policy. This particular partnership was designed to help teachers learn to both view and implement mother-tongue education as a powerful avenue for increased literacy in Xhosa and English. Within this situation many teachers resisted the new policy by continuing to teach with more traditional rote-skills techniques as well as continuing to teach certain subjects, such as math, in English. As such, for these teacher-university consultant teams, their negotiation process lay not in countering or finding alternative ways around a restrictive policy, but in finding the ways to implement a permissive policy, especially with limited resources and training for teachers.

The ways in which the administrators and teachers, together with the support of a university consultant negotiate U.S. federal policy together, also may be seen in Johnson and Freeman's (2010) ethnographic study of the School District of Philadelphia's (SDP)

dual language initiative, despite the seemingly adverse legislation of Title III of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. They describe how the collaborative efforts amongst an educational consultant (Freeman), the director of the district's ESOL/bilingual office, and teams of teachers and administrators from several schools within the SDP led to finding ways to creatively re-interpret and appropriate the legislative language of Title III and implement new dual language programs within the district.

Johnson and Freeman (2010) also discuss how sharing the policymaking power this way amongst all parties allowed for the development of “an egalitarian discourse community of language policy developers” (p. 21) which in turn allowed the dual language programs to be funded and implemented within many of the district's schools. Johnson and Freeman's (2010) study serves as an example of a district-wide negotiation of federal policy. It is important to note that in this study the key processes highlighted are those in the planning rather than implementation stages and that the perspectives offered are those of three key administrators within the district's ESOL and bilingual programs office.

### **Teachers and Students**

Combs et al. (2011) describe the ways in which teachers and students negotiate the current language education policies in Arizona, which restrict bilingual education and mandate a prescriptive four-hour block of English only instruction. In this study, the authors highlight the ways in which teachers and students create “third spaces” (Bhabha, 1994; Cook, 2005; González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, & Tejada, 1999; Moje et al., 2004)” defined as “the in-between or hybrid space in which children can apply their “funds of knowledge” to create something new (p. 195). They



document how teachers provided students with time and space to use Spanish to discuss the concepts they were learning in order to facilitate their understanding. While students' role as co-creators of these third spaces is mentioned, and their voices are highlighted in terms of sharing excerpts of classroom discussions, their perspectives concerning their experience and those of their parents are not included.

Zakharia (2010) also mentions the collaborative effort between teachers and students in a Shi'I school in Lebanon who "[T]ogether, negotiate and (re)construct language policy through a critical and participatory learning process" (p. 162). However, once again, the chapter focuses on teachers "as central policy actors" (p. 162). She describes how teachers negotiate the national "tripartite language policy" which promotes Arabic for everyone and then French or English as equal foreign languages to be learned as well as the school's policy mandating that all instruction be in formal Arabic (Fusha), French, or English. The way that these particular teachers and students negotiated both national and school policies was by teaching the formerly colonial languages of French and English by engaging students in discussions of real-life topics and by allowing them the opportunity to also process what they were learning in their first language of informal or spoken Arabic (Amiyya). She describes this approach of "reconstruction" as "an analogy to capture how teachers strip foreign languages of their colonial associations.. resconstruct[ing] the languages as local by integrating real-world and community-centered concerns into language teaching" (p. 162). Again, while this case of policy re-interpretation and "reconstruction" includes students' roles, teachers' perspectives remain most salient in the analysis.

## **Parents & Community**

Less has been written which focuses on the role of parents in policy implementation and negotiation within schools. Berryman, et al. (2010) underscore the active role that that parents, in particular, and the Maori community, in general, have played in revitalizing the Maori language through movements such as Kohanga Reo, which led to the establishment of Maori-medium preschools and eventually Maori-medium education at all levels. In addition, they discuss the key role that parents and community members currently play in many schools by helping to ensure that the curriculum is culturally relevant. Their study serves as an example of how partnerships between educators, families, and communities lead to collaborative curriculum design at the level of the school community. However, unlike the context of my study, this collaborative design takes place with the support of a permissive national policy. My study thus builds on the understandings offered in this study by investigating how such school-community collaborations work within a restrictive policy context.

In Bloch et al.'s (2010) study discussed above, there is a slight mention of a parent role. One of the teacher-participants is a grandmother who opts to withdraw her grandson from an English medium school where he was struggling academically and place him in a bilingual Xhosa/English school. These kinds of parental decisions hint at why considering the role that parents play within any policy implementation effort is important. Their choices affect what language their children will learn in at school and even potentially affect what languages are offered in school. In fact, both Ambatchew (2010) and Shohamy (2010) also raise this issue. Ambatchew (2010) describes how many Ethiopian parents negotiate the varied regional implementations of the country's official

policy of multilingual education policy by finding creative ways to “circumvent” the system in order to enroll their children in their desired program, which often times, is English. Shohamy (2010) also describes how privately funded community efforts led to the establishment of Arabic/Hebrew bilingual schools in Israel, an endeavor not at all supported by the national department of education. She also discusses how parent lobbying led to an increase of English instruction at earlier grades in primary schools.

### **Youth**

In a different but related light, several studies highlight not so much their role in policy negotiation within schools per se but the agency that children and young people have in terms of their awareness of language issues, such as language loss, linguistic discrimination, and the relationship between language and identity; their ability to articulate wider social discourses regarding language; and their decisions about how they will respond to all of the above. For example, Gilmore (2011) talks about how, amidst a complex sociocultural Kenyan context wherein English as a colonial language, Swahili as the official language of government, and various tribal languages as the language of family, all resided uneasily together, her son and his Samburu friend created their own private pidgin. “This language became a site for their discursive agency, boldly demonstrating their ability to reshape language policies and practices through everyday speech” (p. 126).

McCarty et al (2011) also demonstrate the agency that young people possess to negotiate circulating discourses and ideologies regarding English and their heritage language both within and outside of various Native American nations in the U.S. Southwest. The authors discuss how the perceptions and responses of young people

represent a form of “informal policy-making [which] reflects shared yet contested ideologies about language and identity, and how these ideologies are transformed into social practice” (p. 32). For example, young people expressed their belief in the necessity of English and their desire to be perceived as “educated” by speaking Standard English at the same time they discussed the connection and identification they felt to their heritage language and their concern that this language was being left behind and forgotten. The authors leave us with the question: “What new formal and informal policy-making possibilities exist if we take seriously youth’s expressed desires to maintain their heritage languages?” (p. 44) This is an important question because they are asking us to consider the role that young people play in negotiating and thus “making” policy. Gilmore (2010) also suggests that the role of young people, particularly young children merits consideration: “Also significant in an area that has focused primarily on adult and adolescent behavior is the importance of exploring further the everyday language policy contributions and agentive roles of very young children” (p. 126).

### **School Communities**

Freeman’s (1998) study of the dual language program at Oyster Bilingual School in Washington, D.C. is one of the few studies examining policymaking at the school-wide level. She finds that many of the Oyster educators share a common discourse of creating a school and curriculum that equally values and utilizes students’ linguistic and cultural backgrounds. They see this as an alternative vision of schooling to that of most U.S. mainstream schools.

Another study, which discusses the roles, actions, and perspectives of all school community members is McCarty’s (2002) critical life history of Rough Rock

Demonstration School in the Navajo Nation, located within the state of Arizona. Like Freeman's (1998) assessment of Oyster Bilingual School, McCarty (2002), proposes that the kind of work being done at Rough Rock serves as an example of the possibility that schools have to be "sites of social justice as well as creativity, competence, and joy" (p. 199). Once the Rough Rock community gained full control of the school, due to the combined efforts of multiple community leaders, they were able to implement their vision of school, with many members of the community finding a role within the school, such as creating arts and crafts, developing Navajo language and culture curriculum, becoming teachers and dorm mothers, and generally supporting and being supported by the school. The roles and perspectives of many longstanding community members, including teachers, administrators, and former students are included in her account.

In addition, McCarty (2002) discusses how the possibility for creating schools "of joy and justice" is tempered by the many constraints facing schools such as funding, professional development, finding and supporting bilingual teachers and programs, lack of curricular materials, and changing national and state education policies, to name a few. Her analysis suggests that a community-wide collective effort such as the one at Rough Rock is necessary not only for creating alternative school policies but also for *sustaining* these policies, particularly in the face of other restrictive policies at the state and national levels, a point which will be highlighted again at the end of this section.

### **Importance of All Perspectives**

The above review of literature demonstrates why it is important to consider the perspectives of all key community members in any study related to language policy implementation and negotiation. As already discussed, policy implementation and

negotiation is a complex process with many variables to consider. Such variables include teachers' personal beliefs and experiences, the broader sociopolitical and sociocultural contexts in which they teach, the specific policies and contexts of their schools, the materials that are available to them, and many more. Due to such complexity, continued research into how and why teachers negotiate language education policy is needed. While the role that teachers play is important, as this review demonstrates, there are other significant roles and perspectives to consider, such as parents, students, and other invested community members. Viewed collectively, the majority of studies above: 1) primarily highlight teachers or teachers and administrators in the role of everyday policymakers (Creese, 2010; English & Varghese, 2010; Hélot, 2010; Johnson & Freeman, 2010; Menken and Garcia, 2010; Stritikus, 2002; Valdiviezo, 2010); 2) occasionally examine the collaborative relationships among teachers and other key actors, such as students and local university personnel (Bloch et al, 2010; Combs et al, 2011; Zakharia, 2010); 3) hint at the role of parents via their decision-making power of where to send their children to school (Ambatchew, 2010; Bloch et al, 2010; Shohamy, 2010); and 4) occasionally explore the agency that children and young people possess (Gilmore, 1979, 1983, 2010, 2011; McCarty et al., 2011). A few of the studies (Freeman, 1998; McCarty, 2002) investigate the role that entire school communities play in creating alternative schools and school policies.

There are many reasons why all of the roles, which are most often examined in limited configurations, are important and should be looked at *together*. First of all, while teachers may be at the “epicenter” of policy implementation, they do not occupy this position alone. As the other primary classroom actors, students and their families

represent another important part of this center. Additionally, other invested community members make important contributions to policy implementation and negotiation within classrooms as well as schools. Thus, there are several additional layers to be considered, even at the “heart” of the onion.

A second reason for examining language policy negotiation at the school-wide level is that school communities are composed of many actors in addition to administrators, teachers, and students. Typically, schools are often thought of as consisting of precisely these key groups. Yet as just suggested, many other actors contribute to schools, whether directly or indirectly, such as parents, district personnel, university consultants and instructors, alumni, and many others. Thus, perhaps it is more accurate to define school communities as being made up of all of these individuals. Indeed, as Ricento and Hornberger’s (1996) onion metaphor suggests, language policy in action cannot be fully understood without looking at all of these related roles and perspectives. Studying this process in any particular location without focusing on all actors, particularly those key actors at the “heart” of the onion, where policy is actually implemented, gives an incomplete picture. A third important consideration is how policy negotiation work is sustained. In all of the above-mentioned examples the discussion centers on how a variety of different configurations of actors negotiate language education policies in order to change a situation they believed was not serving their students. While Johnson and Freeman (2010) raise the concern of how this work begins to unravel when someone new, who does not support what is happening, comes on the scene, the issue of how this negotiation work is *sustained* at a school-wide level is only addressed by McCarty (2002) when she discusses the many constraints faced by schools.

Thus another reason to look at policy negotiation at the school-wide level is to learn more about how such efforts are sustained. A final and crucial reason is that, as discussed in the introduction, schools are often faulted for the ways they reproduce inequality. If we are to understand the ways in which schools may act alternatively, then examining the roles of all school participants is in order. Hence, a case study of the collective roles that *all* key community members (teachers, administrators, students, parents, and others invested in the school) play together is necessary.



## Chapter 3

### METHODS AND DESIGN

#### **Overall Genre and Rationale**

My study was a qualitative case study, which utilized ethnographic methods.

Ethnography is well suited to understanding how and why communities of people act in a particular way because this is the central purpose of ethnography. Wolcott (2008) explains that ethnography allows us:

To describe what the people in some particular place or status ordinarily do, and the meanings they ascribe to the doing, under ordinary or particular circumstances, presenting that description in a manner that draws attention to regularities that implicate cultural process” (p. 73).

In using this approach, I described how the people at my case study school negotiate policy (what they do) and their perspectives of this process (the meanings they ascribe to the doing). In addition, since my case study school has a distinct school culture and community, I needed an approach that allowed me to both “look” (collect data) and “see” (analyze and interpret that data) in a way that uses culture as an orienting concept. This allowed me to understand not only what happens at my case study school but the meanings the school community members give to what they do.

Culture as an orienting concept of analysis is significant for studies of schools and educators who negotiate educational policies. Because negotiation is a social phenomenon, using a lens that focuses specifically on socially shared beliefs and actions can help to illuminate what those beliefs and actions are and what they mean to the people who are involved. Thus, ethnography provides researchers with a tool to see a particular context, in this case, schools, in the way that the educators, administrators,

students, parents, and others involved with that school see it and to understand the meanings they attribute to their actions and experiences there.

Finally, in terms of the potential broader implications of study of policy implementation and negotiation, using an ethnographic approach can help to illuminate the possibilities for social change via such negotiation. McCarty (2011) says that, “seminal critical ethnographer, Dell Hymes, found within ethnography not only the methodological tools for understanding diverse ways of speaking, but also an engine for social change” (p. 31). Critical ethnography can act as a catalyst for social change because it helps us to “learn the meanings, norms, and patterns of a way of life” in a manner that is “continuous with ordinary life [and] the knowledge that others already have” (Hymes, 1980b, as cited in McCarty 2011 p. 31). In other words, ethnography allows us to learn about the possibilities that are already in existence by talking to and learning from the people who are involved in creating those possibilities.

### **Context of My Study**

As briefly mentioned in the introduction, in November 2000, Arizona voters approved Proposition 203, the “English for the Children” Initiative. Proposition 203 restricts bilingual education and mandates Structured English Immersion (SEI), a program of nearly all English-only instruction for children up to age 10, for a period “not normally intended to exceed one year” (Arizona Revised Statutes [A.R.S.] Section 15-752). This law was patterned after California’s Proposition 227, passed in 1997. Proposition 203 and 227 were both passed with language setting forth a one year exit expectation for most students, despite research indicating that 4-7 years is the average

time it takes a student to achieve cognitive academic language proficiency (Cummins, 1979, 2003; Collier, 1987, 1988; Thomas & Collier, 1997, 2002; McCarty, 2002).

Uncertainty about what was permitted under Proposition 203 led educators to widely interpret the policy, with some schools and districts being extremely restrictive, at times completely prohibiting the use of a student's primary language (Wright & Choi, 2006). Statewide confusion ultimately led to the passage of House Bill 2064 in 2006, which mandates a four-hour English Language Development (ELD) block, with specific guidelines per grade level on how time is to be spent (A.R.S. Section 15-1044). Conversation, Grammar, Reading, Vocabulary and Writing are the instructional areas, to be taught within specific time allocations. A student's score on the AZELLA (Arizona English Language Learner Assessment), the English language proficiency test for K-12 students whose primary home language is not English, determines entry and exit into the ELD classroom.

Prior to the passage of Proposition 203, there were many bilingual education classes held in various schools throughout Arizona (Combs, Evans, Fletcher, Parra, & Jiménez, 2005). Since the implementation of Proposition 203 in 2000 and House Bill 2064 in 2006, the vast majority of these bilingual programs have disappeared. There is, however, one exception to this legislation. Parents still have the option to sign waivers for their children to be exempted from the four-hour ELD block mandated by House Bill 2064, however few parents or educators realize that this waiver option exists. Finally, as cited earlier, many studies conducted since the passage of English-only education in the three states of Arizona, California, and Massachusetts have revealed that the academic achievement gap between ELs and Non-ELs continues to exist and that the physical

isolation and social stigmatism that many ELs feel is leading to harmful consequences for these children.

### **Research Site**

Because I am using an ethnographic case study design, the research site that I selected is important. Site selection matters because a key characteristic of ethnographic studies is to contextualize “cultural phenomena socially, historically, and comparatively across time and space” (McCarty, 2011 p. 10). Desert Breeze is a school where school community members actively take part in negotiating language education policy as evidenced by the continuance of their dual language program as well as the presence of many other school-wide practices, which support bilingualism. Approximately 65% of the student population is considered to be English learners, with nearly all of those students speaking Spanish as their first language, and approximately 90% of all the school’s students are of Latino background, many of whom have Spanish in their family backgrounds. Thus, the vast majority of students at Desert Breeze have the potential to be affected by the state’s current language education policies. Considering these contextual and demographic factors helps to show why studying the interpretation, enactment, and negotiation of Prop 203 and HB 2064 in this particular school context becomes particularly salient.

### **Participants**

My study participants included a variety of key school community members, including teachers and administrators (who I will also refer to collectively as educators), students and their families, and other individuals who are invested in the school, such as alumni and former educators. I interacted with my study participants through classroom

and school observations as well as interviews and focus groups. Recruitment and the nature of participation are described in more detail below as part of the data collection procedure.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

The primary data sources for my dissertation were observations and interviews. I also occasionally collected documents such as school communications (flyers and letters) and student work. Thus, my four data sets were: 1) classroom observations (four dual language classrooms and four mainstream classrooms) 2) observations of the school-at-large 3) interviews with key school community members, and 4) documents. The data collection procedures I used are described in detail below.

***Overall Data Collection and Preliminary Data Analysis Schedule.*** I collected data from Oct. 17, 2011 through April 20, 2012. My data collection can be divided into two principal periods. During the first period of time, between Oct. 17, 2011 and Dec. 23, 2011, I made weekly observations in the four junior high or 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> multi-grade classrooms and conducted interviews with some teachers, administrators, and parents. I also conducted focus groups with the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders whose classrooms I was also observing. I originally intended to continue collecting data right after the winter break, on Jan. 9, 2012 and to conduct an additional 8 weeks of observations with the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade classes through the end of February. However, due to certain circumstances, including a family emergency and job-related travel, my plans changed and I needed to extend my data collection through April. I was able to make a couple of infrequent observations here and there during the month of February and conduct a couple of parent interviews during this time as well. I resumed a regular data collection schedule in March

and continued observing the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades and conducting interviews and focus groups during this time. Thus, while my total data collection time extends from mid-October to near the end of April, the full weeks of data collection number just over 17 weeks, with a few additional days. The tables below summarize my total data collection schedule, the total number of observations, interviews, and focus groups, and the total number of study participants. Please see Appendix A for the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval and Appendix B for the complete schedule of interviews and focus groups.

Table 1

Timeline of Data Collection

Oct. 17 – Dec. 23	Focus on 7 <sup>th</sup> /8 <sup>th</sup> grades; Various interviews and focus groups completed
Holiday Break	
Jan. 6	One group interview completed
Feb. 2 –Feb. 8	One interview and one classroom observation completed
Mar. 1 –April 20	Focus on 5 <sup>th</sup> /6 <sup>th</sup> grades; Various interviews and focus groups completed
17 full weeks of data collection, with some additional days	

Table 2.

Numbers of Classroom Observations, Interviews, Focus Groups, and Total Number of Study Participants

Number of Classroom Observations	58
Number of Interviews	27
Number of Focus Groups	12
<b>Total Number of Study Participants</b>	<b>64</b>

## **Classroom Observations**

*Overview.* Overall, I observed eight classrooms in the 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grades. These included the Dual Language and non-Dual Language classrooms at these grade levels. I did not observe in the K-4<sup>th</sup> grades because the Dual Language program is not offered at these grade levels. I divided these observations into two different periods of time. During the first period of time, between Oct. 17, 2011 and Dec. 23, 2011 I made weekly observations in the four junior high or 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> multi-grade classrooms for a total of 37 classroom observations of approximately 2 hours each, or 74 hours total.

During the second period of time, between March 1, 2012 and April 20, 2012, I made weekly observations in the four 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup>, multi-grade classrooms. I observed two classrooms per day for approximately two hours: one classroom in the morning and one in the afternoon. As mentioned above, due to certain circumstances, I was not able to have quite as regular of an observation schedule in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms as I'd had in the junior high. There were also other scheduling challenges during this time period, such as one teacher being frequently absent, Spring Break, etc. that led to less observations, overall, of the 5<sup>th</sup> /6<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms. In the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms, I made a total of 21 classroom observations of approximately 2 hours each for a total of 44 hours. Please see Appendix C for a more detailed table of the specific dates of each classroom observation.

During my observations, my role was mainly that of observer. Sometimes I sat at student tables so I could observe and listen, and on occasion, I worked briefly with students but mainly I tried to sit back and observe. Students understood that my role was

to watch and learn. I interacted with students, but not extensively. My data collection schedule is shown in the tables below.

***Dual Language Classrooms.*** I spent one day a week observing in the school's dual language (Dual Language) classrooms. The reason it was important to observe in the Dual Language classrooms is that these classes were a primary reason for selecting this school as a study site. These classes are unique to the district and rare in Arizona. How the school has been able to continue to offer bilingual education after the passage of Proposition 203 and House Bill 2064 is one key area I wish to investigate.

The content of the Dual Language classrooms at the 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> grade level are block time periods of either integrated social studies and language arts or integrated science and language arts. At the 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> grade level, the content consists of all academic areas, such as math, language arts, social studies, and science. I collected my data by audio taping classroom discussions, by making observational field notes, and by occasionally collecting documents such as lesson materials or student work. My observations focused on teacher instruction and student participation. During my observations I took note of language use (Spanish, English or both), lesson content and student participation and work, and general discourse patterns in communication. By discourse patterns I mean patterns in the oral or written texts of the classroom which: “gives meaning to material objects and social practices” (Barker, 2008, p. 90) or which suggest “ideologically structured assumptions and expectations about social groups that reflect and shape power relations in particular cultural contexts” (Fairclough, 1989 as cited in Freeman, 1998). Making these weekly observations helped me to address my first sub-question of what characterizes the curriculum for ELs and bilingual students at Desert Breeze. Within the



term curriculum I included lesson content, teacher instruction, and student engagement with the teacher, content, and other classmates.

I recruited the four Dual Language teachers by first securing the school principal's permission to do so, and then by attending a teachers' meeting to introduce myself to the teachers (I already know three of the four Dual Language teachers) and to explain my study. I invited all four of them into the study and all four elected to participate. In order to recruit the Dual Language students as participants, I asked their teachers for permission to introduce myself to their classes and to explain the purpose of my study to the students and to invite their voluntary participation into the study. I sent home parent consent and student assent forms in both Spanish and English and took care to conduct focus groups and collect student work only with students who had the permission and desire to participate. Twenty-six students out of 100 potential dual language students opted to participate in the observations and student focus groups. Please see Appendix D for parent consent and student assent forms in both English and Spanish. Since I focused on the classroom proceedings in general, I did not need permission from each student in every classroom to be a part of my general observations. However, I only recorded table groups and collected work from students from whom I had permission. Of note, I also secured permission from 4 former Dual Language students to participate in a focus group.

***Mainstream Classrooms.*** Just as I observed in the dual language classrooms one day a week, I also spent another day a week observing in the non-dual language or “mainstream” classrooms. Observing in mainstream classrooms, in addition the Dual Language classrooms was important because some of the school's ELs at the 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade

levels are also in mainstream classes and I wanted to see what characterized the pedagogical practices that support ELs outside of the Dual Language program as well.

Just as in the Dual Language 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> grades, the mainstream 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> classes were also either integrated blocks of social studies and language arts or integrated science and language arts. Again, I collected data by audio taping classroom discussions, by making observational field notes, and by occasionally collecting documents such as lesson materials or student work. Again my observational focus was on noticing teacher instruction and student participation. I also looked for specific pedagogical practices to support ELs such as teachers allowing students to use Spanish as a learning resource in the classroom, teachers providing support materials in Spanish, and teachers themselves occasionally using Spanish to support students. Again, during my observations I took note of language use (Spanish, English or both), lesson content and student participation and work, and general discourse patterns in communication.

I recruited the four mainstream teachers in the same way as the Dual Language teacher. First, I secured the school principal's permission to do so, and then by attending a teachers' meeting to introduce myself to the teachers (I already know three of the four non-Dual Language teachers) and to explain my study. I invited all four of them into the study and all four elected to participate. In order to recruit the mainstream students as participants, I asked their teachers for permission to introduce myself to their classes and to explain the purpose of my study to the students and to invite their voluntary participation into the study. I sent home parent consent and student assent forms in both Spanish and English and took care to conduct focus groups and collect student work only with students who had the permission and desire to participate. Seven out of 100 potential

non-Dual Language students opted to participate in the observations and student focus groups. Please see Appendix D for parent consent and student assent forms in both English and Spanish. Since I focused on the classroom proceedings in general, I did not need permission from each student in every classroom to be a part of my general observations. However, I only recorded table groups and collected work from students from whom I had permission. Of note, I also secured permission from 3 former non-Dual Language students to participate in a focus group.

***Observations – School At Large.*** In order to address my second research question and learn more about the key actors, processes, and cultural practices at Desert Breeze that support the negotiation of Prop 203 and HB 2064, I dedicated time to observing the school community at large. I did this in two ways. One was during my classroom observation days. As mentioned above, I spent approximately two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon in a specific classroom. However, this left time during the day, either when I first arrived, or between scheduled classroom observations to observe general school-wide happenings, such Monday morning rituals, sidewalk conversations, lunch and recess time, etc. The other way I made observations was by occasionally attending more-formally planned special events, such as student performances and student-led conferences parent meetings, and by making occasional observations in the parent center and of parent programs.

## **Interviews**

I also conducted interviews with key school community members at Desert Breeze. This included a wide range of individuals: the former and new principal and other administrative team members/educators, such as the School Instructional Programs

(SIPs) Leader, the Intervention Specialist, etc., current and former classroom teachers, parents, and current and former students. The period during which I conducted interviews and focus groups began on November 8<sup>th</sup> and extended through April 20<sup>th</sup>. I interviewed 7 administrators/educators (4 of these staff members were also parents of current or past Desert Breeze students), 13 teachers (3 of whom were also parents or grandparents of current or past Desert Breeze students), 7 parents (but 14 total including those parents who were also Desert Breeze educators), and 37 students. Seven of those students were former students. This made a total of 64 different people, representing approximately 77.5 hours of interview/focus group time.

I used purposeful sampling for selecting my interview participants. Purposeful sampling is “based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain interest and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (Merriam, 2009 p. 77). These may also be considered cases that are “information-rich” (Patton, as cited in Merriam, 2009). Merriam (2009) suggests that first, the essential selection criteria are determined and then participants are identified and recruited based upon these criteria. In my study, it was important to interview key community members who could speak to my research questions. Criteria included those who are or have been: involved with the school’s policy-making; involved with programmatic and curricular decision-making; involved long-term with the school; and finally, involved in the dual language or non-dual language classrooms I observed.

***Scheduling.*** Because I wanted to accommodate my participants’ schedules when planning interview and focus group times, this time was the most flexible part of my data collection schedule. Almost all focus groups took place after school in one of the

participating teachers' classrooms or outdoors at the campus. One focus group with former Desert Breeze students took place in the students' home with their mother present. Almost all parent interviews took place during school or after school at the parent center or library. One parent interview took place at the parent's home, after school. Almost all interviews with teachers took place after school in their classrooms and twice I interviewed teachers together. For example, on Jan. 6, 2012, I interviewed two junior high teachers and the former principal together, at a café, and on April 20, 2012, I interviewed two junior teachers in one of their classrooms.

Since I anticipated the interviews to be approximately 90 minutes long, I aimed for approximately 1-3 interviews or focus groups each week. However, due to various considerations within my own and my participants' schedules, as well as school holidays and breaks, there were sometimes weeks where I conducted classroom observations but no interviews or focus groups or vice versa. I simply tried to schedule the interviews and focus groups when I could. Please see Appendix C for a detailed table of scheduled interviews and focus groups.

***Interview Structure.*** My interview structure was modeled after an adaptation of Seidman's (2006) series of three interviews format used by McCarty et al. (2010). First, I will briefly describe Seidman's (2006) original format and then I will describe McCarty et al.'s (2010) adaptation of that format. Seidman (2006) proposes a model "of in depth, phenomenological interviewing" in order to make people's behavior "meaningful and understandable" by contextualizing this behavior within their lives and "the lives of those around them" (pp. 16-17). He offers the following reasons for each interview:

The first interview establishes the context of the participants' experience. The second allows participants to reconstruct the details of their experience within the context in which it occurs. And the third encourages the participants to reflect on the meaning their experience holds for them (p. 17).

Thus, the purpose of having three separate interviews is to provide a more holistic perspective of the participants' experience. However, Seidman (2006) concedes that researchers will most likely need to explore alternative formats. He suggests that, "as long as a structure is maintained that allows participants to reconstruct and reflect upon their experience within the context of their lives, alterations to the three-interview structure and the duration and spacing of interviews can certainly be explored" (pp. 21-22).

T.L. McCarty, B. M. J. Brayboy, and K. M. Silver adapted this structure into a single 90-minute three-part interview during their interviews with educators, students and families with successful results in their "Promising Practices and Partnerships in Indian Education" study (T.L. McCarty, personal communication, March, 2010). McCarty (2011) also used a similar adaptation of Seidman's (2006) format. Due to the volume of interview participants and the limited time in my study, I borrowed this type of condensed format and modeled some of my questions after theirs. I collapsed the three separate sessions into one approximately 90-minute session while maintaining a structure that includes the three parts: focused life history, details of experience, and reflection on meaning. Please see Appendix E for a copy of the interview protocol I used with both adults and students. As Seidman (2006) suggests, I used this style of interview with all of my adult community member participants in order to gain a deeper, more contextualized

understanding of their experiences. However, I opted to use a focus-group format with my student participants, as I will explain next.

*Student Focus Groups.* For interviews with students, both current and former, I used focus groups of approximately 45-60 minutes. I wanted to interview both former and current students because I believe that they have important insights to share with researchers of language education policy. Menken and Garcia (2010) describe teachers as the “final arbiters of language policy implementation” (p. 1), yet students are in classrooms with teachers as they implement this policy. Students also help to negotiate policy, by participating in alternative teaching practices as described by Combs et al (2011) and Zakharia (2011). However, too often their actual perspectives of the language programs resulting from this negotiation process are not included in research findings. As the ones most directly affected by language education policies, students are an important part of the policy negotiation process, whose voices need to be included more often.

I elected to use the focus group format because it seemed likely that students would be more willing to open up and talk in a group format. Krueger and Casey (2009) suggest that focus groups are appropriate to use when the researcher is “looking for the range of ideas or feelings that people have about something” (p. 19) and that “focus groups offer considerable potential for discovering how young people think about issues, programs, and opportunities”(p. 155). Since I wanted to learn about the range of perspectives that students have about the dual language curriculum and other pedagogical practices supportive of bilingualism at Desert Breeze, as well as the issues associated with language education and language education policy, focus groups seemed to be an appropriate format choice for this group of participants. In addition, the use of focus

groups helped me to interview more students in the same amount of time, which helped to make this aspect of my data collection more feasible.

### **Language Choice**

During my research, I used both Spanish and English since many of my participants spoke both and some participants (primarily parents) spoke only Spanish. To begin, I translated all forms, including consent and assent forms, into Spanish. A colleague in the doctoral program, who was a former high school teacher and a native speaker of Spanish, double-checked my translations and made suggestions where necessary. I provided all forms to all participants in either English, or both languages, as appropriate (i.e. for English-dominant teachers, I did not need to use both forms, but for all students who spoke both languages or whose family members spoke primarily Spanish, I gave them both forms). For all focus groups with students, I told students we could use either language. In all cases, students picked English, sometimes telling me that English was easier. In retrospect, if I had perhaps begun my interviews in Spanish, it is possible more students may have picked Spanish or that we may have used both. For my interviews with parents who spoke predominantly Spanish, I began in Spanish and we used Spanish for the interview. I conducted all transcriptions of interviews in Spanish and completed all translations as well. For excerpts of translations included in this dissertation, I had a bilingual, native Spanish speaker double-check my translations.

### **Data Analysis Strategies**

My data analysis strategy used a three-pronged approach: inductive reasoning, an ethnographic lens, and general discourse analysis. As in all qualitative research, I began making sense of my data inductively. Merriam (2009) suggests that, “all qualitative



analysis is primarily *inductive* and *comparative*” (p. 175, her emphasis) wherein researchers work to “construct categories or themes that capture some recurring pattern that cuts across [their] data” (p. 181). I specifically looked for salient information that would help me to answer my research sub- questions: what characterizes the curriculum and pedagogical practices supportive of bilingualism; how key actors, processes and cultural practices support the negotiation process; and how all of the above is perceived by key school community members.

I began analyzing my data by reading through my interview and focus group transcripts as well as my transcripts and field notes from classroom observations, noticing repeated words and phrases as well as similar or related ideas, and making note of these patterns in the margins, highlighting repeated ideas. These repeated ideas and patterns that suggested broader themes or categories of ideas. For example, during my focus groups, many students mentioned the importance of the Special Area classes, so I would note, “Specials” wherever these classes were mentioned. When they spoke about why learning in Spanish was important to them, I would write “Spanish - Family” or “Spanish - Future” next to a particular quote. Next, I made lists of all the ideas mentioned in a particular set of interviews or focus groups, such as for students, parents, or teachers and then looked across these sets of lists for related ideas, as well. Making lists helped me notice repeated ideas and patterns across interviews, focus groups, and observations. Key words signaled a particular idea, such as the descriptors, “whole” and “real,” which were used over and over again to describe the vision of children and of learning at Desert Breeze. I also noticed that often a similar idea was being discussed even if the participants did not use the exact same words. For example, one mom described

education at Desert Breeze as “complete” rather than “whole,” but to me this conveyed a similar idea.

Once I had a key idea, such as “whole child”, I then used this as a kind of code, and as I re-read through my transcripts, I would add quotes and other ideas to this code heading in a new word document that would help me to categorize the quotes and ideas. I tended to find themes in my interviews first, and then would see reflections of these ideas in my observations. For example, I began with the repeated idea that learning should be “real” or “meaningful” as expressed by many teachers during our interviews, and then I looked for examples of related ideas (i.e. real product, real audience, etc.) within the observations themselves. Basically, I created lists of “codes” or ideas that I then continued to watch for in other transcripts and field notes. If I noticed that a particular code or idea that seemed to go together at first, was actually two ideas, such as the idea that Spanish is important for family communication and also for future career success, I subdivided these into two separate reasons participants gave for studying Spanish.

Since I used an ethnographic lens, I also used cultural interpretation as an organizing concept for my analysis. Drawing upon Goodenough’s (1976) explanation of culture as something that ethnographers attribute to the people among whom they study, Wolcott (2008) says that, “Ethnographers must be able to posit “concepts, beliefs, and principles of action and organization they infer from what they observe firsthand and what others tell them” (p. 82). Thus, in my analysis, I looked for concepts, beliefs, and principles of action and organization in what my participants both said and did.

Finally, coming from a perspective of human agency, I also needed a way to analyze the power relationships and human agency at work within these cultural practices

and policy negotiation processes. For this, I utilized a form of discourse analysis. I drew upon Freeman's (1998) description of discourse analysis to help me identify underlying discourse patterns and themes. Freeman (1998) explains that the goal of discourse analysis is "to examine a wide range of social practices, including written documents and/or social activities, in order to make explicit the underlying cultural notions that link forms of writing and/or talk to social groups in a way that seems natural within that context" (p. 18). When reading through my transcripts and field notes, I looked for the range of social practices in evidence and studied those practices (the ways they were both described to me and that I observed in action) in order to bring attention to the underlying cultural norms (such as beliefs, guiding principals, values) that potentially shaped those practices. I also looked for way those practices potentially enabled or constrained the agency of the various school community members to act.

### **Personal Biography of the Researcher**

Wolcott (2008) suggests that, "What results from any particular ethnographic inquiry represents a coming together of a personality and personal biography in the persona of the ethnographer, interacting in a particular place in a unique way..." (p. 94). As such, it is important to say a few words about whom I am, and in particular how my background relates to the study. I am a bilingual educator who formerly taught at my case study school, Desert Breeze. I first taught classes as the family literacy instructor for two years, from 1999-2001 and then in the Spanish/English dual language program for six years after that, from 2002-2008. As such, I entered this research with a great deal of insight already into the workings of Desert Breeze. In fact, it is from my experience as a teacher at Desert Breeze that the title of this study emerges.

“Sacred ground” was a metaphor that the school’s former principal often used with teachers during discussions about our work. My understanding of this metaphor was then, and is now, that we, as educators, need to determine for ourselves, individually and collectively, what we value most about school, and also what meaning we give to the concept of “school”. From my current position as a researcher and invested member of the educational community, I wanted to learn more about what the “sacred ground” of school was for other Desert Breeze school community members, especially within the context of a district and state climate that does not support bilingual education.

According to Maxwell (1996): “Researchers first of all need to be aware of their personal reasons for carrying out a study – their subjective motives – for those will have important consequences for the trustworthiness of a project” (as cited in Watt, 2007, p. 85). My previous experiences as a bilingual teacher have led me to support bilingual education and to believe that it is important for children to have the opportunity to learn in their first language as well as additional languages. My beliefs and background experiences influenced my decision to research how schools negotiate policy. However, I do not believe my personal subjectivity to be a disadvantage to my position as a researcher. Being aware of my reasons for carrying out my study, as well as how my own experiences may influence my perspective, is part of being aware and reflective. In addition, Wolcott (2008) suggests that, “intimate, long-term acquaintance with a group of people ought to enrich an account, not be regarded as a threat to it” (p. 99). I used my prior experience at Desert Breeze, coupled with a critical self-awareness, to my advantage. My previous experience as a dual language teacher at Desert Breeze guided

my data collection efforts—providing me with insight about where to look, who to talk to, and what certain practices might mean to the school community.

### **Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations**

Trustworthiness and ethical considerations are two extremely important and interrelated aspects to being a competent and principled researcher. Rossman and Rallis (2003) suggest: “Put simply, an unethical study is not a trustworthy study” (p. 63). It is important to present the findings from my study at Desert Breeze as openly and honestly as possible. I do this by sharing all aspects of my research process, from my own beliefs and position as a researcher (which I have done above) to how I collected and analyzed the data. I worked to make my research credible by bringing in multiple perspectives and communicating my participants’ worldviews as honestly and fully as possible, recognizing the part that my own interpretations played in constructing the knowledge that I present here. My ethnographic approach has helped me to avoid a limited, “snapshot” kind of view. Finally, I have counted upon the assistance of peers and professors, as trusted colleagues, to help me throughout the process, talking over my findings with me and helping me to think about what they might mean.

As an ethical researcher, I made many decisions. During the course of fieldwork, I encountered situations that required me to think about what to do with potentially sensitive information. Rossman and Rallis (2003) suggest that being an ethical researcher boils down to acting “as we would want others to act in any given situation—in ways that treat humanity as ends as well as means” (p. 72). To me, this sounds like the “golden rule” of treating others as you wish to be treated. Keeping this “golden rule” in mind and realizing that “ethical dilemmas are not solvable” (p. 73) but must be negotiated as

thoughtfully and sensitively as possible, helped me to keep my research as ethical as possible.

### **Limitations**

Drawing from Agar (1980), Wolcott (2008) says that, “ethnography at best can only be partial... one person’s view, at one point in time, based on one set of experiences, enhanced by a purposeful but serendipitous selection of experiences related by others” (p. 80). I was indeed one person, investigating a situation at one point in time. While the data I collected came from other people during my observations and interviews, ultimately, they were analyzed by me, and as such provide only a partial perspective. The study is also limited by the length of time I collected data. While six months is long enough to glean valuable insights toward answering my research questions, a longer study would undoubtedly have reaped even more understanding. However, I believe that my long previous tenure there helped to offset some of this limitation of time.

## Chapter 4

### SHARED BELIEFS AT DESERT BREEZE

#### **Introduction**

I would like to begin the discussion of my findings with the following vignette about a winter band concert at Desert Breeze Elementary School. I start with this example because it exemplifies many of the key beliefs and practices related to the curriculum and culture at Desert Breeze. I will focus on the beliefs about the curriculum and culture in this chapter, saving my discussion of the key practices to be found at Desert Breeze for chapter five. The following description is based upon my field notes:

When I arrived fifteen minutes before the concert was scheduled to start, the parking lot was already full when I walked into the cafeteria. Only a few seats remained. A feeling of excitement filled the room. A slide show of the junior high students' recent trip to Prescott for their annual Arts Quest camp was being shown on the large screen in the front. People were enjoying the pictures, laughing and commenting. There were families everywhere - not just parents, but older and younger siblings, as well as grandparents, many eagerly holding video cameras and phone cameras, ready to record the evening's event. Several former students noticed me standing in the back and came up and gave me a hug. By the time the concert started the cafeteria had become standing room only. As I looked around I noticed many teachers in the audience as well, among them the former principal, Jim Watts.

The longtime band teacher, with 32 years in the district and 19 years at Desert Breeze, Emilio Garcia, began the evening by first thanking the former principal for supporting the band as well as the students' annual trips to Prescott Pines. He explained to the audience that the 3-day Arts Quest Camp is the first time many of the students have been away from home. Next, he introduced Mr. Fujimoto, a retired band teacher in the district, who was formerly Mr. Garcia's teacher, and who still comes to help him with his classes, as well as with the Arts Quest camp. Next, he introduced the new principal, Mr. McCormick, who said a few words of welcome, both in English and Spanish. After these introductions he gave an explanation of the music that the students were about to perform, explaining the criteria for each selection. They are the same pieces they will also perform for coming festivals and competitions.

Finally, he thanked the parents for sending him these students, and he complimented his young musicians, saying, "They try their best and I'm really excited to work with them everyday." [Field notes, 11/17/2011]

This evening epitomizes the curriculum and culture at Desert Breeze for several reasons. First of all, it demonstrates the emphasis and value placed on the Arts within the curriculum. Second, it shows how many families are involved with the school. Third, it also hints at the way providing students with the opportunity to learn about the natural world and to learn in outdoor settings is also valued at Desert Breeze. Fourth, the role of the former principal in supporting the arts, as well as opportunities for students to take trips, such as the annual Prescott Pines Arts Quest Camp, is acknowledged. Finally, the new principal takes care to also say a few words in Spanish, showing that he recognizes that speaking Spanish is an important part of the school.

In the following chapters I will unpack each of these components: a curriculum where Arts, outdoor learning and other kinds of "Special Area" classes, along with other kinds of "real" learning, are an integral part of teaching and learning, and a culture where community events, such as the winter band concert, family involvement, and speaking Spanish are key practices. As mentioned above, chapter four will focus on the beliefs that Desert Breeze community members share, which in turn influence their practices, which are discussed in chapter five. Chapter six will focus on the role of key actors in creating and sustaining these beliefs and practices and how these beliefs and practices lead to a cultural process, which increases agency for all school community members.



## **Desert Breeze Elementary School**

Before delving into my discussion of the various beliefs in place at Desert Breeze, I also begin with a description of Desert Breeze School. Desert Breeze is a K-8 public elementary school, located in Phoenix, AZ. The school is nestled at the foot of nearby low-lying desert mountains and, as such, the school's playgrounds and fields give a wide-open view to this nearby mountain skyline. In addition, from the soccer fields, one can see all the way to downtown Phoenix, whose skyscrapers look like children's blocks from this distance. To the east and south are residential areas, which include both older homes and neighborhoods as well as many new housing developments which have become quite commonplace in this area of Phoenix in recent years. This community enjoys a richness of diversity, including Latino, African American, and Anglo communities. Recently, the area has become home to many families who have immigrated from Mexico as well as other Latin American countries, making it a linguistically diverse area of the city as well, with Spanish heard often in the neighborhood.

Although located in an urban area, when one steps onto the school's campus, one is filled with a sense of being away from the city, as one is immediately immersed within an open green landscape, and greeted by the carefully tended gardens, and grassy courtyards and fields, which compose the outer campus. The school buildings themselves have an open layout, with a series of individual red brick and portable buildings separated by verdant courtyards, and interspersed with large, mature trees, and adjoined on either side by long sidewalks that traverse the northern and southern ends of the campus. An excerpt from my field notes captures this openness:

One thing that really stands out at this school is the open space. There is a long grassy area, sort of subdivided into different sections, all along the main walkway of the school. The area I am sitting in has a blue-painted picnic table next to the large garden, which is right outside the office, along with the school's large animal exhibit, which one has to pass through to enter the main office. [Field Notes, 10/17/2011]

In addition, in the corners where each courtyard meets the main sidewalk, there are a series of small triangular flowerbeds, which display colorful floral arrangements. Just west of the five main wings of the school, which hold the K-6 classrooms, one can find the primary playground and a large grassy courtyard, followed by a vast expanse of field, holding the intermediate playground, basketball courts and outer soccer fields.

On the north side of campus is the main entrance to the school, with a large courtyard with a large shaded Ramada area, where the students line up at lunchtime before they enter the cafeteria, and a large red brick building, which holds not only kitchen and dining areas, but also the band and music classrooms. Another red brick building just south of the cafeteria holds the school's old Home Economics classroom (now used as storage) and Art classrooms. Yet another building across the courtyard from the cafeteria holds the school's technology lab and library as well as several 7th/8th grade classrooms. Additional space for the junior high wing of the school has been created by the addition of three portables.

Across the campus, from north to south, each building is decorated in various ways by student artwork. Two large painted murals decorate the sides of the buildings. The mural on the north side of the school, displayed one of the portable walls, shows a mural of children dressed in traditional clothing of various cultural backgrounds, such as Inuit, Native American, Dutch, etc. with lettering that reads, "We all smile in the same

language." Another mural, located on the outside wall of the Head Start portable on the south side of the campus, depicts a beautiful desert landscape, with a large saguaro cactus whose holes reveal the faces of the desert owl and hare, who make their homes within. This second mural was completely designed by three Desert Breeze students, who have since graduated, but whose names may be found in the lower right hand corner. Many ceramic tile mosaics may be found on the eastern sides of each of the five red brick buildings, which hold the K-6 classrooms. In addition, many pieces of framed student artwork decorate the school's main office, principal's office, and conference room.

Beyond the junior high portables is the latest pride and joy of many students and teachers I spoke with - a brand new gymnasium, named for two longtime but now retired Desert Breeze physical education coaches. As the newest part of the school, the gym holds a pristine basketball court, bleachers, and a lobby with glass trophy cases. Before the addition of the gym, students took their physical education classes outdoors on the fields and basketball courts, even during the hot summer's end and later spring seasons, and as a long awaited addition to the school, students and teachers alike, spoke proudly of the new gym.

Just west of the northernmost building, which also holds the front office, is a large school garden area, protected by a low adobe wall, which has been decorated near the top with a layer of student-painted tiles, arranged side by side, extending along the length of the interior and exterior of the wall. Several wooden compost bins have also been painted in bright colors, all of which serve to make the many plants and large sunflowers, when in bloom, compete with the garden wall itself, for adding color to the school garden, as described in my notes below:

The garden itself is approx. 30 ft. by 10 ft. and has what appear to be 9 individual (class) plots inside. I noticed a plot full of what appears to be thriving tomato plants. I am not sure what is in the other beds but several of them have lots of healthy green plants coming up. There are also composting bins at the far end. The garden is surrounded by a low adobe wall, which has been painted in warm earth tones, with gray and blue along the top. It is decorated on both the inside and out with mosaic tile pieces, that making a swirling design, and also the shapes of ladybugs and other insects, butterflies, etc. [Field Notes, Oct. 17, 2011]

In addition, the top of the wall is wide and flat, and serves as a common resting place for students, before and after school, as well as during recess. Just outside the front entrance of the school's office is a large animal habitat, which is home to two goats, a Koi fishpond, and various chickens, roosters, and a peacock. Although fenced in, there is an opening in the middle of the exhibit and one must pass through the animal habitat to enter the office. The main garden and animal habitat's location at the center of the school, just outside the office, hint at the importance placed upon these two spaces, not only geographically, but also in the collective consciousness of the school community. Overwhelmingly, the students, teachers, and parents I spoke with mentioned both the gardens and animal habitat as part of what makes Desert Breeze unique.

As mentioned earlier, the outdoors feels like just as much a part of the campus as the indoors, and there is a great deal happening outdoors as well, including gardening, animal husbandry, and carpentry classes:

As I sit here taking notes I can here the occasional crow of the rooster and the birds singing. It is a very warm day but this moment is peaceful. I can also hear the occasional bray of the goat. I can hear soft voices of people working in the office (side office door is open). I can now hear the sounds of an outdoor carpentry class and the sound of a table saw. [Field Notes, 10/ 17/2011]

The various Specials classes, such as those just mentioned, along with Art, PE, Music, Band, Advanced Band, and Latin Jazz Band, Office Aide, Algebra, Dance, and Drama,

among others were mentioned repeatedly by participants as another important part of what makes Desert Breeze a special place.

Another defining aspect of the school is that many members of the school's faculty and staff are bilingual. Slightly less than half, or 19 of the forty faculty members (teachers and administrators), including many key leadership positions, such as the Assistant Principal, School Instructional Programs (SIPS) Leader, and Intervention Specialist, at Desert Breeze, speaks both Spanish and English. Furthermore, a number of the support staff, not included in the total above (which reflects only faculty positions), such as the two ELL coordinators, the Parent Center Coordinator, as well as the cafeteria and custodial staff, also speaks Spanish. As mentioned above, the school is located in a community, which has become increasingly linguistically diverse, with Spanish being a dominant language in the community, as well as English. In fact, the majority of the school's families speak either primarily Spanish or Spanish and English.

### **Belief in the “Whole Child”**

Over the course of my interviews and focus groups with educators, students, and parents, many people described Desert Breeze as a school that values the “whole child”. This concept of the school, while often described using different terms, such as being “child-centered” or looking at the “entire child” or in other ways, such as offering “una educación completa” [a complete education], was discussed in remarkably similar ways. Although participants used different words, the similarity of the underlying idea to their comments, that Desert Breeze is a school that views children holistically and that offers much more than “traditional academics”, arose frequently and consistently, suggesting a common view or belief about what being a school that values the “whole child” means to people at Desert Breeze. This section will show how people

spoke about this concept of the whole child and related it to key school practices, demonstrating the value show this key concept held for school community members.

As mentioned above, Desert Breeze school community members described the concept of being a “whole child” school to me in various ways. One of these ways was in relation to the variety of classes offered at Desert Breeze. The concept of the “whole child” was quite frequently explained as the reason for the inclusion of various Arts classes, such as music, band, and visual arts, and other “Special Area” classes such as PE, gardening, and carpentry, among others, suggesting that this notion of the “whole child” might be considered as a guiding principle for the curricular offerings at the school. For example, one longtime 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, Lisa Winters, told me, “I feel that the community of Desert Breeze feels that the whole child is important, and as important as the academics, these other areas in their life are equally important, which I truly believe” [Interview, Nov. 8, 2011]. This quote shows that, for Mrs. Winters, the idea of the whole child includes the notion that other areas of children’s development are just as important as traditional academics. When I asked her what she meant by “other aspects of their lives” she explained:

For example, like through the arts program. I think of these little... like when [the music teacher] works with the little kindergartners and first grade and second, on these little shows that they do, which really are not little shows. I mean, all the work that goes into—So you might have some kid up there that’s struggling in math, but they’re able to get up there and remember a dance and perform for their families and do it with so much pride and memorizing their lines in these songs. It just goes to show that they are capable of learning. It’s just a different aspect. Or those kids that do so well in band and all the work and effort. It shows that they care because of how much time and effort they dedicate to it and how they’re producing, and they get to travel. I don’t know. It’s just those types of things I think about. [Interview, Nov. 8, 2011]

We can see in this explanation that for this teacher, the notion of “whole child” encompasses the idea of teaching children in various curricular areas, beyond traditional academics, such as music and band, in order to reach these “other areas in their life”.

The School Instructional Programs (SIPS) Leader, Jose Serrano, described the school to me in this way:

I think that this school, everything we do here is about learners--the habitats, the language, the Arts, EL [Expeditionary Learning], right? For me those are the three big things, and Dual Language for sure, but not even Dual Language, but just the ability to speak your own language. To have that, to respect that, right? Dual Language is part of that, for sure, and the habitats and the idea of doing things that matter, because that's the only way you learn, right? I mean that's not the only way, but that's the most effective way; I won't say the only way. And then, the Arts, you know. And Arts means more than just the Arts, [its] just doing stuff, like supporting kids in their things, and I think that's, for me, that's it. It's child-centered. And everything emanates from that. [Interview, 3/23/2012]

Just as 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, Mrs. Winters, described the notion of the “whole child” in connection with offering Arts classes, such as music and band, within the curriculum, here again, the SIPs leader, Mr. Serrano, described being “child-centered” as the guiding reason for the variety of things people do at Desert Breeze. However, he goes beyond the idea of how being a “whole-child” school influences the inclusion of Arts, and discusses several other important curricular aspects of the school as well. He also includes language (i.e. Spanish) *and* the Dual Language program, the Arts, Expeditionary Learning (a curricular approach at the school), the animal habitats, and “doing things that matter” as key aspects of the curriculum at Desert Breeze.

In Mr. Serrano’s statements that, “everything we do here is about learners” and “everything emanates from that,” he tells us that the above-mentioned aspects of the curriculum are “*about* the learners” at Desert Breeze. He could have said that everything

was about “the Arts program” or that everything was about “language” both of which seem to be key aspects of the curriculum. However, he explains that these curricular aspects “emanate” from being child-centered. In this way, Mr. Serrano positions the idea of the “learner” as being the primary reason for everything they do. This places the learner *above* the curriculum and this positioning reveals that children, not the curriculum, are considered to be what is most important at Desert Breeze. Thus while the idea of the “whole child” includes the notion that the curriculum should provide children with opportunities to learn many different disciplines, not just traditional academics, it also includes the idea that learners are *more* important than the curriculum itself.

Parents, too, spoke about the idea that the curriculum at Desert Breeze helps children to grow in more ways than just academics. For example, one mother, Rosalba Lopez, told me:

Pues con los campamentos les han gustado porque pues no es igual si los lleva uno de la familia [en los campamentos], porque ellos conviven con muchos compañeros, pues, no? Y están afuera de la ciudad. Y hacen trabajos en conjunto, no? Como la fotografía y la música, el... lo que hagan de art, de todo, y es el drama y todo lo que hacen allí. Pues se divierten, hacen más con los compañeros. Yo pienso que todo eso para un niño les ayuda a crecer internamente, a tener un mente más abierto al mundo porque están conociendo cosas nuevas. [Interview, 3/1/2012]

[Well, they have enjoyed the camp-outs because, well, it’s not the same if their family takes them [to camp], because they spend time with many friends, right? And they are outside the city and do their work together, like photography and music... what they do for art, everything, and drama, and everything they do there. Well, they enjoy themselves; they do more with their friends. I think that all of this for a child, it helps them to grow internally, to have a more open mind, because they are getting to know about new things.]

This quote helps to show Mrs. Lopez’s belief in the value of learning about more than just academics at school. We hear how she believes learning experiences like the Arts



Quest Camp, which she describes here, are important for children to “grow internally” and to “have a more open mind”, both aspects of learning that she seems to consider important. Mrs. Lopez’s ideas, too, consider children in a more holistic way and seem connected to the idea of the “whole child”.

Another important idea related to the concept of the whole child is how this idea influences notions about success, and how to measure that success. For example, another 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, Becky Hammill, described the vision at Desert Breeze thus:

I just think that all kids have an opportunity to succeed and that that means different things for different people so, whether it's learning how to garden or build a table or play in a band, or you know, all of our Arts, as well as literacy in both languages, you know, mathematics and numbers; but that every child is valued, no matter what their language or culture. So, that's what I think we're striving for. [Interview, 11/29/2011]

Mrs. Hammill’s words again present the idea that the school’s various offerings beyond traditional academics, such as gardening, carpentry, band, and even academics, such as developing literacy in two languages, are ways that the school not only “values every child” but provides them “an opportunity to succeed”. This seems to suggest that she sees this wide array of offerings as different “entry points” into the curriculum and into a successful school experience. Thus, another important idea related to the “whole child” is the belief in offering children many different pathways to success.

To summarize, the idea of the “whole child” might be described thus: children have many different aspects to their lives, including different needs, various interests, and they bring different backgrounds to school, such as their culture and language. As Mr. Serrano suggested, the idea of being child-centered includes, “the ability to speak your own language” and “to respect that, right?” [Interview, 3/23/2012] As a result, teachers

and parents believe that experiences at school should extend beyond traditional academics and include many different opportunities to grow and learn, including opportunities for development in the Arts and other “Special Areas”, such as PE and sports, gardening and other outdoor learning experiences, and more than one language, in this case, English and Spanish. In chapter five, it will be demonstrated how all of the above ideas in relation to the “whole child” translate into key curricular and cultural practices at Desert Breeze School.

### **Belief in “Real Learning”**

Another common theme in describing the curriculum at Desert Breeze was the idea that learning should be “real” or “something that matters”. As with the idea of the “whole child”, this idea that learning should be “real” was expressed in both similar and different ways, but many people seemed to be talking about very similar underlying concepts in terms of what makes the curriculum at Desert Breeze “real” or “meaningful”, a key idea that was also often mentioned in connection with learning. For example, returning to the above quote by the SIPs leader, Mr. Serrano, the concept of the “whole child” or being “child-centered” also includes “the idea of doing things that matter because that’s the only way you learn, right? I mean, that’s not the only way but that’s the most effective way, right?” [Interview, 3/23/2012] Here we see the idea that learning is most effective when it involves doing things that “matter”. Although I am separating “whole child” and “real learning” as two different beliefs or principles for the ease of discussion, as suggested by Mr. Serrano, they are clearly interrelated concepts. Another quote helps to show this interrelationship of the “whole child” and “real learning”. Mrs. Winters, a 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher explained:

The whole experience is there for the child. There are academic experiences that are integrated with real world issues, with expeditionary learning, that are given to children, that athletics are given to children because different kids have different – people, not just kids. [Interview, 11/8/2012]

In the quote above we again hear the idea that learning should be a “whole” experience.

In other words, real learning, like the whole child, is a holistic concept and includes the idea that learning should create connections to the world beyond school.

One example of this approach of integrating “real world” issues with academic learning comes from Mr. Dominguez’s integrated dual language math and science junior high classroom. Mr. Dominguez often incorporated current events, history, popular culture, and even the names of students and teachers at Desert Breeze, into the math story problems and science lessons he presented to students. I noticed that the use of this kind of content, especially, using students’ and teachers’ own names in the story problems engaged students and seemed to make them more meaningful. On one day in particular, Mr. Dominguez, was teaching students how to figure out what math function was at work in a particular pattern of numbers. To demonstrate this, he created a story problem about U.S. spending on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The students were not only engaged in solving the math problem but also learning about the amount of money being spent - they were clearly surprised and asked Mr. Dominguez, “Is that true?” which led to a brief conversation about war spending. [Field notes, 11/10/2011]

I observed several different aspects of “real learning” in Mr. Dominguez’s teaching. During the same observation as above he had asked his students to write down and share questions that they had for “Koko, the talking gorilla,” a real life gorilla who had been taught to use sign language to communicate. Students engaged in a lively

conversation about the questions they wanted to ask Koko, including such questions as, “How does it feel to be different from other gorillas?” and “Does she feel special?” Mr. Dominguez complimented their questions, remarking, “There is no limit to our curiosity.” He also encouraged them to read a related fictional book called, *Ismael* by Daniel Quinn, a book he described as: “A young man... saying to himself... I feel like I should be doing more with my life. I feel like I should be helping the world...” and he went on to describe how this young man meets a talking gorilla who promises to teach him how to do just that. Mr. Dominguez followed this description of the book with the suggestion, “You’re going to have to read it!” The above examples show several elements of “real learning”: using a real world issue to teach math, the integration of science with literacy, and the way Mr. Dominguez encouraged student voice through the use of open-ended questions and class conversations. He also clearly values student thinking, as shown by his comment, “There’s no limit to our curiosity!” [Field notes, 11/10/2011]

Another aspect of “real learning” as explained by Mr. Dominguez, is the idea that “You need to be applying what you’re learning and practicing in order to be successful with language or with anything else really” [Interview, 4/20/2012]. A moment later he mentioned:

In years past, curriculum design has been much more centered around real-world topics and something relevant to the students’ lives. Whether it’s because of a Native American tribe that is from the area or because of gardening that that the students are now responsible for, we’ve tried to incorporate a lot of those things into the curriculum in the past. [Interview, 4/20/2012]

In the quote above we again hear the idea that “real learning” includes “real-world topics” that are “relevant to the students’ lives”. Third-fourth grade teacher, Mrs. Hammill, explained that:

I just feel like here at Desert Breeze, it's always got to be connected to something real, so when we're learning language, it's always within that context. And of course I'm going to connect it to the expeditions, but, their writing, their reading, the presenting that they do, the listening and speaking that they're doing, within their groups, everything is revolved around something that is meaningful to them, within the context of our study... So I just think we try to do it in a real, make it real, you know. We try to make it real and genuine" [Interview, 11/29/2011].

As we see in the above three quotes, "real learning" includes the ideas of framing learning experiences around real world issues and topics. It's the idea that learning should be "meaningful" and "genuine". It also includes elements of design, such as "expeditionary learning," a curricular approach that will be explained more thoroughly below, but which allows teachers and students to, in a sense, co-create the curriculum, because they are examining larger questions together, which leads to student-created final projects.

"Real learning" also includes the idea that learning should be connected to students' personal lives and local communities. It also extends to the idea of learning language and that learning language should also take place within a real context. The above descriptions and others like them often make use of the word "real" or other synonyms, such as "genuine" and "authentic" as a defining adjective of learning at Desert Breeze. Because this adjective or one like it was so often used by participants, I use the descriptor "real learning" as an umbrella term for a broad array of beliefs about learning. As will be related next, there were many other ideas about the curriculum at Desert Breeze that may not have specifically used the word "real", but these ideas still seemed aligned to the above descriptions of real world issues, teacher and student co-designed curriculum, learning that is connected to students' own lives, and that learning language should take place within a real context.

Sometimes the curriculum at Desert Breeze was described in terms of what goals or vision teachers had for students' learning. For example, Dual Language junior high teacher, Ms. Kessler, told me:

What we offer the kids is the possibility of exploring ideas, of becoming frustrated with certain things, because we're [not] spoon-feeding them knowledge. We're respecting them as human beings, as thinking human beings, and of course that is not easy. [Interview, 1/6/2012]

We see in the above quote the idea that learning at Desert Breeze also includes "exploring ideas" and "becoming frustrated with certain things". She also mentions a particular curricular approach, noting that for her teaching is about "respecting [students] as thinking human beings". So, for Ms. Kessler, encouraging students to grapple with ideas even to the point of "becoming frustrated with them" is an important part of teaching and learning at Desert Breeze and may be considered part of the umbrella term of "real learning". A moment later she added to this idea, telling me:

I feel like compared to what most junior high students are asked to do, our kids at Desert Breeze have done some wonderful, wonderful work. Which goes back to what [another teacher] said, that allows them to become thinkers, to become complete human beings, to become agents of their own change as individuals, and their own, in a limited way, with their families and in their communities. [Interview, 1/6/2012]

Both of Ms. Kessler's quotes reveal how, for her, teaching and learning should be about thinking critically, whether by allowing students to "explore ideas" or by helping them "to become agents of their own change as individuals". Thus, critical thinking, and agency are important aspects of real learning for this junior high teacher, and others like her who expressed similar ideas.

I saw many examples of the way Ms. Kessler worked to respect students, to provide them with opportunities to "explore ideas" and "become frustrated with certain

things”, and “to become agents of their own change as individuals” in her classes. For example, some of the techniques she used to encourage students to do this kind of critical thinking include the way she often had students write personal responses to what they read in their notebooks and then share these ideas with their classmates, such as this observation shows, “You’re sharing your whole response. You’re teaching, you’re sharing your learning with the person who’s listening to you” [Field notes, 11/15/2011]. This observational snippet reveals that Ms. Kessler expects students to teach and share their learning with their classmates, a practice which both demonstrates her respect for their thinking and which provides opportunity to practice exploring ideas about what they read rather than simply responding to a set of comprehension questions.

Another way she encourages students to “explore ideas” is by considering multiple viewpoints, such as this next classroom snippet reveals. As context, the students were completing their biography power points, and Ms. Kessler and a student had been talking about whether or not Che Guevara could be considered a “hero” and what the truth was about the circumstances of his death. The student asked, “Ms. Kessler, wasn’t him and Castro, like, together?” She responded to him, saying, “There’s always two sides, two points of view...” and then explained various stories about his death, concluding, “So there’s more than one version to why or how he was killed, so you need to read both sides, both points of view, and then make your own decisions as to what you want to believe” [Field notes, 10/19/2011]. The above conversation demonstrates how Ms. Kessler often asked students to think about ideas from more than one perspective.

This focus on critical thinking and agency can also be seen in the topics she asked student to investigate, such as two of the studies I saw while I was observing in her room:

child labor and service learning for a domestic abuse shelter. More detail will be given about the service learning study in the next chapter. These topics seemed to leave students thinking and making connections to their own lives. For example, after the students had completed their child labor study, the topic came up during one of my focus groups because I had asked students what they were learning about. One of the students made the following comment:

I used to, child labor, how I think of it, because, my mom was affected by that when she was a kid and she used to work, like, cleaning houses and stuff... Yeah, and well, I used to know about it, whenever I was younger, and now I'm getting more into it, now that it's worldwide, not just her. [Focus Group #5, 12/16/2011]

In the quote above we hear of a personal connection that a student has made between what he's been studying in social studies and his own life. His comment reveals that he's been thinking critically about this topic with the topic of child labor by making this connection and realizing that this topic is a global issue. It seems that this is the kind of thinking and "exploring of ideas" that Ms. Kessler described in the quotes above when she talked about her goals for her students.

Parents, too, spoke of this idea of "real learning". Again, although they expressed this idea in different ways, their idea included the notion that real learning extends beyond school, beyond "book- learning". For example, Mrs. Lopez said:

La educación escolar que se les dio también. Todo que ellos aprendieron no más de los libros pero lo que practicaron fuera de la escuela, verdad? No solamente las historias que les platicó los maestros pero también tuvieron mucho de explorar afuera de lo que estaban estudiando adentro y aprendieron muchas cosas y tuvieron muchos conocimientos de los maestros también. [Interview, 3/1/2012]

[The academic education that was given to them also. Everything that they learned, not only from books, but also what they practiced outside of school, right? Not only the stories that teachers told them but they explored beyond this and they learned many things from the teachers also.]



In Mrs. Lopez's words we hear the idea that real learning includes "not only learning from books" but includes opportunities to learn "outside of the school". This quote also includes the idea that students learn "from the teachers", seeming to imply from the teachers themselves. Thus, this parent perspective presents the idea that real learning also includes learning outside of school and from teachers themselves as well as from books.

Students often described the curriculum at Desert Breeze in terms of the special area classes they valued so highly. For example, one student told me:

Like all the different specials that we have, like, most schools don't normally have the Orchard and the animal habitat and it's really cool that we have that... Because you have, like, more different stuff. Like, not only reading textbooks and stuff, but like, learning really cool stuff. [Focus Group #3, 12/7/2011]

While this quote did come within the context of a student talking about the special area classes at Desert Breeze, I believe it provides insight to students' feelings about the traditional academic curriculum as well. It is similar to the parent's comment above that, at Desert Breeze, students learn "not only from books" but from the real world of experiences. In other discussions with students they mentioned specific activities that they enjoyed, or, upon prompting, specific topics they were studying.

Thus, we hear from a variety of Desert Breeze voices what the curriculum at Desert Breeze is like. They describe it in many different ways, but these various descriptions seem to point to many common and interrelated concepts. Here is a summary of ways people described the curriculum at Desert Breeze:

#### Broader Goals

- Students learn about democracy, advocacy, self-empowerment
- Students become thinkers, explore ideas, and create own meaning

- Students become agents

#### Approaches/Practices

- Created by teachers and/or students
- Goes In-depth/Expeditions
- Goes beyond the classroom or school setting
- Learning by “doing” /Applying what you learn/Project-based
- Real audience for student work (beyond teacher)

#### Content

- Real world issues and topics
- Content that is relevant to students’ lives

Like the concept of the “whole child”, the concept of “real learning” seemed to encompass various aspects of the curriculum, which can be broadly categorized, as shown above, into three main areas: broader goals, teaching approaches/practices, and lesson content. Also similarly to the concept of the “whole child”, the ideas behind “real learning” were translated into the curriculum in a variety of ways, as will be shown in chapter five.

### **Belief in “A Sense of Community”**

In describing Desert Breeze, overwhelmingly, nearly every person I spoke with described Desert Breeze as having a strong sense of community or even of being like a family. For example, one junior high student commented, “It feels like we’re all, like, a family, like, we all care about each other and if somebody got hurt, we would all be worried about each other” [Focus Group #4, 12/15/2011]. Another junior high student commented, “It feels good because I’ve been in this school for eight years, and like I

said, I feel a part of the Desert Breeze community. It feels good to be a part of it.” His classmate agreed, saying, “I think it’s the same thing. It feels good to be a member of the family of staff and everyone.”[Focus Group #5, 12/16/2011]

Parents’ comments mirror those of students. For example, one mother, Mrs. Lopez, told me, “Es un ambiente familiar... Es familiar porque hay muchas escuelas donde educan a los niños y lo dejan hasta allí y no más, no?” [Interview, 3/1/2012] [“It’s a family environment... It’s family-like because there are a lot of schools that teach children and leave it at that, and no more, right?”] While, another mother, Mrs. Inéz, didn’t specifically use the word “family” to describe the environment at Desert Breeze, she did say:

Esta escuela me gusta mucho porque hay muy buenos maestros que, sí son muy atentos y también me gusta porque, como muchas cosas. Mr. Watts tiene su granja para llevar a los niños a la huerta y siembran. O sea, eso es algo bonito que les ayuda a ellos, y luego tienen esa granjita aquí anterior, de los animals. A mí es algo muy bonito. Entre todos lo que me gustan aquí. Y luego, apoyan también a nosotros, los padres de familia. Por ejemplo, tenemos *Rosetta Stone* para aprender inglés. Podemos tenernos comunicación, por ejemplo, nos reunimos para ir a la huerta, para sembrar, para que tengan para, o sea, que esas son experiencias bonitas para los niños para que les enseñen y sepan lo que es bueno, la fruta orgánica, la verdura que también es orgánica. Es muy bonito, sí, me gusta, la verdad. Y es que son cosas también que son oportunidades que nos ofrecen para los padres que quieren aprovecharlos. [Interview, 3/8/2012]

[I like this school a lot because there are many good teachers that are very attentive and I also like it because, well for many reasons. Mr. Watts has his farm, for taking the children to the Orchard, and they plant. Or, I mean, it’s something beautiful that helps them and then they have that little farm here, with the animals. To me, this is something very beautiful. I like everything here. And then, they support us, as well, the parents. For example, we have *Rosetta Stone* to learn English. We can communicate amongst ourselves, for example, we meet to go to the Orchard, to plant, so that they can have, or, rather, these are beautiful experiences for the children, so that they can teach them and so they know what’s good, the organic fruit, the vegetables are also organic. It’s really beautiful. Yes, in truth, I like it. These are things that are opportunities that they offer to parents that we want to take advantage of.]

Mrs. Inéz's comment reveals many aspects that for her, make the school special, including the opportunity for parents and their children to spend time together at the Orchard, a nearby community center which partners with the school.

Teachers also spoke about the school community in terms of a family. For example, one of the Resource teachers, Sally Southern, commented:

I think it's almost being part of a family. I think that's the feeling that you get at this school, especially when I first got here, that people watch out for each other; they care about each other. They take care of each other. The kids are all of our kids. I don't have them one year and then they're not mine. [Interview, 11/17/2011]

Ms. Southern's remark echoes the students' comments above, that being at Desert Breeze is like being "part of a family" and that people at Desert Breeze "care about each other".

The Intervention Specialist, María Chacón, also mentioned "family" as a descriptor:

I just think it's like we're a community, and not only a community, but like a family. Parents feel welcomed here whether it's because of the language or just different things—and I've heard a lot of people saying that walking in here you get a whole different feeling... And maybe that's because we feel comfortable with who we are and where we come from. [Interview, 4/5/2012]

The words of these students, teachers, and parents all show how Desert Breeze school community members feel a sense of community at the school, often describing this feeling as being "like a family". Next, we'll examine some of other beliefs and experiences in relation to these notions of community and family, such as a belief in the importance of relationships.

Desert Breeze school community members mentioned a variety of reasons they believed the school to have a strong community feeling. For example, in the quote above, Mrs. Chacón, attributes this family feeling to the idea that parents feel welcome at school

because they can use Spanish, which allows them to feel comfortable with “who we are”. Her perspective of how the school welcomes parents becomes especially salient when we consider that her own children, now grown, attended Desert Breeze, and that she began her, thus far 16-year career at Desert Breeze, as a paraprofessional before teaching in the Dual Language program and then eventually, after earning her Masters in Counseling, becoming the school’s Intervention Specialist. In fact, her grown daughter, a Desert Breeze graduate, is now the school secretary. Echoing this idea that “parents feel welcome”, the Parent Coordinator, Isabel Orellana, also currently a Desert Breeze parent, who first became involved with the school as a volunteer, remarked, “I mean, I know the staff was always welcoming and I just got to know the staff. I think being welcomed by staff made me feel welcomed in the school” [Interview, 4/11/2012].

These kinds of comments about parents feeling welcome were repeated often across my interviews. For example, the band teacher, Emilio Garcia, commented, “It’s a very friendly climate here. I think parents feel welcome on campus. There’s community support. I think all that works together” [Interview, 11/8/2011]. This sense of welcome was also often attributed to the use of Spanish as well as accepting and honoring families’ cultures at school. A moment later, Mr. Garcia, told me:

Part of it is the Arts, but part of it is, I think, could be the language, too, and the way that Hispanics are perceived here and accepted, I think, here at Desert Breeze more than other schools. I think that they see that the culture is, I think, preserved a little more here than other schools. [Interview, 11/8/2011]

We hear above that, in Mr. Garcia’s opinion, the community feeling at school has to do with the way Spanish is used and also that Latino culture is valued at Desert Breeze.

Third/fourth grade teacher, Becky Hammill, also expressed this relationship between

being a bilingual campus and parents feeling comfortable and welcome, saying, “And the parents are still welcomed and the parents are still valued and teachers are still bilingual to speak with them even if we can’t instruct [at the K-4 level], so really, I think it’s still positive.” [Interview, 11/29/2011]

Another common reason cited for this feeling of community was that fact that people feel comfortable at the school. The band teacher, Mr. Garcia, commented, “There’s kids here all the time, and it’s a very comfortable environment. I can come here at any time in the evening and feel comfortable here” [Interview, 11/10/2011]. Third and fourth grade teacher, Becky Hammill, also remarked:

I just think that the kids are, that we feel safe and that they feel accepted, no matter what, and it’s hard for me because this is all I know, really, but I hear from other people, ‘Oh my gosh! Your kids are so, like, comfortable in their own skin!’ They’re comfortable here. They don’t put each other down, and yeah, of course, once in a while you’re going to have it, but I think on the whole our kids take care of each other. Our kids love each other. And I’ve heard that doesn’t go on at all the schools.” [Interview, 11/29/2011]

In the words above, we hear more about how the ability for students to feel comfortable at school helps to contribute to the community feeling. In addition, Mrs. Hammill suggests that this feeling of safety and comfort allows students to get along and care about each other, to “love each other”. Thus, again, we hear the idea of Desert Breeze being like a family.

One important aspect of the belief in community, as mentioned above, is that relationships are just as important, if not more important, than academic curriculum. In fact, the former principal, Jim Watts, told me that:

I say that the “sacred ground” of a school is one that places the primary principle of operation in relationships: relationships to self, relationships to other human

beings, relationships to animals, to the planet, to the experience. [Interview, Jan. 6, 2012]

This idea that relationships were "sacred" to school was expressed many times by those I interviewed. For instance, when I asked students to describe what was important to them about Desert Breeze, many students mentioned relationships with teachers and with each other. For example, one junior high student mentioned, "I really like the atmosphere, I guess. I really like how the teachers react with you. You could have a good relationship with the teacher and they're understanding and stuff." [Focus Group #3, 12/7/2011] Her friend agreed, saying, "Well, yeah, like all the teachers, they understand you if you don't get something. Well, like, I guess some teachers, they've like, been where you have." And yet another student added to this, "Being a student at Desert Breeze is like, happy. If you've been a student at this school for a long time, you like, connect to it. Like how teachers are your friends and some are part of your family and you could tell some teachers how you feel, and like, pride in being a student at Desert Breeze." [Focus Group #3, 12/7/2011]

Parents, too, seemed to place great value on relationships. The following quote did not follow my sacred ground question, but interestingly came within a discussion of the state's policies, which she disagreed with, explaining that not only did she see them as racist, but as interfering with what she called a "complete education". I followed up with this comment to see what she meant:

Sarah: So, en su opinión, una educación completa, qué sería?

Rosalba: Pues, que los niños llevan... que quieren terminar una carrera bien y si llevan los dos idiomas, o tres o no le hace, o sea, no se va arrastrar a nada, verdad? Al contrario es un beneficio. Pueden extenderse en otras áreas, no solamente en lo que están. Estudiando una cosa, pues, pueden aprender muchas

cosas más - de cultura, de la gente, pues. Pueden relacionarse con otras personas. No, no más con los Anglos, pues. [Interview, 3/1/12]

[Sarah: So, in your opinion, what would a complete education be?

Rosalba: Well, that the kids take away... that they want to finish with a good career and if they take away two languages, or three, or however many, or in other words, it's not going to slow them down, right? On the contrary, it's a benefit. They can extend themselves into other areas, not only the one in which they find themselves. Studying one thing, well, they can learn many more things - about culture, about people. They can relate with other people, not just with Anglos.]

Thus, again, we hear the belief that part of the purpose of school is learning about other people and how to relate to other people, especially, perhaps, those different from ourselves.

Teachers, too, mentioned the importance they placed on relationships. For example, in regards to what her "sacred ground" of school would be, junior high teacher, Mrs. Spangler, told me:

Giving [students] the opportunity to discover and make mistakes and to learn from their mistakes, and having a relationship with each other and the adults in their lives. I've always said this - I don't think that my students are going to remember, maybe one or two things that I taught them - but they're going to remember me, and they're going to remember the relationship that they had with me and with their peers and the other adults on campus... [Interview, 1/6/2012]

Her words seem to be an echo of the former principal's own vision about relationships as the "primary principle of operation". In fact, this idea seems to suggest that relationships are *as* important as the content of the curriculum. Thus, in the sample of quotes above, from across the various groups of school community members, we hear a valuing of relationships and the belief that relationships are an important part of school.

To conclude this section on beliefs about the community at Desert Breeze, we hear that many people feel a strong sense of community, to the point where the community almost feels "like a family". We also heard that many people feel that



speaking Spanish, having close relationships, and caring for one another also contributes to that community feeling. As one Desert Breeze graduate, currently a junior in high school, said:

I think we can all generalize that that's what we love most about Desert Breeze - how close you get, whether it's like, to a staff member or the students. Like, everyone's just so close and open to each other. It's not like... I mean, I'm not saying there weren't any cliques there because there were, but just because everyone had their own group of friends doesn't mean there wasn't a point where everyone came together... No matter what it was and everyone was always so involved with the community, and that's what makes it, to me personally, so special about it. [Interview, 3/9/2012]

This shared sense of community is significant because my assertion, as will be discussed more fully in chapter seven, is that this strong feeling of community, this sense of family and connectedness amongst teachers, students, and families, is an important part of how the school community has been able to sustain the Dual Language program and the use of Spanish at the school.

### **Beliefs About Language, Culture, and Identity**

Desert Breeze school community members shared a variety of beliefs they held about language, culture, and identity. However, before sharing what these beliefs were, it is important to take a moment to explain more about the context of people at Desert Breeze. As mentioned in chapter three, when I described my research site, the majority of students at Desert Breeze may be considered to be Latino (about 90%) and to be English learners (about 65%). However, I wanted my participants to describe themselves so that I would have a better understanding of how people at Desert Breeze see themselves. Therefore, at the beginning of every interview, I asked each person to describe his or her linguistic, cultural and ethnic background.

Many students, parents, and teachers I interviewed described themselves in the following ways: Mexican, Mexican American, Hispanic, Latin American, and Latino. Some parents and teachers also told me that they identified themselves more specifically as Nicaraguan, Guatemalan, and Yaqui. This helps to show that although one group at Desert Breeze could broadly be described as “Latino”, within this broad group, there were many more ways people saw themselves. For ease of discussion, I often use this broader term of Latino, but feel it is important to include a discussion of the diversity within that broader characterization. Other students, parents, and teachers also described themselves as: Japanese American, being of a variety of European descents such as Irish, Scottish, Italian, and/or German, and being from particular regions of the country, such as the Midwest or New York. Furthermore, many people described themselves as being Spanish-speakers, bilingual/multilingual in Spanish, English, and sometimes another language such as Japanese or Yaqui, or English speakers. Their descriptions revealed to me that the people at Desert Breeze come from a wide variety of linguistic, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds and describe these backgrounds in different ways.

Interestingly, my question about linguistic, cultural, and ethnic background often prompted discussion about what these terms mean. Students often asked me what I meant by these terms and I told them how I described myself as an example. In describing themselves, adults, at times, ended up shared their beliefs about these ideas. For example, one teacher told me, “I’m a native English speaker. I’m American. I’m white. I’m just American. You know, I don’t go around talking about Irish or German American, I’m just American but obviously Spanish was my second language.” [Interview, 11/29/11] Another teacher told me, “I have a hard time describing my culture because I think of it

like I'm a fish in water. A fish – how does a fish describe water?" [Interview, 11/8/2011]

During one group interview, the educators I spoke with took several minutes to discuss this concept. For example, one teacher said:

Because culture, and you know how some people from Mexico describe themselves as just being Mexicans, but what does that really mean because you have Mexicans of African descent and Mexicans of Jewish descent and then you have Mexicans who are gay and they're a culture, and then you have Mexicans who happen to be, I don't know, Gothics, and they're also a kind of culture, and then you have Mexicans like me who happen to be atheist, and that's a different culture, or you happen to have Mexicans from Mexico City who are into Native American dances and they call themselves, and they have a different religion, they are not Catholics, and they call themselves Aztecs, and they're a culture, so culture is, like, really big. [Interview, 1/6/2012]

Her colleague added:

But also if you kind of take it down to a microscopic level it's also, you know, somebody else comes from a Jewish culture or a white, New York, Bronx culture. I mean, I really break it down for the kids to family because everybody's family has their own unique cultural structure and even though you may be, as you said, you may both be Mexican, but your families cultures will be totally different. [Interview, 1/6/2012]

The former principal continued with this by saying: "I don't think you can tie it to ethnicity. I mean, what we're doing right now is a cultural experience and there's a context that's very cultural but it isn't necessarily drawing dots to ethnical experience."

[1/6/2012] The above comments demonstrate the complexities that many participants recognized in describing language, culture, and ethnicity.

At times, teachers related, and perhaps equated, feelings of cultural identity to national identity. For example, one participant spoke passionately about how she didn't want to use any identifiers in front of the term "American". She said, "That's why when you asked me that first question, I don't say I'm Irish-American, I'm German-American. I'm an American." Another teacher also told me how he had problems with this question

of culture, saying, “I have problems with it and I don’t like that because one thing they taught us in the Marines - they’re like, ‘You’re all Americans. Period.’” He went on to say:

When I first came to Desert Breeze, I was asked what I was. They were like, “What are you?” I’m like, even my dad, goes “You’re American. Born and raised.” And then I came here and I’m like, “I’m American.” People got angry because I said I’m American. I don’t see a problem with that. But in my mind, if people thought more like that and said, “It doesn’t matter what color you are” I think that people would get along a little bit better. [Interview, 4/11/2012]

The complexities of linguistic, cultural, and ethnic identity seemed to contribute to some the reason why a few Desert Breeze teachers expressed their perspective that sometimes these descriptors of difference become divisive. A couple of teachers also shared experiences, either their own, or of their children or other students, of at times feeling left out for not speaking Spanish or that other cultures besides “Latino” culture were excluded from the curriculum at Desert Breeze. These issues will be discussed further on in this section.

### **Language is Part of Cultural Identity**

Many people conveyed their belief that language, in this case, Spanish, is an important part of cultural identity. For example, one 6<sup>th</sup> grader commented, “I think another language is important because it’s, like, part of your culture... For instance, if you’re Mexican American, you could talk both languages, and like he said, two is better than one.” [Focus Group #10, 4/13/2011] A junior high student expressed it this way, “I think it’s ‘tight’ to be able to learn [Spanish] in school because it’s kind of, like, my background...” [Focus Group #3, 12/7/2011] During another focus group with former Desert Breeze students, they discussed the relationship between language and identity in

depth, although they described identity in terms of a “world” as seen in the following exchange:

St 1: And knowing two different languages... Spanish, for me, is like another world. You might say, "Oh, that's kind of cheesy" but...

St 2: It's true!

St 1: But it's another world and if you talk English, that's your world - the music, the traditions, and everything. If you talk Spanish it's like a whole different... everything's different. And that's a door that Desert Breeze would open to you by having the double...

St 2: [whispers] Nice word!

St 1: The dual enrollment, the dual language classes is that it's showing you other worlds that you would never...

St 3: Well, consider before

St 1: Consider

The main student in this exchange, Diego’s, idea of Spanish being another world expresses his belief that language is much more than what we speak, but that it also influences how we live, the way we see our world – as he says, our “music, the traditions, and everything”. This sentiment can be related to some of the other things this group of students discussed with me. He also had told me:

Well, Spanish was my first language, so that's... There's more bigger words that I use to help me explain how I'm feeling or something. And in English, well, I still feel the same way, but I think, like in Spanish, I don't know, but there's the words... I don't know how to explain it. [Focus Group #8, 3/9/2012]

He went on to tell me that he felt more of a connection with Mexican styles of music, such as *Banda* or *Grupero*, explaining, "Yeah, and just, like, the lyrics of the songs, I don't know, they're more...well, more meaningful." It seems, based on the above quotes, that for Diego, Spanish is a world that is just a little bit more meaningful, a world that he

grew up in and in which he can express himself just a little bit more completely. In other words, Spanish is an important part of his identity.

Parents also told me that they wanted their children to learn Spanish because it was an important part of who they were. As one mom expressed:

También es importante el español porque no quiero que mi hija se olvide mi... que se olvide... Cómo se dice? Mi... pues, sí, mi lenguaje. Quiero que también sepa mi lenguaje. Sí. Es algo muy importante para mí y mi esposo. Soy orgullosa de ser Mexicana. Soy orgullosa de mi español. [Interview, 3/8/2012]

[Spanish is also important because I don't want my daughter to forget my... to forget... How do I say it? My...well, yes, my language. I want her to also know my language. Yes. It's something very important for my husband and I. I am proud to be Mexican. I am proud of my Spanish.]

For this parent, it is important for her daughter to learn Spanish because, as her words imply, speaking Spanish is part of how she identifies as being Mexican and an important part of her identity. Thus she sees it as an important part of her daughter's identity as well.

One of the ELL coordinators, whose children also previously attended Desert Breeze, talked to me about why it was important to her that her younger daughter, who had never shown much interest in learning Spanish before, learn it: "Now she's understanding the concept of why we want Spanish - because it's part of our culture, our tradition, and you don't want to lose it. You want to continue it, and now she's seeing that, so now she's pushing it more" [Interview, 4/9/2012]. A moment later she added:

My fear has always been with my daughters, is when my husband and I are gone, when my family's gone, that my daughters won't know their language and don't know their cultures and their traditions. So I tell them, learn your Spanish - it's up to you if you want to learn it or not, but it's part of who you are - don't forget where you come from! [Interview, 4/9/2012]

It is clear in the quote above that this mother considers language to be an important part of cultural identity. In fact, she explicitly used the idea of identity to describe her feelings about Spanish for herself, saying: "I didn't forget my Spanish, which sometimes people do" and later added "I feel proud to be Mexican. I wasn't born there, but my parents were and I know who I am. I think its identity for yourself" [Interview, 4/9/2012].

When I talked about language with educators, they too, told me they felt language to be an important part of identity. For example, the School Programs Specialist, Jose Serrano told me, "I believe that in terms of identity, language is key. Is it the most important thing? No, but for the cultural identity thing to last more than two generations, yeah. It's very, very important" [Interview, 3/23/2012]. A moment later he elaborated on this idea:

For instance, half the kids here don't speak Spanish. Most of them are Latinos, right? But their identity is also English. Their identity is as Americans. And they'll say, "I'm Mexican" at the same time that they'll say, "I'm from here." And that comes from English. It doesn't come from Spanish because if they only spoke Spanish, even if they were Chicanos, they would say they were from there [Mexico]. [Interview, 3/23/2012]

This quote shows how educators, too, view language as an important part of identity.

### **Spanish is Necessary for Family Communication**

In addition to talking about the relationship between language and identity, many students and parents also talked about how speaking Spanish was important for sharing schoolwork, communicating with one another, and staying connected with extended family. For example, during several focus groups students told me that they chose to do their work in Spanish, "because I want, like, if my parents see, I want my parents to know what I'm doing" [Focus group #3, 12/7/2011]. In addition, two junior high students told

me: “Like, some of your family members don't speak English, so you have a little trouble explaining to them what you're saying in Spanish” and “You could communicate better to people you know. Most of the people I know are Mexican and my cousins are all Mexican, too. My family. So if I only talked English it would be kind of hard to communicate with them” [Focus Group #2, 12/6/2012]. The above quotes show that students value being able to learn in Spanish because they can share their learning with their families and maintain their Spanish proficiency so that they can communicate with their family.

For students, Spanish is important for family communication but for many parents Spanish is not only important but also necessary. Parenting becomes more difficult when there is a breakdown in communication due to language. One parent told me:

A veces los niños se ponen en inglés con algunas cosas y a veces me dificulta porque tengo que preguntar, "Qué dijiste?" Entonces es un poco difícil para mí. O a veces ellos si están peleando. Están peleando en inglés y no entiendo lo que están diciendo. Ellos están hablando y les pregunto, "Pues, qué están diciendo?" O le pregunto a otro, como a mi niño más chiquito. Le pregunto, "Pues, qué dicen los grandes?" Y él me dice. Y eso es lo que me dificulta, en la casa - El no poder... La comunicación. A veces yo les regaño y les llamo la atención en español y me responden en inglés. Pues, eso, sí, me dificulta. [Interview, 2/8/2012]

[Sometimes the children start talking in English about things and sometimes it's difficult because I have to ask, "What did you say?" Then it's a little bit difficult for me. Or sometimes they are fighting. They're fighting in English and I don't understand what they're saying. They're talking and I ask them, "Well, what are you saying?" Or I ask someone else, like my youngest. I ask him, "Well, what are the big kids saying?" And he tells me. And that's what's difficult, in the house - the not being able... The communication. Sometimes I scold them and I get their attention in Spanish and they answer me in English. Well, yes, that's what's difficult.]

As we hear from the voices above, Spanish is not only an important part of cultural identity, but an integral part of family communication as well. Children's language



choices, whether to complete some of their school work in Spanish so that their parents will understand or to use English during a sibling squabble so that their parents won't understand, affect family communication patterns. Children's language ability, too, has an affect. Several parents lamented the fact that the Dual Language program at Desert Breeze is no longer offered at the K-4 grade levels and told me they saw a diminishing ability to use Spanish with their youngest children who were now in the English-medium classrooms. As this mom told me:

El niño más chiquito, como no está en el programa de doble lenguaje, se me parece que está perdiendo el español porque hay cosas que dice y dice no me los sabe en español y así lo está perdiendo. En la casa yo trato, pero así es. [Interview, 2/8/2012]

[The youngest, since he is not in the dual language program, it seems like he is losing his Spanish because there are things that he says and he tells me he doesn't know them in Spanish and that's how he's losing it. I try [to teach him] at home, but that's how it is.]

From the quote above, we hear how, learning Spanish at school is important to parents because they feel that without this opportunity, language ability begins to be lost.

### **Being Bilingual is an Advantage**

Many people at Desert Breeze also expressed many reasons why they saw being bilingual as an advantage. One of these reasons was that bilingualism provides more opportunity for future careers. Many students spoke about how they saw the ability to speak both Spanish and English as something which would help them in their future jobs and or make them more marketable in their careers. For example, one sixth-grader, not in the Dual Language program, said:

I think most important to learn is the language – language and reading – because mostly my dad says that I need to learn more Spanish than he did, because if I'm

going to become a doctor or something, they might ask me in Spanish, so I could explain it to them in Spanish, too. [Focus Group #12, 4/10/2012]

We hear in the above comment that this student feels Spanish will be an asset to her in her potential future career as a doctor. We also hear that her family values the opportunity for her to learn Spanish at school. In a similar vein, one junior high student told me: “I want to be a nurse, and you get paid better.” [Focus Group #3, 12/7/2011] Another junior high student commented, “Because you’ve got more opportunity to get your job, like we said earlier. Like if there was a person who only knew English it would be more possible that they would pick me.” [Focus Group #4, 12/15/2011]

Students also commented that knowing two languages made it easier to learn a third. For example, one junior high student commented, “If you know already two languages, you can know a different one” and her classmate agreed, saying, “Like, if you learn Spanish, you can learn other languages easier because most other European, like Italian and all that stuff, it has some Spanish words in it.” [Focus Group #2, 12/6/2011]

Related to this idea was the idea that knowing more than one language “makes you smarter”. For example, the band teacher, Mr. Garcia, remarked, “I’ve always believed the more languages you know the smarter person you are. That’s why I was kind of flabbergasted that they were pushing you should just know English because it’s been known for a long time the more languages you speak, the more intelligent you are and the more you know about lots of things and cultures.” [Interview, 11/8/2011]

### **Focus on Spanish Language and Latino Culture Leaves Some People Out**

Many people felt that valuing Spanish speakers and the culture of Spanish speakers at Desert Breeze is an important part of building an inclusive community at

Desert Breeze. However, some people also shared the concern that the effort to value Spanish and the Latino community and teaching about the cultural traditions and history of Hispanic cultures, particularly, that of Mexico, had resulted in other cultural traditions and histories being left out of the curriculum and culture of Desert Breeze. Thus, although school community members shared many of the same values in relation to language in general, Spanish and English in particular, and bilingualism, there were a few voices that expressed concern about some of the school's practices, particularly related to the curriculum. For example, one Anglo teacher said:

There is a little bit of getting used to being the minority. There is a little bit of getting used to not understanding, you know? I'm not offended when people just talk Spanish and know I can't understand, but do I think it's just a little impolite? Yes. I haven't quite gotten over that, you know. It's just not okay. [Interview, 4/10/2012]

In the above quote, we see that, this teacher feels some discomfort at not speaking Spanish. She also expressed a few other concerns, saying:

When I have had, like IEP meetings or something and someone has to translate, I'm not always completely comfortable with that because you don't know what people are saying and in that I have a stake... So that's been kind of an interesting lesson, having to let go of that. And I already told you I failed miserably at learning to speak Spanish. I may try again, you know, sort of thing, but yet I chose to put myself in that situation because I do see the importance of it. Do I think that the students need to learn English? Absolutely. I mean English is the language of this country. [Interview, 4/10/2012]

In the quote above, we hear the belief that, because English is “the language of this country” students need to learn it. Other voices, too, shared this idea. While the majority of faculty at Desert Breeze may be bilingual, the voices of monolingual English speakers help us to realize that while the norm may be to speak Spanish or that it is okay to speak Spanish, not everyone feels comfortable with this all the time.

It appears that some students feel similarly left out, at times, from the Dual Language program. When I spoke with the Intervention Specialist, a Latina woman, whose parents were from Mexico but who was born and grew up in the U.S., in the same school district, in fact, speaking both Spanish and English, told me how some of her non-Dual Language students shared that they felt "segregated" from the Dual Language kids. She related the following story to me:

Something that has come up with a lot of the kids is, and I don't know - I've been kind of thinking about this - like are kids just telling me this or are the teachers...? Because, like I said, I do groups with the junior high kids. One little girl tells me, she's in junior high, she said, "I feel that we're segregated." I said, "What do you mean?" She goes, "Yeah I do." I said, "Well, what...?" She goes, "Never mind, never mind." I said, "No, no, no, no," I said. "Remember what is our class about?" She goes, "Okay, because you have the Dual Language kids over there and then we're over here. It's like they're in their own world. We're in our world." I go, "So what do you mean?" She said, "I don't like that." [Interview, 4/5/2012]

In the quote above, we hear echoes of the analogy of Spanish and English being different "worlds" but in this case it is the division between the Dual Language and non-Dual Language classes that causes this student to feel like that. While I do not know the particular linguistic, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds of the specific non-Dual Language students whom the Intervention Specialist is referring to, I did observe that the vast majority of students in the Dual Language program are Latino while the non-Dual Language classes also include many more African-American and Anglo students as well as Latino students. It is possible then, that some of the non-Dual Language students, who felt that the Dual Language and non-Dual Language students were segregated, saw this segregation as happening along racial or linguistic lines.

Interestingly, the two ELL Coordinators, both Latinas, whose kids had also graduated from Desert Breeze years before, also told me how they observed this

separation between the Dual Language and non-Dual Language or English-medium students:

Me, being that both of my daughters were in all-English classes, I noticed a difference. I noticed a difference with Carla and her friends in an all English class and then I noticed a difference with kids in a Dual Language class because the majority of what I saw, the majority of Dual Language kids were kids either born to Mexican parents or kids born in Mexico, that's what I saw most of because the parents put them in there to support the language.... It was very rare you would see a kid that both of his parents were from Mexico and in an all-English class... I saw the difference, to me, that that group of Dual Language and all English classes as segregated, too. [Interview, 4/9/2012]

In the quote above we hear this parent and educator's perspective that shows that she, too, sees a separation of students along the lines of their national origin or that of their families. Hence, while many school community members spoke of the feeling of comfort, welcome, and strong community they felt at Desert Breeze, these other views help us to see that while there may be a strong community in place, some see divisions within the community, and for some students, the separation between Dual Language and non-Dual Language students felt like a form of segregation.

### **Trying to Balance Things Out is Now Going Too Far**

In describing the process of valuing Spanish at Desert Breeze, a former Dual Language teacher, who identified herself as a native English speaker, American, and White, as well as bilingual, talked about how the school tries to balance the value given to Spanish and Mexican cultural traditions and history in the curriculum. For example, she said:

So, language is culture, right? Knowing that there's really no separating of language and culture, this school really tried to balance the value given to Spanish and that culture because of the dominant language being English, so curriculum-wise, [in] the curriculum also, we valued, to try to make that balance. [Interview, 11/29/2011]

However, she went on to describe how, while she used to see this attempt to balance the scales as positive, she is now concerned that teaching about Mexican and Latino cultural traditions and history has been over-valued at Desert Breeze, costing the valuing and teaching of "American" culture. She explained:

So we tried to really, you know, give them more of a broad perspective. But then in hindsight, I've looked back at my own son, who is not in that culture - okay, he's in the dominant [Anglo] culture - but the American history, like my kids, back then, my students knew more about Benito Juarez and the history of Mexico than they did about our own history. But I think in the process, we forgot that no, where are they going to hear that then, if not here? So in one way I've felt now that, I feel that it is important for the kids here, whether they were born here or not, regardless of their culture, because I do feel that the American whatever it is, we as Americans, whether you were born here or not, I feel that we need to have an identity to be strong also, and that's why when you asked me that first question, I don't say I'm an Irish-American, I'm a German-American... I'm an American and I hope that my students, whether they're Mexican-American or whatever, I feel that I hope that some point, without losing their own culture and value for that, that they would somehow feel pride to be a part of this American dream, too.  
[Interview, 11/29/2011]

In the words above, we hear that this teacher feels some conflict with the multicultural curriculum at Desert Breeze. She suggests that this curriculum has taken the place of teaching "American" history. Her words express a larger cultural discourse about a common American identity – an identity without a hyphen preceding it. In fact, her next words reveal another conflict she feels in regard to what that American identity is about:

I still feel like, okay, there's been a push against the melting pot, and now it's tossed salad or whatever, but in some ways does that weaken us? Because if you're your own group, and you're in your own group and nobody really feels like we have an American something to join us together, then who are we? We're just a bunch of separate, basically, countries, cultures, languages... so I still believe in that melting pot of yes, bring your culture, bring your language, bring your... who you are... but something has to be the glue to join us all together as Americans, or else what are we doing?

Her comments, again, express a larger cultural debate about whether America should be more like a “melting pot” or a “tossed salad”. These are questions about American identity but they are also questions about how that identity should be created or defined. Her statement that, “something has to be the glue to join us all together,” begs the question of what that “glue” might be. Is it a common history, a common set of cultural traditions, a common language? But if this is the case, then whose history, traditions, and language do we use? Although she had once been a Dual Language teacher and felt that the value given to Spanish and Mexican and Latino history and culture at Desert Breeze was a well-meaning attempt to balance the scales, she now felt that it had gone *too far* the other way and had ended up working toward reverse discrimination.

Again, other voices echoed this concern. Another Anglo teacher whose children had attended Desert Breeze, felt that their experience had been somewhat marginalized because their cultural heritage was not taught, or celebrated. She commented to me:

In that way that's interesting to me - we talk about diversity, but, for example, because - now this is where I'm coming from as a parent - I think about, like, when my boys were going through and they would talk about, let's learn about other cultures, which was really let's talk about the Hispanic culture. It was never - I mean, I would think you would talk about maybe the Hispanic culture and then let's look at the German culture, whatever, the French culture or something, something that we're not even associated with at all to get more of a global perspective or a more diverse perspective, but it never really seemed to get that far. I don't know. Does that make sense? [Interview, 11/8/2011]

In this teacher's view, although the goal of the culture and curriculum at Desert Breeze was to focus on diversity and as the other teacher expressed, "balance the value given to Spanish and that culture" she feels that they have done so at the expense of valuing other cultures as well. She, too, feels that the scale is now tipped too far the other way. This

affects the experience of students who are not part of this “minority-majority”, such as her own children, as she mentioned next:

I feel like we talk about diversity, but then when I really look at it, I'm like, maybe not as much as we think we do because we're trying to make sure that our majority, which is a minority, but our majority group is feeling validated. I think it also, even though in the larger picture my kids are part of the majority, they never felt like that. They always felt marginalized, to the side. [Interview, 11/8/2011]

For this teacher’s children, their experience has been the opposite of what Desert Breeze has tried to compensate for. As part of a minority group at Desert Breeze, she feels that her own children have been "marginalized".

It is noteworthy that these two teachers who feel that their children’s backgrounds have been left out of the curriculum, and who feel that, in a sense, their children have experienced a form of “reverse discrimination” at Desert Breeze, are Anglo teachers. Their concerns are certainly valid, however, their concerns must also be placed within the larger sociocultural and social-historical context of the U.S. more generally, and the Southwest in particular. Although Latino students may add up to a numerical majority in many schools in Arizona, the Latino community has experienced a long history of marginalization and discrimination within the state, and within the state’s schools. In fact, many Latino teachers at Desert Breeze, whom I interviewed, spoke about experiencing linguistic discrimination growing up, often within the same school district in which Desert Breeze is located. Additionally, currently within Arizona, there is strong anti-immigrant sentiment within the legislation and public discourse, as evidenced by Senate Bill 1060, which authorizes all law enforcement officials to detain anyone suspected of



being an illegal immigrant and the state-sanctioned ban of a highly successful ethnic studies program in Tucson, AZ that primarily served Latino students.

In fact, during several of my focus groups, junior high students and recent Desert Breeze graduates, now in high school, told me how they felt the Latino community to be discriminated against within the state. For example, one student commented:

I actually made an observation. Separation or segregation, I don't want to say it, but for African Americans, I think that was happening for Mexicans because back then they didn't want African Americans anywhere, and they wanted to kick them out. But now it's the other way around. Now Americans are trying to kick us out, so I think that's what's happening now. It's not cool. [Focus Group #1, 12/5/2011]

It is troubling to hear this young student's perspective of hostility toward the Latino community within the state. His view bespeaks of a larger social and political climate within the state that, in the eyes of many, continues to enact discriminatory policies targeted toward Latinos. Thus, it is also important to view these Anglo teachers' comments within this larger state context, a context in which the scales have not, in fact, "tipped the other way", as suggested by one of the teachers, and in which, the vast majority of Latino students attend schools where the only language of instruction is English and where the majority of classes: social studies, history, art, music, etc. are primarily focused on the history and culture of the dominant (i.e. Anglo) group within the U.S. As a school, which seeks to be otherwise and to include Spanish as a language of instruction as well as to integrate elements of Mexican and Mexican-American culture and history into the curriculum, Desert Breeze is clearly still part of a very small minority of schools that do so. Furthermore, in a state where segregation of students who are ELs and English proficient students is sanctioned by the state as "necessary for educational

purposes”, implying that the curriculum at Desert Breeze enacts a kind of “reverse discrimination” must certainly be critically examined and questioned.

There is one final example in relation to these concerns that the community at Desert Breeze, at times, inadvertently leaves other cultures beside the Latino culture out. For example, the School Programs Leader, also pointed out how:

And I think, actually, in the last few years, we should've been valuing a lot more Pima because we have about a dozen Pima kids on campus. And you talk to them, and they will not tell you, but if you shove, poke, poke, poke, like with this guy, Sky, he tells me every time, "We went to the dah-dah-dah, and so and so" and he was real excited about it, so I think, I wish we could do that, um, more here, but that's not going to happen. [Interview, 3/23/2012]

In the quote above, we hear of another group of students at Desert Breeze who also may not be receiving much attention to their home language and culture at Desert Breeze. At a school committed to the concept of the “whole child” as discussed in chapter four, and where people clearly value language and cultural identity, it seems clear that this oversight is not deliberate. The voices throughout these two chapters have shown that many people clearly feel a sense of comfort, welcome, and belonging at Desert Breeze. However, what these concerns do reveal is that Desert Breeze is a real place, and like any other culture, people’s beliefs and experiences are not monolithic. These voices show us the difficulty with ensuring that all voices are heard. As one of these teachers also commented: "One of my concerns with this whole, you know, let's include everybody is, but are you including everybody?" [Interview, 12/1/2011] Finally, these voices raise an important question for all school communities and communities everywhere to keep at the forefront of their minds: Are we including everybody?

## **Conclusion**

What is important about considering people's beliefs in regards to key aspects of community life: whole-child, real learning, relationships, language, culture, and identity, is that these beliefs help to shape the culture of that community. Desert Breeze has a culture where speaking Spanish is valued and where people speak Spanish. This stands in contrast with the culture of most public schools in Arizona today. It also stands in contrast with the experiences of many of the adults at Desert Breeze whose experiences, as Spanish speakers in school, were often painful. Many of the students I spoke with, both current and former, believe bilingualism to be a door amongst otherwise separate worlds as well as an important pathway to future success. These students' beliefs are an important aspect to consider of the Dual Language program at Desert Breeze.

## Chapter 5

### SHARED PRACTICES AT DESERT BREEZE

#### **Introduction**

As discussed in chapter four, there are certain key shared beliefs that seem to act as guiding principles for what people do at Desert Breeze. These beliefs include the importance of teaching to the “whole child”, learning in ways that are “real”, the value of relationships and community building, and beliefs about language more generally and Spanish more specifically, such as how language is an important part of cultural identity, the value of speaking Spanish and the possibilities that being bilingual bring. This next chapter will turn to examine some specific practices, which reflect the above beliefs.

#### **Dual Language at Desert Breeze**

As mentioned in the opening anecdote about the school’s winter band concert, the value of Spanish is an important belief at Desert Breeze, as evidenced by the way the new principal greeted the gathered families in both Spanish and English. Furthermore, dual language is one part of the curricular offerings at Desert Breeze precisely because so many Desert Breeze school community members see Spanish as an important part of meeting the needs of the “whole child”. To revisit the same quote discussed in the opening of chapter four, the SIPS leader, Mr. Serrano told me:

I think that this school, everything we do here is about learners--the habitats, the language, the Arts, EL [Expeditionary Learning], right? For me those are the three big things, and Dual Language for sure, but not even Dual Language, but just the ability to speak your own language. To have that, to respect that, right? Dual Language is part of that, for sure, and the habitats and the idea of doing things that matter, because that's the only way you learn, right? I mean that's not the only way, but that's the most effective way; I won't say the only way. And then, the Arts, you know. And Arts means more than just the Arts, [its] just doing stuff,

like supporting kids in their things, and I think that's, for me, that's it. It's child-centered. And everything emanates from that. [Interview, 3/23/2012]

In this quote Mr. Serrano mentions some of aspects of Desert Breeze that are “about the learners” including the animal habitat, the language, the Arts, and Expeditionary Learning. He adds that Dual Language is a part of this, but he clarifies that it is important to not just have the Dual Language program but to be able to speak Spanish on campus. These are really two different ideas: speaking Spanish on campus and having a Dual Language program, although they are certainly related. This section will focus mainly on the Dual Language program as part of the child-centered curriculum at Desert Breeze. Later, I will discuss the campus-wide use of Spanish as an important cultural practice at Desert Breeze.

It is important to note that my reasons for discussing the Dual Language program are two-fold. First of all, I entered into this study to learn how the school community has been able to negotiate the state’s set of English-only policies and continue to offer a Spanish/English Dual Language program. As two sub-questions to this overarching question, I also set out to learn what characterized the Dual Language program and what perspectives the school community members held about the Dual Language program. As such, I was focused on the Dual Language program from the start, as part of my own research interests. I soon learned that the Dual Language program and speaking Spanish are also important aspects of the curriculum for students, parents, and teachers. However, it is important to also note that the Dual Language program was discussed as only one of many aspects of the curriculum that were important. For example, most students I spoke with first mentioned the Special Area classes, field trips, and opportunities to learn at the

Orchard. It was often not until I asked them specifically about the Dual Language program that they mentioned why it was important to them. This suggests that the Dual Language program is just one of many salient aspects of the curriculum for students. However, since it is an important aspect of teaching and learning at Desert Breeze, it is also important to describe and discuss in light of the importance it holds for my study participants.

Offering the Dual Language program is one part of the curriculum at Desert Breeze, which many participants see as “child-centered” or meeting the needs of the “whole child”. The SIPS leader was not alone in mentioning both the Dual Language program and the ability to use Spanish on campus as part of what defined the curriculum at Desert Breeze. For example, many students made comments similar to this one: “It’s cool that you can learn Spanish and English and like if you’re struggling in Spanish or English, you can look at the other language to help you out” [Focus Group #2, 12/6/2011]. Other comments included the idea that having the Dual Language program was important to them for a variety of reasons such as being able to share their learning with their families, because it helped them to learn more effectively, and because they felt being bilingual would be important to their future careers. In addition, many parents discussed the Dual Language program as an important aspect of Desert Breeze, for similar reasons as the students mentioned. For example, one parent told me: “No querría que ellos olvidaran el español. Entonces, pensé ponerlos en el programa de doble lenguaje.” [“I didn’t want them to forget Spanish. So, I thought of putting them in the Dual Language program.”] [Interview, 2/8/2012] Teachers, too, spoke of how they felt the Dual Language program addressed the needs of Desert Breeze students and the

community. For example, one teacher told me, “I think learning language is extremely important because if I don’t know my language or another’s language, I can’t have that interaction.” A moment later she added, “It’s critical” [Interview, 11/8/2011]. I will now present the dual language program at Desert Breeze, in terms of its beginning, history, and current status.

## **Overview**

During the year of my research, the academic year of 2011-2012, the Dual Language program at Desert Breeze was in its 21<sup>st</sup> year of operation. It began in 1990 in two K/1 classrooms, eventually growing into a K-8 program with Title VII funding, operating as a strand within the school. With federal financial support, they recruited many teachers from Latin America as well as locally and provided Dual Language teachers with many opportunities to travel to professional development conferences, such as the annual National Association of Bilingual Education. In other words, it was a strong, thriving program when Prop 203, prohibiting the use of bilingual education passed in 2000. Since then it has undergone several reconfigurations - changing to a late entry 4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade program, and most recently, within the past 3 years it has become a late entry 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade program since the 4th graders are now combined with the 3rd graders.

For the past two-three years, the Dual Language program at Desert Breeze has been comprised of only four classrooms - two at the 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> level and two at the 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> level. During the year of my research, the four Dual Language teachers were struggling to keep the Dual Language program alive. They did not feel the program to be greatly supported by the new principal and they lacked the appropriate planning time as well as

materials to support the kind of learning they have traditionally done in Spanish – Learning Expeditions (as will be described in the Real Learning section). Furthermore, one of the teachers was only in his second year of teaching, and still new to the Dual Language program. He had many questions about how the program was supposed to be taught and at times expressed to me his desire to teach only in English the following year, in great part, due to his questions and lack of support. What I learned, by observing both the Dual Language and non-Dual Language classrooms across the 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grades is that what characterizes the curriculum within the Dual Language program is not very different from that outside the program. Students engage in similar content lessons and learning activities across the Dual Language and non-Dual Language classrooms. The main difference is that ostensibly the curriculum is taught in both Spanish and English, alternating by quarter. However, I observed very little Spanish being used in the Dual Language classrooms this year.

Dual Language teachers told me they'd received little support for the Dual Language program from the new principal and felt constraints on their common planning time due to data meetings as well as pressure to prepare students to do well on the state's high stakes end of the year exam, Arizona's Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS), which is of course given in English. They were hoping to teach a learning expedition in Spanish in the final quarter of the year, after the students took the AIMS. Toward the end of my data collection, a few teachers told me that they'd heard that the Dual Language program might not continue to the next year. More will be said about this later. For now, it is important to gain a historical perspective of the program in order to appreciate the way the Dual Language program contributes to the learning experiences of students at



Desert Breeze as well as to understand the process of how the school has negotiated the state's policy to keep the Dual Language program at the school.

### **The Beginning**

When I asked how the Dual Language program at Desert Breeze began, the former principal, Jim Watts, told me that the program got started after a conversation with a parent during his first year as principal:

I ran into an interesting situation there because it was a school that had been neglected in many ways, administratively, and started the Dual Language program on a parent's request the following year that now has a 21-year history. I remember that conversation, too. I was under the Ramada, in front of that administrative building there, and the parent just sat down. Well, I was very much interested in doing bilingual education and she said, 'Why don't we do dual language? (Or two-way immersion as it was called then.) And I was thinking, "Well, I get that" and she said, "Let's just do it!" and so we started some conversations and then the following year - I was impatient- I didn't want to start with just one grade, so we started with a K/1, so two classes started that first year with families that signed up for dual language" [Interview, Jan. 6, 2012].

There are two important ideas to note here: one, the program started on a parent request and two, that the principal was already interested in doing bilingual education since he had already been part of a bilingual program in another school in the district. As will be discussed more fully in chapter six, parents play an important role in supporting the dual language program as well as participating in the school culture, which supports the Dual Language program at Desert Breeze.

Of the early days of the program, former Dual Language 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, Becky Hammill, described the excitement and energy she felt teaching in the Dual Language program:

I felt like it was coming home, like, so comfortable and accepted by everybody. It didn't feel like work to me, really, you know, it was hard work and I've always spent a lot of hours here, but it didn't feel like it. And I learned a lot, oh, my gosh!

At that time we had funding for the Dual Language program, so I was doing conferences, I was traveling, I was doing presenting about the Dual Language program, bringing kids' samples, etc. Well you know, kind of learning and presenting, so I did a lot of learning and growing as a teacher in those first five or six years, especially...

We were under a grant. So, yeah, we had that funding for travel and conference tuition and all that. I mean it was challenging and it was, it pushed me a lot, you know, because, especially the presenting. Right away I was part of something, like you said, powerful, and you know, so I just think right away it kind of swept me away, kind of swept me up with it, and just challenging and fulfilling, and working with the kids, and their families, it was just, you know, I mean it still is, but, I'm just kind of reminiscing right now. [Interview, 11/29/2011]

Mrs. Hammill's reminiscence provides a glimpse of the early days of the Dual Language program. She describes it as "challenging and fulfilling." In addition the school had grant money "for travel and conference tuition". It was a learning experience for her and although she spent many hours at the school, "it didn't feel like it". Mr. Serrano, currently the SIPS leader, who had also been at the school as a consultant at the start of the Dual Language program, also talked about the early days of the program:

We wrote our first grant in '90, I think? Yeah, we got the first grant in '90. And, uf! Those were heady days! It was the 90-10 model, 90-10 was big, then, right? ...We'd go to conferences! We'd go everywhere. We had money like you would not believe. We took teachers to... We took, like, ten teachers to EL Paso, for a week. We took ten teachers to San Francisco. We sent teachers to Guadalajara. We sent teachers to Puerto Rico. We were all over! Those were the golden days, right? [Interview, 3/23/2012]

What we see above is a picture of a strong and thriving program. It was well-supported by federal Title VII funds, supported by teachers from all over Latin America, as well as American teachers, and incorporated a great deal of Latin American culture into the curriculum. Teachers in the Dual Language program had materials, opportunities for professional development, and funding.

### **Proposition 203**

As mentioned in the introduction, Proposition 203, prohibiting the use of bilingual education, was passed in 2000. Of note, I was the family literacy teacher at Desert Breeze during this time. I remember that many Desert Breeze school community members were very actively involved in trying to prevent the passage of Prop 203. In the days leading up to its passage, there was a large march on the state capitol, involving communities from around the state, in protest of its passage. Many of the school's teachers, students, parents, and the former principal planned to participate and I was invited to join them. The former principal, in fact, camped out on the state capitol's lawn, along with some students and their parents in protest of Proposition 203. When it did pass, Mr. Watts told me that he personally decided, "This is unconstitutional!" and determined to find a way to keep the program at the school. As part of this process, he and the teachers initiated a self-study of their Dual Language program. About the self-study he told me:

There were a number of outcomes, but one of the strongest ones was that we didn't really have a Dual Language program because of the majority of kids. Although we had some really successful non-native speaking Spanish speaking students come through the program, and to this day we're hearing success stories about their acquisition of Spanish, the majority of kids had some Spanish, at least, or only Spanish. So, we had a program that was more of a native language program than a dual language program in terms of percentages of kids in the program, and we decided to change to a late immersion and that was, I don't remember exactly, maybe 2000 or 2001-2002 or 2002-2003, I don't remember and so that became a fourth grade entry. [Interview, 1/6/2012]

Hence, while Prop 203 did mean the school had to make some changes, the change to a fourth grade late-entry model was also due, at least in part, to the results of their own self-study of the program. Their determination, that for most families in the current Dual Language program, Spanish was a heritage language, led them to believe that a late-entry

model would work. Either prior to or concurrent with this study they had also found a way to keep this move to a late entry program legal in the eyes of the state through the use of parent waivers.

### **Waiver Option**

Desert Breeze was able to continue the Dual Language program after the passage of Proposition 203 through the use of parent waivers. However it is important to clarify that two different waiver forms have been used at Desert Breeze. Initially, when Prop 203 came out, there was no specific English language program mandated by the state as there is now. As a result, there was a great deal of confusion as to what the parameters of Prop 203 were. That is why, several years later, the State Superintendent of Education created a task force to study different English instruction models. The state decided to adopt the four-hour English Language Development (ELD) block, a particular model that was created by the taskforce and not in use by any other state, which mandated four daily hours of discrete skills instruction. In response to this mandate, Desert Breeze also offered parents a second waiver option – they could choose the 4- hour model or they could opt out and decide to keep their children in their current English-medium classroom. So, there are two waivers being used at Desert Breeze: 1) to allow students into the Dual Language program at the 4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> (now 5<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> grade) level and 2) to keep students in their regular English-medium classroom instead of the state-mandated four-hour ELD classroom at the K-4<sup>th</sup> grades.

Letting parents know this waiver option existed became the next step in keeping the Dual Language program at Desert Breeze. JW explained this waiver process to me. He said:

For a couple of years we did an education process with families. We did workshops on what we were doing and we recruited kids from the 2<sup>nd</sup> into the 3<sup>rd</sup> /4<sup>th</sup> Dual Language program. Then for the last several years it has been so self-sustaining, that we send home letters and families, at the rate of about 60% enroll, just based on the letter, so that it has the level of awareness, in the community, at least the community's perception, and they've signed up for it. [Interview, 1/6/2012]

The above quote reveals that, although the former principal certainly played a key role in deciding to continue offering the Dual Language program at Desert Breeze, the families, too, played an important role in *choosing* the Dual Language program option for their children. Parent awareness of the importance of speaking Spanish and being bilingual seems to play an important role in their decision to place their children into the Dual Language program. Mr. Watts spoke more about this level of awareness, saying: "A lot of families' choice is built around the awareness that... language is valuable, and we're not speaking Spanish at home but I don't want my kids to lose that" [Interview, 1/6/2012]. Many other teachers, too, spoke to me about the "level of awareness" that families at Desert Breeze have in terms of the Dual Language program and why they choose it.

Speaking about this factor of parent awareness, one of the junior high Dual Language teachers, Ms. Kessler, told me:

I think that one of the things that I've noticed with parents is that they do want their kids to retain their native language. They do want them to be able to go to Mexico and be able to communicate with their families in Mexico... I see the parents feeling really proud of how the kids, even though they're sharing their work sometimes in English, how they have the ability to translate the work that they are doing to their parents. I think that parents are very sophisticated when it comes to understanding why being bilingual and bicultural is the way to go. They know that the two languages really, really allow the kids to be more *versatiles* [versatile]. [Interview, 1/6/2012]

As we see from the quote above, in this teacher's opinion, parents are proud of their children's bilingualism and feel that it is important for their future. In my conversations with parents and students, this was, in fact, a common theme. Other teachers talked about this waiver process as well. As a note, in the following quotes, most teachers seem to be discussing the more recent parent waiver option to keep their children in the regular English-medium classrooms (with SEI, ESL, or bilingually endorsed teachers) rather than have them placed in the state mandated four hour ELD program. For example, 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher said:

The interesting thing is, once parents look and they understand, both programs, most parents opt out, so they're opted out and then we don't have to worry about that. We have to be careful and we always have to consistently look at our numbers because I think if it's 20 kids in a grade range connection then you have to [place them in a four hour classroom]. [Interview, 11/8/2012]

This teacher's comments help to show how important parent decision-making is to the waiver process. As she mentions, without parent consent, Desert Breeze would be required to create a four-hour ELD option. One of the Resource teachers, Ms. Southern, also spoke about how Desert Breeze made an effort to present both options to parents.

She said:

I think the biggest thing that Jim did right is giving parents information. I know Tom Horne and the state did not want us to tell parents they had a choice, but Jim also found someplace in the law where it says you're supposed to tell parents about your language education programs. That's what we did, and by having Becky's little T-Chart, that kind of laid it out in a nice visual and explain to parents and being careful how we did it and not just telling parents, "Just sign here. Don't ask questions" Yeah, they got choices. They were told the pluses and the minutes. I think if that had been done at every school, there'd have been a lot less kids in those classes. The flipside of that is that I haven't talked to anyone who's taught one of those classes. I would be curious to know. [Interview, 11/17/2012]

Ms. Southern's comments provide yet another glimpse into this waiver process, revealing how the Desert Breeze faculty were careful to present parents with both options. As she notes, one of the teachers created a T-chart, which presents parents with the pro's and con's of each option. Her comment also reveals her belief in a parent's right to choose the education program they want for their children. A moment later she added:

I do think parents should have knowledge and power over their children's education. That's really all Jim did, was give them knowledge of the language programs available here. I think it was very wrong of that state to not want us to do that and to let parents feel like they don't have a choice... I think Jim did it the right way. [Interview, 11/17/2011]

We hear in the comment above, this teacher's opinion that the former principal had made the right decision to make parents aware of their options. When I spoke with the two ELL coordinators, Mrs. Jurado and Mrs. Suárez at the school, both of whose children also attended Desert Breeze although they are now in high school or grown up, the two ELL coordinators explained how parents played an active role in helping to make other parents aware of the waiver option at Desert Breeze. For example, one of the ELL coordinators told me:

When this four hours first came out, we felt that they had a right to know what was going on and I think back then the law wanted to do that [the four hours] and not notify parents, so parents, when it was open house, they found out and they questioned it and that's how we got a lot of our parent withdrawals because here at this school the community's really close-knitted, so parents talk to each other and so that's how the word spread and so a lot of parents encouraged, you know, "I wouldn't do that if I were you" and so that's how they, how we, got a lot of parent withdrawals. [Interview, 4/9/2012]

This quote helps to show that it was also parents talking to other parents that helped to support the "family education process" that Jim Watts had described to me, as mentioned above. As such, not only did parents play an important role in the waiver process by

signing the waivers, but also by talking to other parents and sharing their opinions with one another. When I asked if any parents ever chose the four-hour block, Mrs. Suárez told me:

I don't think... If there has been, maybe a handful, but they don't push it because it kind of, at the same time, they're like, "I do want my child to learn English but at the same time I don't want him to lose all this academic stuff". So they're being pulled but they're like, "But they're going to learn English with this teacher when she's teaching him math and science anyways, so that's what kind of makes them, gives them the decision [to opt out]. But pushing the four-hours? I really don't think so. [Interview, 4/9/2012]

Her comment helps to show parent thinking in making the decision about which option to choose. For many parents, it is not that they don't want their child to learn English, but rather that they do not want their child to miss out on important academic content, such as math and science.

I did not directly ask about the waiver process during my interviews although I did have a section of questions that asked what my participants thought about the policy negotiation process at Desert Breeze. It is interesting that while many teachers discussed the waivers as part of the negotiation process, none of the students or parents (who weren't already employees of the school) did specifically mention the waivers. This could be for a number of reasons such as they were not directly aware of the waivers per se (as in the case of students) although many students did tell me *why* either they and/or their parents had chosen Dual Language. It also could be that they did not connect the waivers with policy negotiation or because they were not sure exactly what I meant by "policy negotiation". However, during this section of questions, several parents and students did share their feelings about the English only policies in Arizona. As a result, I



do not have parent and student comments directly about the waiver process, but as just mentioned I did learn about some of the reasons behind choosing Dual Language.

As briefly mentioned above, for the parents I interviewed who did choose Dual Language, it was because they did not want their children to forget Spanish or because they felt being bilingual would benefit their children. For those parents who told me they'd chosen the English-medium option, it was often the case that they feared their son or daughter would not be successful in the Dual Language program since their children were more dominant in English or spoke mainly English at home. For example, one parent told me: "I was actually scared to put them in there because my kids have done very well throughout the year. My fear was that if I put them in a dual language class, are they going to struggle because their primary language is not Spanish" [Interview, 4/11/2012]

One parent I spoke with told me that she did not realize what I meant when I asked her about the Dual Language program. It seemed that she took it for granted that her daughter was learning in both Spanish and English. However, she told me that she was very happy that her daughter was learning in Spanish, since her daughter was now able to read and write in both languages. This example helps show that while I am confident that the Desert Breeze staff put forth tremendous effort to make sure parents understood the waiver options before them, some parents may have chosen an option without a full understanding of what it was. It is important to note that a student at Desert Breeze cannot be placed into the Dual Language program without a parent waiver, so parents must give consent. But it is possible that perhaps not all parents have a full understanding of what the different options mean.

This parent's comment could also suggest that for many students and parents, speaking Spanish, and thus learning in Spanish, is taken for granted at Desert Breeze. This idea seems highly probable since it has been a school-wide cultural practice for such a long time. Furthermore, except for this parent, who did in fact support the Dual Language program (without realizing this wasn't just part of the classes automatically offered to her daughter), all other parents were quite conscientious of why they'd chosen one option or the other. This exception helps to show that the use of waivers at Desert Breeze is a human and imperfect process, despite Desert Breeze educators' best efforts to inform parents of the options. Not all parents uniformly chose either the Dual Language option or to opt their children out of the four-hour block. It also helps to support the idea that using Spanish is so embedded in the school's culture that many parents and students do not realize this is being "negotiated" per se. Rather, they see using Spanish and the Dual Language program as a practice and a program at the school they believe in and something that makes Desert Breeze unique.

### **The Dual Language Program This Year**

As mentioned in the introduction to this section on the Dual Language program at Desert Breeze, nearing the end of the 2011-2012 academic year, the fate of the program remained unclear to teachers. One day in April when I arrived at lunchtime, I had the opportunity to speak with two of the junior high teachers whose classes I had previously observed. Ms. Spangler told me she'd just heard that the Dual Language program would not be continued the next year. Ms. Kessler started shaking her head sadly and became visibly distraught. Yet, at this point, this still seemed to be more of a rumor than hard fact. However, the idea seemed likely considering that all the Dual Language teachers

told me about how they felt there'd been little support for it this year and how they'd barely been able to squeeze in instruction in Spanish.

While lack of support from the administration certainly contributed to the diminished use of Spanish at Desert Breeze this year, there were other ideas about what had contributed to this "diminished" state as well. For example, when I spoke with the SIPS leader, Jose Serrano, he told me that he felt that the late immersion model had made it more challenging to continue offering a high quality Dual Language program at Desert Breeze. He said:

I think late immersion works, but just like the regular Dual Language program, you better have your act together. You better have certain things that we didn't, and to this day, teachers haven't taught in Spanish yet, this year. I am so pissed off about that! But, who am I? I am the program specialist. I have less power than I ever have in my, in any job I've ever had, and so it's basically died on it's own. [3/23/2012]

The above comment shows that Mr. Serrano feels that the program has slowly been losing focus, which has also contributed to the current status of less Spanish instruction. However, he too, felt that the new principal's lack of support was a contributing factor, telling me:

You know, and Mr. McCormick [new principal], we had a meeting with Mr. McCormick, and he says, "I believe in bilingual education. I wish I were bilingual," and we said, "Okay, there are some things that we need," and he said, "I'll get back to you on that." So, you can say you support something, but not support it and let it die and that's what's happening here, so I think one of the things that we did, that Jim Watts did wrong, was that we just let teachers make their own decisions, instead of having it, "No we will do it these days, these ways, and there's no negotiation" because then you start going East. It's hard! It's hard. So, late immersion, I think was a mistake, but a decision had to be made, and I think the not having the funding and strong leadership, forcing teachers to teach at certain times, really, really was the beginning of the end for our program. And I think this will be our last year. [Interview, 3/23/2012]

We hear in the quote above that for Mr. Serrano, the diminished use of Spanish for instruction within the Dual Language program was a combination of both the lack of current administrative support, and the fact that there'd been less of a focus during recent years, on making sure teachers stuck to particular guidelines for the Dual Language program.

Mr. Serrano's comments reveal the enormous constraints to the Dual Language program and the way these constraints act to disempower educators at Desert Breeze. Although presumably in charge of the school's instructional programs, Mr. Serrano told me that he has "less power than I ever have in...any job... ever." Mr. Serrano's sense of agency has been impacted by a multitude of factors acting upon the Dual Language program: the initial change to a late entry model, a lack of focus on maintaining standards for language use within the program, and now a lack of support from the new principal. These are very real constraints that act upon the ability of the SIPS leader to act as well as upon the Dual Language teachers themselves. The tensions and complex reality created by these constraints will be more fully explored in the final chapter.

There was one Dual Language meeting in the fall of 2011, an evening meeting at the home of the former principal. The teachers were hoping to begin planning an expedition in Spanish that they could teach in the fourth quarter, after AIMS. As the meeting got underway, Jim Watts said, "The people seated at this table are all that's left of a 21 year program" [Field notes, 12/2/2011]. In fact, there were several tense moments as the teachers discussed what would be most important for them to accomplish with this rare time together – to plan an expedition or to plan how to save the program. It was clear that the Dual Language team felt both demoralized and challenged as to how to really

teach in a Dual Language program when the new principal was pushing certain curriculum, such as the Story Town basal series, in order to help raise test scores, which the 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> grade team currently only had in English. In addition, the 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> grade teachers pointed out how, since they switched with the non-Dual Language teachers for math and then were required to offer the 45-minute district mandated English language development class, they had very little time with their homeroom students to teach in Spanish.

Ultimately, the teachers decided that the best way to save the Dual Language program was to approach the new principal with a solid learning expedition in Spanish already planned out. They devoted two and a half hours that evening to planning a learning expedition, which would examine the relationship between the Kyoto Protocol on global climate change and the reasons that various countries chose to sign or decline the protocol. They worked hard to figure out what their three “guiding questions” would be and what “enduring understandings” (both aspects of expeditionary planning) they wanted students to take away from their study. They ended the planning session sharing a pizza the former principal made for them and laughing as they chitchatted about this and that. The evening ended on a positive note but it was clear that the Dual Language program was in a precarious position [Field notes, 12/2/2011]. As one Dual Language teacher pointed out: “When it comes to the Dual Language program it's tough. It's really tough. It's not like, “Oh you have a Dual Language program!” and just because you say that it happens... It takes a conscious effort to retain the little bits that you still have at Desert Breeze.” [Interview, 1/6/2012] The former principal, Jim Watts also mentioned the challenge of sustaining the program, post-Prop 203, saying:

Since then, there hasn't been a dime to add to the Dual Language program in and of itself. It's been how we crafted it and it's had its ups and downs. Ups in the sense of becoming self-sustaining and reliant, which is cool, but also downs in the terms of "It's work!" and especially when it's counter-cultural or counter-political in an effort to be human. [Interview, 1/6/2012]

As evidenced by the after-hours Dual Language planning meeting and the efforts made to make sense of how to incorporate teaching in Spanish with a new school focus on raising test scores, "It's work!" is an apt description of the effort it takes to teach in a way which is counter to policy mandate.

Contrasting the "golden days" of the Dual Language program at Desert Breeze to this past year, we see that a process of negotiation has indeed taken place. The Dual Language program has been chipped away at, both from forced grade level changes due to policy dictates as well as to, what one educator saw as loss of regulation of the Dual Language program. Although the former principal said, "We've been able to be relatively self-sufficient", loss of grant funding has also impacted the program. However, self-sufficiency is also most likely a big part of how they've continued. For example, as the principal, Jim Watts allocated funds to teachers every year for the purchase of books and materials related to what they planned to study that year. This allowed teachers to continue purchasing books and materials in Spanish. What's more, Mr. Watts used some of the school's budget to pay teachers for some additional Dual Language planning time and he created time to do that planning within the regular school day meeting schedule.

This year, with a very small program left (four classes), lack of materials, lack of planning time, and lack of professional development, the Dual Language program is hanging on by a thread. However, as the SIPS leader said, "it's more than the Dual Language program - it's the ability to speak Spanish" and as many teachers affirmed, one

can still hear Spanish spoken all over the school. Most participants I spoke with made comments about speaking Spanish as, "Who we are" and "That's our culture". As such, it is perhaps apt to describe the Dual Language program this year as more symbolic than academic. However, even if more symbolic, the Dual Language program is a powerful and important program at the school, in that it holds a place in the hearts and minds of many school community members. The Dual Language program at Desert Breeze continues to send the message to the community that, "their language and culture are still being valued" [Interview, 11/29/2011].

As we have heard above, it has indeed been a struggle to keep what remains of the Dual Language program at Desert Breeze. There are very real and strong forces acting upon the ability of the community to maintain the program. Even before the passage of Proposition 203 and later House Bill 2064, bilingual programs were not commonplace in the state of Arizona, and served only a small portion of the state's EL students. One of the strongest forces working against such programs is the wide spread belief that English should be the primary, if not the only, language of instruction within the U.S. This broader, national ideology is one force to contend with, and the state's policies, of course, are another.

Lack of funding, is also a very real constraint that Desert Breeze must contend with. It is very difficult to continue Dual Language programs without monetary resources. Money provides materials and professional development. The new Dual Language teacher at Desert Breeze, Mr. Guerrero, on several occasions, asked me questions about the Dual Language program model at the school. He asked me about such issues as deciding which variety of Spanish should be taught, and he expressed great

concern that each of the four Dual Language teachers spoke a different variety of Spanish, having grown up in different places. He wondered if this might not be confusing for students and wondered which model of Spanish was “best”. In fact, he felt so much confusion as well as lack of support for the program, that on one occasion he commented to me that if he remained at Desert Breeze School, he was going to ask to teach outside of the Dual Language program. [Field notes, 3/20/2012] One day when I brought him a copy of Dual Language Essentials, he thanked me enthusiastically and declared he had been looking for such guidance. [Field notes, 4/10/2012] These conversations revealed to me that Mr. Guerrero, as a new teacher in general, and particularly as a new Dual Language teacher, needed much more support than he was receiving. Bloch et al (2010) also describe the challenges teachers in South Africa faced when trying to implement the country’s permissive mother tongue education plan without sufficient professional development or materials. Lack of professional development and materials can be a daunting challenge for multilingual programs.

Menken (2008) highlights the way in which the current national focus on raising test scores under has become a de facto national English only policy. We can see the new heightened focus on raising test scores at Desert Breeze as also becoming a de facto English-only policy at the school, interrupting the time traditionally devoted to Spanish within the Dual Language program. Several of the Dual Language teachers told me that although they had not been explicitly told by the new principal to not teach in Spanish, they felt compelled to teach more in English in order to help prepare students for the high-stakes end of the year test. In addition, the 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> grade Dual Language teachers told me they also had less time to teach in Spanish this year, due to certain administrative



decisions, such as asking them to teach language arts using the all English *Story Time* basal textbook series and switching homeroom classes with the non-Dual Language teachers for math, meant even less time with their Dual Language homeroom classes. In fact, observed no formal instruction in Spanish in two of the four Dual Language classrooms.

The key concepts of hegemony, ideology, and discourse, can assist in an analysis of these constraints and how they are delimiting the amount of instruction delivered in Spanish, even within the Dual Language program. While, clearly the school community has exercised great agency in continuing to have the Dual Language program and refusing to implement the 4-hour ELD block, the obstacles described above show us that agency is always constrained. Hegemony is a helpful concept because it helps to explain how “consent is won” (Williams, 1973) in terms of certain practices. Although two of the teachers I worked with often expressed their disagreement with the new focus on test scores, many others seemed to be submitting to this pressure. One Dual Language teacher even commented on how although teachers had never been explicitly told not to do “project-based” or “expeditionary style” learning, there seemed to be an unspoken pressure to focus mainly on teaching practices (i.e. test-taking practice and drills) which would raise test scores. [Interview, 4/20/2012] In fact, another Dual Language teacher told me how excited he was to see his students’ reading scores going up on the quarterly district benchmarks. He attributed this climb in test scores to using the basal series *StoryTown*, telling me, “You can’t argue with that!” [Field notes, 3/20/2012] Like it or not, many teachers at Desert Breeze are “consenting” to the school’s new focus on raising test scores.

While many of the practices that had been such an integral part of Desert Breeze's culture in the past, such as using Spanish and focusing on relationship-building, etc. acted to redistribute the resources the community had, which then enabled them to negotiate the state's policies, the changes taking place under the leadership of the new principal were also redistributing those resources – taking away time, materials, and support for not only the Dual Language program, but for teaching via the “real learning” kinds of practices so valued by the teachers. The ability of the school community, in the past especially, but even up to this particular moment, to keep the Dual Language program, becomes particularly salient, when viewed within the context of the constraints faced by the community. More will be said about the tension between these constraints and the community's agency in the final chapter.

### **Curricular Practices Related to the “Whole Child”**

#### **Special Area Classes**

As glimpsed through the participant quotes in chapter four, a school-wide focus on the “whole child” has meant a wide variety of curricular offerings at the school. This next section serves to give an overview of extent and variety of the overall Arts and Special Area Program offered at Desert Breeze. These offerings include many different Special Area classes, such as PE, gardening, and carpentry, with a particular emphasis on the Arts. Some of the various Arts classes offered at Desert Breeze during the year of my research include: Band, Advanced Band, Latin Jazz Band, General Music, Choir, Keyboarding, and Drama. Offerings in past years have also included Art, Advanced Art, Carpentry, and Dance. The art courses were not offered this year because the long-standing Art teacher was on a leave of absence. The carpentry teacher actually has since

become the “Farm to School” teacher and now mainly teaches gardening and other similar classes. Dance was actually offered during the first semester of the 2011-2012 school year, but was cancelled the second semester, reflecting a shift in the curricular focus that began taking place during my study at Desert Breeze, but I will say more about that later.

Most Special Area classes are electives. Administration tries to accommodate student requests but also assigns classes as needed to make the schedule work. Specials operate on a rotating schedule, so that students take two different Specials on one day and then two more different classes on the other. They alternate every other day. Specials last for 45 minutes each, so that they total a 90-minute block of each student’s instructional day. Additionally, all students take certain Specials in a particular grade. For example, all fourth graders take choir and most students take PE each semester. Students are given a semester-long Specials schedule that includes four classes with one exception.

Students designated as ELs by Arizona’s English Language Learning Assessment, (AZELLA) scores are required, due a district agreement with the Office of Civil Rights, to take a daily 45-minute English language development class. Of note, this is not the same as the state’s mandated 4-hour daily English language development (ELD) program. This requirement is unique to this district and arose as the consequence of a past lawsuit, in which a family within the district had sued the district for failing to provide adequate English instruction for their children. As a result, the district has been required by the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) to implement a designated 45-minute block of English language development daily. For this reason EL students take only one Special each day, marking a key area of difference in curriculum EL and non-EL students. It is

important to note this difference since this represents a disparity in terms of Special Area education for EL and non-EL students. EL students receive half as much Special Area (often Arts-based) instruction as their English proficient peers. While this policy comes from an OCR agreement meant to ensure that educational opportunity is more equal for ELs, it is ironic that at Desert Breeze this means that ELs miss out on key instructional experiences that their English proficient peers enjoy. As a result, I know from my past teaching experience there, that many students resent and do not want to be in the ELD class.

The focus on offering a wide-range of classes beyond traditional academics and a particular emphasis on the Arts has also translated to more than the wide variety of Special Area classes offered. This has also meant that a number of student performances are offered throughout the year. An example of this was the winter band concert that I observed and described in the introduction to chapter four. Another example was another performance a month later, which included the choir, flag squad, and drama classes giving performances. In addition to regular performances, the various band classes take many trips to local, regional, and out-of-state events and competitions, providing students with opportunities to travel and compete. An example of this was the participation of the various school bands in the annual Thanksgiving parade, which is a larger community event involving groups and schools from around the area. Another example is the annual Arts Quest Camp, which takes place at a group campground in Prescott, during which students take a variety of Arts classes throughout the day, which culminate in a performance at the end of the 3-day trip.

The school's physical environment itself also reflects the Arts and outdoor learning emphases in the curriculum. There are a number of student-created murals painted on the outside of various buildings and there is a great deal of student artwork displayed outside the art room and in the front office. Evidence of a focus on gardening and outdoor learning is also evidenced by the many gardens located around the school, including a large garden in the middle of the school, the many fruit and citrus trees and flower beds that have been added to the campus's already mature trees and open layout. There are many picnic tables dotting the campus grounds to encourage outdoor work. And, perhaps most prominent of all, there is a large animal habitat built alongside the front of the school, through which students, parents, and teachers must pass to enter the front office. This habitat includes two goats, several chickens, peacocks, and a Koi fishpond. These environmental aspects of the school, particularly the animal habitat, are referenced nearly constantly across my interviews as particular features, which help to make Desert Breeze special.

Special Area classes, outdoor learning opportunities, and the animal habitat at Desert Breeze were spoken of highly by all school community members and were an important aspect of teaching to the "whole child" at Desert Breeze. In the remaining subsections to this section on curricular practices, I will share how people spoke of their experiences with these Special Area classes and this physical outdoor environment as well as the meanings they took away from these experiences. These experiences and meanings help to portray how the idea of the whole child is translated into the curriculum and physical environment.

## **Latin Jazz Band**

Participating in the various band classes, concerts, and competitions has been an important aspect of the Desert Breeze school experience for students. Many students discussed what they have learned and enjoyed, and the ways in which this experience has influenced their lives, demonstrating that Band, in general, and Latin Jazz Band, in particular, is an important curricular element for many Desert Breeze students. During our focus groups, many students talked about what a positive experience being a part of the band had been for them. For example, when I asked a group of former Desert Breeze students, currently in high school, what was important to them about Desert Breeze, one of the things they mentioned in depth was the Latin Jazz Band:

Just like one thing from Desert Breeze would be Mr. G in band. Like, he would be a good band director and I would tell him about some, like, let's say an accordion, like Mexican instruments, and he would tell me, like, the notes or something and, like, he showed me how to play the music I play now for money, the music that I play that I actually get paid for. That's something I took from Desert Breeze, is like Mr. G's ways of teaching. Like over there [at his current high school] it's just like typical jazz and over here it was Latin Jazz, and I liked it more. Over there I don't like it as much. It's good music but I like it, it's, like, more me over here.  
[Focus Group #8, 3/9/2012]

This former student, Diego's, quote reveals the influence being in the Latin Jazz band has had on his life. As a high school student, he now has his own band where, as he points out, "I actually get paid for [playing]." He also continues to play at Desert Breeze as part of the high school Latin Jazz Band since Desert Breeze's band teacher Mr. Garcia began the high school section of the band a couple of years ago as a way to keep his former students involved with the Latin Jazz Band. As an important side note – Mr. Garcia works with the former Desert Breeze students who are now in high school voluntarily. He receives no additional compensation for this work. This kind of teacher dedication and

close student-teacher relationships is one of many examples of the kinds of close and ongoing relationships between different school community members at Desert Breeze.

Playing in the Latin Jazz band as a student at Desert Breeze and continuing with it now as a high school student also seem to be an important part of Diego's identity. He describes how he feels an important connection to the music that he learned to play in the Latin Jazz band at Desert Breeze, saying "It's like more me over here". He contrasts experience in the Desert Breeze Latin Jazz Band with his current experiences in the regular band at his high school and decides that the Latin Jazz Band is "more me." His words suggest that the Latin Jazz Band fulfills an important dimension of his life, a feeling, which may be true for many Desert Breeze students. In fact, his cousins and siblings who I also interviewed on this day, agreed with him. His cousin, Lalo, another former Desert Breeze student points out, "We sang, like, Spanish music, with the maracas." And Veronica, notes, "I think what made it so special was just how unique it was and how close the students felt to the music and all of that. I think it all played a big factor into how successful Mr. Garcia's Latin Jazz band has been." Diego also proudly pointed out to me, "And to date, Mr. Garcia still announces that we're the only Latin Jazz group in the state of Arizona."

It is clear from these comments that these students feel a strong connection to the music of Latin Jazz. These comments reveal the concept of the "whole child" at work. We see that in this case, this group of former Desert Breeze students has felt the kind of success that teacher, Becky Hammill, described when she said, "I just think that all kids have an opportunity to succeed and that means different things for different people... I think that's what we're striving for" [Interview, 11/29/2011] For Diego, it seems that part

of this success is getting paid to play music and perhaps, too, having had the experience of being able to be “more himself” at school, an experience he appreciates more now that he is in a different school context.

### **Arts Quest Camp**

As mentioned in the opening vignette, the annual Arts Quest Camp in Prescott is an annual highlight for 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade students. As might be expected, many of the junior high students I spoke with mentioned the Arts Quest Camp as an important part of their experience at Desert Breeze. They gave various reasons for this importance, including the opportunity for self-expression, as the following snippet of conversation reveals:

Sarah: So tell me about being a student at Desert Breeze - What's it like?  
St 1: It's fun... because we get to go to Arts Quest camp, sixth through eighth graders.  
Sarah: What do you like about Arts Quest Camp?  
St 1: They like, they let you express yourself a lot.  
Sarah: Okay, like how? Give me an example.  
St 1: I don't know.  
St 2: Arts and crafts - they let you make masks.  
St 1: They teach you more about arts and all that.  
Sarah: All right, and you said you made masks while you were there? Is that what you said?  
St 2: When you... I think... No, in art you can make a mask and I think that's how you can express your culture - you can put things that represent your culture.  
Sarah: Okay, I'm sorry - like what? Can you give me an example?  
St 2: I put the colors of Mexico as a banner and then I put a little leaf on top and that's how I expressed that I was from Mexico.  
[Focus Group #1, 12/5/11]

These comments of how the Arts Quest camp provides a venue for self-expression reminds me of the earlier comment made by Diego about how being in the Latin Jazz Band at Desert Breeze helped him to feel more like himself. We see a similar sentiment above when the second student says, “that’s how I expressed that I was from Mexico”.



While not quite the same, both comments reveal the fact that through these Arts-based experiences, students feel free to express themselves at school.

### **Outdoors Learning: Gardens, Animal Habitat, and The Orchard**

Outdoors learning, which includes both learning about the outdoors and in the context of the outdoors, is also an important aspect of the curricular offerings at Desert Breeze. It's integration into both the curriculum and culture of the school can be observed in many ways. Another example of the outdoor emphasis can be observed in the school environment itself, including the school and class gardens, the animal habitat, and the outdoor learning area as also described in the beginning of this section. In addition, this emphasis on the outdoors can also be seen in the collaboration between "The Orchard", a newly formed nearby community center, run by the former principal and the school. In fact, some of the Special Area gardening classes were held at The Orchard last year, its inaugural year, and some of these collaborations continue this year, although to a lesser extent. (More will be said about the reason for this lesser extent later.)

The emphasis put on providing children with opportunities to learn outdoors and to learn about the natural world, can be seen in various comments shared by school community members, such as this former principal's idea, as seen earlier, that "the sacred ground of a school" includes "relationship to animals, to the planet, to the experience..." [Interview, Jan. 6, 2012]. This idea of incorporating the opportunity to relate to the natural world can also be heard in the comments made by teachers. For example, junior high teacher, Ms. Kessler, told me:

When you go to the office and you see the animals, you feel like you're in a place that is real. You don't feel like you're in a place that is an institution, in the bad sense of the word. You feel like you're in an organic place and that's what allows

you to feel like you're with family, you're with other human beings, with other living things, so I guess the climate, the culture that we have is sacred ground because everything that you do has created that culture and climate. [Interview, Jan. 6, 2012]

We can hear, again, in Ms. Kessler's words, the value that she places on the presence of having the animal habitat at school. For her, this helps to make the school "an organic place" and a place that is more "like you're with family". Such values and beliefs reveal the importance placed on the outdoor learning aspects of the school and curriculum.

As mentioned above, there are many gardens at the school. There is a large central garden in the middle of the school, where individual classes can have their own "class plot" as well as garden plots which are worked on during the gardening elective. Another example of this emphasis is the large animal habitat at the front of the school. Again, individual classes can work in the animal habitat or as a part of a Special Area elective. In addition, students and their families also volunteer to help care for the habitat during school holidays as well as during the summer. In fact, one teacher, whose son attends Desert Breeze, told me of how this experience of caring for the animals during the summer influenced her daughter, still too young to go to school. She told me, "Nathan [her son] was in charge of it, a couple of years ago, during the breaks and during the summer. And so, you know, we were here every week, here during the breaks and everything, and my daughter, she still crows like a rooster because of that, and "Are we going to the animal habitat?" This teacher's perspective as a mother as well as educator again reveal the importance of these outdoors learning aspects of Desert Breeze's curriculum. Students also talked about how much they enjoyed the animal habitat, such as these this 5<sup>th</sup> grader:

I've been to the animal habitat since I was in fourth... because we always have to get out early in the class to go feed the chickens. If we don't get out there early, they might not be there anymore, so I'd rather get there early and not miss that job because I like petting the animals and feeding the fishes. [Focus Group #12, 4/10/2012]

Clearly, taking care of the chickens was an experience she enjoyed. Her classmate agreed with her, commenting a moment later, "Yeah. Some of the chickens died and I was really sad." [FG #12, April 10, 2012]

Opportunities for experiencing the outdoors do not come only through the gardens and animal habitat at the school. They also come through visits to the nearby community-learning center, The Orchard, as just mentioned above. When I asked students about experiences at Desert Breeze that stuck out in their minds, they talked about visits to The Orchard, as can be seen in this next snippet of conversation:

St 1: When we got to go to The Orchard last year.  
Sarah: Okay, when you went to The Orchard last year. What did you like about that?  
St 1: It was fun.  
Sarah: What did you guys do at The Orchard last year?  
St 1: We planted stuff and we made like a little garden and we, like, took care of it. Then we had to pick the plants - like all the fruit and all that. And then we had to dig up a big, old hole, like this [gesturing], and like, ten feet deep or something.  
Sarah: What was the hole for?  
St 2: Like an apple tree or something like that.  
S: Oh, okay. Did you guys plant the apple tree?  
St: Yeah.  
Sarah: [turning to another student] You said the Orchard was important to you - why?  
St 2: Because we learn how to plant plants, how to keep...  
St 3: How to make them grow.  
St 1: How to make the type of things that you plant, like organic.  
[Focus Group #1, 12/5/11]

The conversation above reveals how these students enjoy their time at the Orchard and learning how to plant both gardens and trees.

Parents also talked about what the outdoor education at the school and at the Orchard meant to them. For example, one mother, Mrs. Inéz, told me:

Por ejemplo, me gusta, como le digo, me gusta ir a la huerta, convivir con mis hijas, que miren ellas, que ayuden, o es que es algo sano también para ellas. En la huerta hay mucho espacio... O sea es algo especial porque convivo con mis hijas y para que aprendan como hacer la plantura que comen, como hacer una caserola de verdura, para que ellas se enseñen de muchas cosas. Y luego tambien me gusta porque ellos les llevan a ellos a la huerta [at school] porque siembran y se ponen a comer allí también y hay narajas y todo. Y me dice, "Oye, mamá, están bien ricas las narajas que comí" o me dice, "Oh, mamá, ayer plantamos eso!" o "comimos fresas" o así, cosas que tienen allí.  
[Interview, 3/8/2012]

[For example, I like, as I mentioned, I like to go the Orchard, to spend time with my children, so that they can see and help, or it's that it's something healthy for them. At the Orchard there is a lot of space... It's something special because I spend time with my daughters and we learn how to plant what we eat, how to make a vegetable casserole, so that they learn about many things. And then, I also like it because they take them to the Orchard [while at school] because they can plant and they eat there, too, and there are oranges and everything. And [my daughter] tells me, "Hey, Mommy, the oranges I ate are really good" or she tells me, "Oh, Mommy, yesterday we planted this!" or "We ate strawberries!" and things like that, that they have there.]

As can be seen in Mrs. Inéz's perspective above, the Orchard is another important aspect of the learning offered at Desert Breeze for both her and her daughter. She describes how she values spending time with her children there, the things they learn together, and the fact that students also visit the Orchard while at school.

The quotes highlighted above only serve as examples of the many times students, parents, and teachers mentioned the gardens, the animal habitats, and the Orchard as part of what makes Desert Breeze special or an aspect of the school they enjoyed. For many students, this outdoor learning focus led to experiences they still remember, such as drawing a picture of rabbit spotted under a tree [Focus Group #12, 4/10/2012], planting an apple tree (as described above), or playing around in the irrigation water [Focus Group

#1, 12/5/2011]. They also talked about learning how to plant, what makes plants organic, the weather, and how to possibly plant their own gardens at home.

What is important about all of the above quotes is that they show a curriculum in place which seeks to provide children with the opportunity to learn not just academics, and not just "regular" Special Area classes, but band classes that they really connect with, such as Latin Jazz, which contain a cultural history the students can identify with. These classes also provide the opportunity to learn about the natural world. As expressed by the various school community members cited here, these classes include giving students the opportunity to learn about various aspects of themselves, for example, how they might feel sad at the death of the school's chickens, or proud to know how to plant a garden and how plants grow. As one student commented:

Like all the different Specials that we have, like, most schools don't normally have the Orchard and the animal habitat and it's really cool that we have that. And just, like, different Specials. Like, most schools don't have choir and stuff like that... like, not only reading textbooks and stuff, but like learning really cool stuff. [Focus Group #2, 12/6/2012]

This student's quote shows how the curriculum at Desert Breeze provides the opportunity for students to grow and learn in many directions, not just academic. The kinds of learning opportunities as discussed above, all seem to meet the belief in educating the "whole child" as described in chapter four.

In addition, as an integral part of the curriculum and culture at the school, the special area classes and outdoor learning focus are important aspects of how the school negotiates language policy. These classes and opportunities go along with the community's belief in the whole child, that these other areas of a child's life are just as important as traditional academics. The arts and other specials create a venue for self-

expression, which includes expression of language and culture. They provide a way for students to access and use their funds of knowledge. Many students talked about the Arts and other classes in relation to cultural expression, such as Diego's experience in the Latin Jazz Band. These classes also help to build relationships and create community, which are also an important part of how the school negotiates policy. They help to make learners and learning multi-faceted and to create space for both English and Spanish language use. They are one aspect of an alternative curriculum and culture, which emphasizes learners themselves and non-traditional measures of successful learning.

### **Curricular Practices that Support “Real Learning”**

Before delving into this next section on teaching practices that characterize “real learning”, revisiting the notion of “real leaning” and its associated concepts will be helpful for considering this next section of curricular examples. As mentioned in chapter four, “real learning” is an umbrella term for many related ideas. Since a more in-depth description was provided in chapter four, here real learning may be summarized as a curricular approach guided by the principle that learning should have many real or authentic elements, such as learning about real world issues and topics, especially those that are meaningful to students lives. It also includes idea that teachers and students can and should learn and even “co-create” the curriculum together. This means that students help to select reading materials, topics, and engage in a process to create their own final product. It also means that learning often centers around open-ended questions so that there are no “set answers”. These practices position students and teachers as “co-learners” and “co-curriculum creators”. Real learning also includes the idea that students are given opportunities to explain their thinking and to talk about the problems they are

solving. Finally, real learning has a final goal related to the idea that students should become active thinkers and self-advocates in order to become “agents of their own change as individuals” [Interview, 1/6/2012].

It is also important to acknowledge that not *all* learning at Desert Breeze may necessarily be characterized by these above aspects of “real learning.” I also observed many teaching practices and learning activities, which I would not consider as especially characteristic of “real learning” as defined in chapter four. I mention this because it helps to show that not everything said and done in classrooms at Desert Breeze is about “real learning” (or about the “whole child” for that matter). I also observed practices that I would characterize as more “typical” of school in general, such as teachers writing learning targets on the board and students reading them aloud and/or copying them down, students being asked to line up, students being reminded to be quiet, students completing worksheets, teachers at times struggling with classroom management, students practicing test taking skills, students taking tests, etc. I am choosing not to discuss these practices in depth since they do not relate to the ways Desert Breeze school community members described the curriculum to me, but I do mention them because I observed them, and they are also part of the picture of curriculum at Desert Breeze.

Finally, a word about the following three classroom examples will help to explain my selection and presentation of them here. In chapter four, I provided very brief snippets of classroom dialogue or practices in order to help me explain the concept of real learning. However, these do not provide an in-depth look at the teaching and learning that is taking place at Desert Breeze. The three examples I present here are meant to serve as that more in-depth look at “real learning”. I have tried to select examples that both show

a range of practices, which exemplify particular aspects of real learning and that allow me to provide an in-depth look at those practices.

### **Classroom Example 1 – Creating Biography Power Points**

This lesson is taken from Ms. Kessler’s junior high, integrated social studies and language arts dual language classroom on Oct. 19, 2011. In the segment below she is working one-on-one with her students in order to help them with their creation of power points, which representing a culminating project during their biography study. The following are snippets of the conversations that she had with students as she conferenced with them. As a note, I did not have the audio recorder turned on for most of these conferences since it was my first day of observing and I was unsure if this would be intrusive or not. Instead, I tried to capture the conversations from where I sat at the back of the room, jotting down notes. It was difficult for me to hear what students said, so these snippets mainly show what Ms. Kessler said. Most conferences lasted anywhere from 1-5 minutes and my notes show that VK had approximately 22 different conferences with students. I have selected only a few of these conferences to share below:

Conference 1:

"Who was your...? Maya Angelou... Why is she so famous?" Student says something. "So, Maya Angelou's greatest contribution is her struggle against discrimination or racism? Her fight for her rights?"

Conference 2:

"You can start working on your power point presentation. First, bring me your..." V is explaining what to put on the slide, how to add maps, make it "look pretty". She reminds the student about the 10 slides--"I'm not going to tell you how to organize it, but it's got to make sense, right?"

Conference 3:



Ms. Kessler and the student talk about where to put the picture... "The picture is going to have to be here" and "Depends on where you want it". She demonstrates something for him. "I don't want all the power points to look the same. You guys get to choose font, order, color..." A moment later she adds, "Places where he... You're going to have to decide where you want all that. You can change the color, font... when you're ready to add YouTube..."

Conference 4:

Ms. Kessler is asking the student why Bessie Coleman had to go to Paris to become a pilot. She asks her to reread that part of the article. The student reads it aloud and Ms. Kessler asks her to pause and retell what she read. The student comments that Bessie Coleman was a woman and an African American. Next, Ms. Kessler summarizes it for her, saying, "Okay, so right now we know that she was a woman and she was African American and she came from Texas. Texas is in the South. She moved to Chicago and became interested in becoming a pilot when her brothers came back from World War One."

Next, Ms. Kessler asks the student if Bessie Coleman became a pilot at that point. The student says that, yes, she did. Ms. Kessler questions this answer and tells her, "Go back to the word here – 'failed'". The student then revises her answer, saying that "No, she didn't [become a pilot then]." Ms. Kessler says, "Let's keep reading." They read a line together that says, "She couldn't find anyone to teach a black woman." Then, making the connection, the student says, that Bessie Coleman didn't become a pilot yet because she couldn't find a teacher because she was African American. Ms. Kessler confirms this saying, "Yes, because she was a woman and African American, but she was determined to go abroad." Ms. Kessler acts out what Bessie Coleman might have said, at that point, saying, "I'm not going to let anyone stop me!" Then she explains that she moved to Paris, France.

Finally, Ms. Kessler asks her to retell this information and the student says that Bessie Coleman moved to Paris and was accepted into an aviation school. Ms. Kessler helps her sum it up one last time, "So because she was a woman and African American, she was determined. She moved to Paris and on June 15, 1931 she earned her pilot's license. Then she tells her, "Now you're going to put it into your own words."

[Field notes, 10/19/2011]

There were many more conferences like the four highlighted above. These conferences demonstrate "real learning" in various ways. First of all, the above conferences show how the students had a great deal of choice and freedom in designing their power points. For example, Ms. Kessler continually makes comments such as, "I'm not going to tell you

how...” or “You’re going to have to decide...” This approach helps to put students “in charge of their learning” [Interview, 11/29/2011] an aspect of real learning as described by 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, Mrs. Hammill. Second, these conferences show how many students have chosen to research people who have in some way, broadly speaking, worked for social justice, such as Maya Angelou and Bessie Coleman. While I was not present for the selection of these people, students told me they had been able to select whom they wanted. Since many of the topics studied in Ms. Kessler’s room focused on issues of injustice, such as child labor and domestic abuse, these student selections seem to reflect this focus. Finally, we also see that Ms. Kessler is having in-depth conversations with students so that she can learn about how students are making sense of the information they have been reading.

*Student Perspectives – “She didn’t give up or anything”* Some time after this observation, during my student focus groups, I asked students to describe what they had been learning about. Several groups of students mentioned the biographies they had created as power point presentations. Since they had been given the opportunity to choose whom they would research, I asked them about those choices and what they had learned. Here’s an example of one of those conversations:

Student: I chose to learn about Maya Angelou because Ms. Kessler told me she was a really kind and friendly woman and then she sang a poem for the president and then...[inaudible]

Sarah: Okay, what was the most interesting thing you learned about her?

Student: Like, even though she was poor, she didn’t give up or anything and she fought for her rights for an African-American woman.

Sarah: How about you? Who did you pick?

Student 2: I picked Gloria Estefan and I picked that because of her name, because she's a singer.

Sarah: Okay, right. Do you like...Have you listened to her music?

Student 2: Mm-hmm.

Sarah: You must like her music since you picked her! What was the most interesting thing you learned about Gloria Estefan?

Student 2: That she was born in Cuba and that she came over here when she was little and her family helped her to get where she is.

Sarah: How about you?

Student 3: Princess Diana

Sarah: Okay and why'd you pick Princess Diana? [She shrugs her shoulders.] Did you know anything about her before?

Student 3: No.

Sarah: So you just wanted to learn about somebody new? [She nods.] And what was the most interesting thing you learned?

Student 3: That she donated money to charities, to different charities.  
[Focus Group #3, 12/7/2011]

As these student perspectives show, projects like this one allow students to take away their own meanings as part of the learning. These students' comments reveal learning about how these three famous women became successful, such as never giving up and drawing upon family support and what they did with that success, such as sharing their wealth. While the students do not explicitly say so, it is possible to imagine that this biography study, this study of how these famous women achieved success in life, may provide "life lessons" for these young women to think about and apply to their own lives.

## **Classroom Example 2 - Service Learning at the Orchard**

The following two-day lesson serves as a prime example of many of the aspects of the kind of “real learning” that is so highly valued at Desert Breeze. This was the beginning of an ongoing service-learning project in which students learned about various aspects of gardening, including how to build a hoop-style greenhouse, domestic abuse, and how to engage in service learning. During this introductory two day lesson, students were asked to think about how they could use the various elements they were presented with to benefit a local women’s domestic abuse shelter.

This in-depth look provides the opportunity to view many aspects of real learning within the context of the whole lesson. Some of the particular aspects it demonstrates are: the goal of students becoming thinkers and agents of change, learning with a real purpose, learning about real world topics, integrating reading, writing, speaking, and listening within the context of the study, drawing out student voice and ownership in the project by sharing personal learning responses, the idea that learning has no “set answers”, and work with and service to the community. It also shows students and teachers learning together and demonstrates learning, which partially takes place in an outdoor setting. It also shows a focus on serving the community in which the students live, developing relationships between the students and the shelter, and providing a learning experience, which further developed the class community amongst students.

I will highlight just bits and pieces of the two days I observed this learning project getting underway. After this initial introduction to the lesson, I was scheduled to begin observing in the 5th/6th grade classrooms so I did not have the opportunity to see more of this lesson unfold. What follows is an overview of the first two days, with an emphasis on

how the teaching practices, the content, and the ways in which students engaged with the material, reflect real learning. All of the following material is taken from my field notes of Dec. 19 and Dec. 20, 2011.

***Day One - Imagine Drawings.*** The first day of the two-day introduction began at the school, in Ms. Kessler's dual language integrated social studies and language arts classroom. Ms. Kessler taught this service-learning project in cooperation with the school's carpentry and gardening teacher, Mr. Simpson, and the former principal, Mr. Watts. Day one began with an introduction to two of the key pieces in the project - community service and how to build a cold frame hoop house or greenhouse. They began by watching two brief videos and having some brief discussion on what community service is. After watching the two videos, they read two different articles, again one on a community service project and the other one involving how to build a greenhouse. They "jig-sawed" or divided up this reading assignment, with two students in each four person group reading the article on greenhouses, and the other two students reading the article on the service learning project. What makes this particular practice a more authentic kind of reading experience is the fact that it is directly related to what they are studying, the two texts are articles from authentic journals, not from a textbook, and because the students are asked to highlight what they think are the most important points.

***Segment One - "How might those things go together?"*** At first students were confused about what to put in their imagine drawings. BS explained it again, emphasizing that what the kids should draw was up to them:

BS: Okay so what we're trying to do, the reason we asked, we often ask people to go from words to talking to drawing is just to get this information to settle in our head a little bit different way. So we want you

to go to the visual realm here. Now, what do we want you to draw? So, we've got three things. We have a way to grow food in Phoenix right now when it's cold in a greenhouse. So we have that. We have this component of service learning, which is, we have thirty of us that can do something for someone else - What can we do that benefits someone else while we learn at the same time? So, maybe a greenhouse and service learning might go together, and then Mr. Watts talked about a shelter, that they need certain things, specifically, maybe that thing is food, maybe that thing is money, maybe that thing is orange juice, maybe it's eggs. So how might those things go together? [Field notes, Dec. 19, 2011]

This quote demonstrates several components of “real learning”. First of all, it shows that students are being asked to think critically in order to put these three pieces of the project together: service learning, how to build a greenhouse, and a local shelter in any way that they want in order to begin planning and visualizing what their project can look like. This is an example of how teachers invite students to “co-create” the curriculum in the sense that students are asked to make decisions about the content and to take ownership of the process. It also demonstrates a real world issue, domestic abuse, as the topic of study. Finally, it also demonstrates that reading, writing, speaking, and listening are being integrated with the content of the lesson, not separate from it.

***Segment Two – “An outcome that’s real for us.”*** After this instruction by Mr. Simpson, Mr. Watts further added, “This is not a test. There are no right answers, except to get your paper covered with colors and everyone participating.” [Field notes, 12/19/2011] This comment reveals the value Mr. Watts places on being placed on learning that is more open-ended, without set “right answers”. At the end of the day, Mr. Watts wrapped the day up with the following comment:

The final product and process of this work is very real. There's nothing pretend, there's nothing like, oh, we'll just practice. This is real and it's going to have an outcome that's real for us as we do it and learn and real for somebody else as they benefit from it. I'm expecting a guest that works with the shelter to join us

tomorrow out at the Orchard, so we'll hear a little bit from her and I agree with Mr. Simpson, I'm terrible at getting started with my drawing, but once you got into it, you guys were really cranking so that's why we want to take them tomorrow and then you guys will be able to share your ideas. Thank you so much. You've been a wonderful, participatory group. [Field notes, Dec. 19, 2011]

The above quote reveals another important dimensions to the concept of real learning, namely that “real learning” has real outcomes that benefit someone else. This quote also mentions how the project is composed of both a process and a final product (which will be created by the students), two more concepts related to real learning.

In sum, on this first day of the project, students created “imagine” drawings, in which they were asked to connect the three ideas together in a visual format. My notes reveal that during this time students were busy discussing and problem-solving the visual design aspects of the assignment. Giving students the opportunity to “talk about a problem, where they’ll have to write about a problem, and the steps they took to solve it” [Interview, 4/20/2012]. This comment about problem solving came from Mr. Dominguez the math teacher, but it clearly applies to this integrated social studies and language arts lesson as well. Students were provided a lot of time to “talk about a problem” – what they thought would be a good way to bring the elements of the project together, and while not asked to write in this particular instance, their drawing can be considered a form of “writing” about this problem.

Also of note during this lesson, I observed that students used both Spanish and English during their discussions. As described earlier in this chapter, while ostensibly a Spanish quarter in the Dual Language program, the two Dual Language teachers had let me know that they were finding it difficult to do the kind of teaching in Spanish that they had in the past. As mentioned, this was due to less support, no common time for Dual

Language planning, and a focus on raising test scores. Testing would be done in English, and it seemed Dual Language teachers felt they needed to devote more time to preparing for the tests in English. However, during this two day lesson on service learning, I observed more Spanish use than at any other time, revealing that the ability to plan more open-ended kinds of learning projects like this one, provided more space for Spanish use since learning projects like this are not constrained by a lack of materials in Spanish.

***Day Two - At the Orchard.*** The next day, the students walked to the nearby Orchard Community Center to see the space where they would be gardening and in order to meet visitors from the women's shelter and hear a presentation about the shelter. The following paragraphs describe the various kinds of learning activities and conversations that took place that day. They will also be interspersed with discussions about how these various activities and discussions demonstrate various aspects of real learning.

***Segment Three - "We Want You to Help Think of the Ideas."*** When students arrived, Mr. Watts first showed them the gardens planted by families in the Family Health Ambassadors program. (This is was one of the parent programs taking place at Desert Breeze at the time, about which more will be said in a following section.) He took time to again explain to the students that the teachers wanted them to help create the project with them, rather than the teachers telling them exactly what they would be doing. He explained it with the metaphor of puzzle pieces, as the following snippet shows:

I'm going to say something. I don't know if you'll understand me but I'm going to try. You guys did a really good job yesterday of getting into the puzzle-piece making. And when you got to the part about the drawing, you had a lot of stuff going on. We are not telling you exactly what we're going to be doing because we want you to help think of the ideas. So, and that's part of good learning, so it's not like we're just not telling you exactly what the learning targets are. From the ideas, and the drawings, and the stuff you write in your journals, and the



conversations we have with the people from [the shelter], we're going to put some more specific learning targets with our work as we go along, so we're kind of inviting you to help be the brainstorming part of the teaching and then we'll all be learning together. [Field notes, 12/20/2011]

Again, in the quote above we hear about one of the defining aspects of “real learning”: the opportunity for students to help think of the ideas and create the goals, which positions students and teachers as co-learners. We hear that for students to “help think of the ideas” is part of “good” learning, and that some of the learning activities that help this thinking process consists of activities such as journal writing and class conversations.

*Segment Four – “Y qué bonito que hablan español!”* Next, the visitors from the women’s shelter arrived to give a presentation on about the women’s shelter and as Mr. Watts introduced the guest speakers, he invited students to “jot down notes - anything that catches your [attention]... questions, things they say to you...” [Field notes, 12/20/2011] This request of jotting down notes and questions, is also part of real learning - what students are supposed to write down is not prescribed – rather, it is left up to them to decide what is important to write down -just as they had been asked to do the day before while reading the articles. The presenters proceeded to explain what domestic violence is and how it includes physical, emotional, economic, and sexual abuse. Next, the presenters related the information to the students' lives, saying, “Es bien importante que Uds que son adolescentes, estén concientes de como usar sus emociones y sus sentimientos hacia sus parejas...” [“It’s very important that you who are adolescents are aware of how to use your emotions and your feelings toward your girlfriend/boyfriend...”] They also talked about the importance of being aware of how abusive patterns can start, even in adolescent relationships.

At the end of their presentation the presenters complimented the students' use of Spanish, telling them how important it is to speak both languages, and to be proud of who they are and where they come from:

Presentador 1: Y qué bonito que hablan español, okay?

Presentador 2: Si, me da gusto.

Presentador 1: Me da gusto porque mucha gente que lo saben no lo hablan. Tienen que estar “proud” de eso, okay! De aprender los dos idiomas. Es muy importante! No les deben de tener vergüenza pero deben de estar orgullosos de lo que son, de donde vienen, sus raíces, porque todo eso les inculcamos a los niños allí y también a las mamás.

[Presenter 1: And how beautiful that you all speak Spanish, okay?

Presenter 2: Yes, it pleases me to see.

Presenter 3: It pleases me because many people that know the language don't speak it. You all need to be proud of it, okay! Of learning both languages. It's very important! You shouldn't be ashamed but you should be proud of who you are, of where you come from, your roots, because this is what we try to instill in the children there and also their mothers.]

This is a way in which this lesson affirmed the students' identity and gave value to speaking Spanish. After the presentation was over, Mr. Watts talked some more with the students about the project:

So a close-up of [the shelter] is an opportunity to have a relationship where they're working with a specific group of, in this case women and their kids, that came into them in some kind of crisis and in need, and as you heard, they don't charge them anything... So what we're hoping across this semester coming up is that our relationship coming up with [the shelter] grows stronger, we do some other things with them, and probably we'll be able to do some things with their women and families in transition, as we go through the semester. So we're going to be looking to them to help us know what they need and how we can help them, and we're going to be looking to them to help teach us what they've learned about relationships, and we'll invite them back later, I'm guessing, to talk with us a little more about how to deal with a relationship when you're fifteen, and how, what does control look like, and how does control turn into abuse? So, that's coming

up, but I just wanted you to know that that's the lens, we're doing this big project and then it'll be coming into focus as a way to bring us together.

In addition to the emphasis being placed on a real world issue and the desire these teachers have for students to work at making their own meaning from the experience, this above quote also shows the emphasis being placed on cultivating relationships. Although not often mentioned by my participants within the context of curriculum per se, as discussed in chapter four, a focus on relationships and community building is an important value or belief held by many Desert Breeze school community members. The quote above shows an emphasis being placed on relationships within the context of this lesson – both the relationship that students will develop with the women from the shelter as well as the relationships that students develop with one another.

*Segment Five – “What happened to the zucchini plants?”* In this next segment, the students completed a scavenger hunt as an introduction to the various spaces at the Orchard. This next segment shows a glimpse of the kind of thinking and talking, again, illustrative of real learning that took place during this investigative activity. First, Mr. Simpson, the farm-to-school teacher, gave directions for the scavenger hunt and again explained that the purpose of today’s activity was to continue thinking about possibilities for the service-learning project they would resume after the holiday break:

Okay, we have no idea how we're going to help this - we have some idea - I have ideas in my head, so does Mr. W, so does Ms. K of how we think we can help the shelter using these four things - the chicken coop, the hoop houses, the orchard, and the community gardens. We have ideas, but there are thirty of you, you're going to have better ideas. That's what we're doing today. Not just today. Today, and over Christmas break, you'll be thinking about it, I'll be thinking about it, and when you get back we'll be talking about it. So, all we're doing right now is getting out there to experience it a little bit.

This quote again, demonstrates the emphasis these teachers are giving to the idea that they want the students to help think of ideas for their service-learning project.

Next, the students began the scavenger hunt, in which they were asked to find the answers to various questions about the different areas of the Orchard grounds. Here is a sample of the kind of learning that was taking place on the scavenger hunt. The students had made their way to the community gardens in the back of the Orchard. The students were supposed to answer the question, "What do you think happened to the zucchini plants?"

St 1: [Wondering which one is the zucchini plant] Is it that burned one?

Mr. Simpson: Burned - that's a good word. There's a bunch of zucchinis, but this is the closest one. So, burned is a good word. But what actually happened?

St 1: The crows like...

St 2: It messed them up

St 3: It got messed up by the water!

BS: What happens when water gets very cold?

St 1: It dies!

St 2: It freezes!

St 3: It freezes!

Mr. Simpson: Thank you. So all the water inside this zucchini turned into ice. When that happens, the water expands, and every single cell in there...

St 1: Se murió! [It died!]

St 2: The water was too cold for the plant!

Mr. Simpson: The air was too cold for the water in the plant.

[A moment later...]

St 1: Zu-chi... [He is sounding it out]

Mr. Simpson: Calabaza! [Squash/zucchini]

St 2: Squash! What's the difference between squash and [zucchini]?

In the snippet above, we see several aspects of “real learning” at work. Although Mr. Simpson does not speak fluent Spanish, he sees a student working on the pronunciation of the word zucchini and he connects with the student by sharing his own learning in Spanish. (The student has pronounced the "chi" with the /ch/ sound rather than the /k/ sound, revealing that zucchini is a new word for him.) Another student chimes in with the word squash – another possible translation for the Spanish word for zucchini. This demonstrates how students and teacher are learning together and sharing their knowledge of both languages. The above dialogue also shows that students are learning which plants are the zucchini plants, what causes plants to freeze and what happens to them when they do, and they are connecting the word for squash in English and Spanish. All of this happens together, with the teacher acting as a guide. All of these elements show how students are applying their understandings about plants and weather in a real life context and learning language within a real context as well.

***Segment Six – “I’m going to wait until I’m married.”*** This second day of the lesson ended back in the students’ classroom at school. Ms. Kessler had asked them to do a “quick write” in their journals about what they had learned and then the individual students shared their thoughts with the whole class. Here are some of the comments students made which reveal that at the end of the day, students had a more in-depth idea about both the shelter and domestic abuse can take than they’d had at the beginning:

St 1: They stay there for 3 months and then a person finds them a house or where they're going to stay.

St 2: It's only for women and their children.

St 3: They take the kids out to field trips.

St 4: They're abusing the women. Sexual abuse, emotional...

St 5: They support them emotionally.

St 6: They talk with their moms, like one on one with the children.

St 7: They keep their address anonymous so that so that the dads don't go and hurt them.

Although these comments do not reveal what the students personally think and feel about the day, they do show that the students have been paying close attention to the content of the presentation. Comparing their silence at the beginning of the presentation when the presenters asked them what domestic abuse was to the many ideas they shared at the end of the day, it appears that the students have a much fuller picture after today of what domestic abuse can encompass. In addition, I caught a sliver of one student's thinking immediately after hearing the presentation, which had included a story about a 16-year old girl who had come to the shelter with her baby. This student commented to the person sitting next to him: "I'm going to wait until I'm married to have a baby... or at least until after college."

In conclusion, what is important about this two-day lesson is that, like the band concert described at the beginning of chapter four, it epitomizes many of the characteristics of real learning, as discussed by various school members and shared above. This project had a real purpose - helping to support the women's shelter. The final products were going to be real: making a hoop-house, growing fresh produce, harvesting

eggs and citrus, and somehow using all of these to benefit the women's shelter. Not only did this study have a real outcome, it was also teaching students about the real life issue of domestic abuse. Another quality that made this study real is the fact that the teachers did not have the final product in mind. Instead, they posed an open-ended question to the students and asked them to think about what final form the service would take.

In addition, as the student's comment above about waiting to have children demonstrates how providing students with the opportunity to learn about real life issues, just as with the child labor study, allows students to make connections to their own lives. Just as a student, as described in chapter four, had made an important connection between the child labor study and his own mother's past, this student saw a very real connection between his own life and the lives of the young people at the shelter. He recognized the difficulties of being a young parent, and commented to his friend next to him that he would wait. When students have access to real lessons such as these, then can internalize real learning, learning that can make a difference in their own lives.

### **Classroom Example 3 - Career Investigations**

The kind of real learning described above and regularly seen in the junior high classrooms was not observed as often in the 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> classrooms. However, when I began my rotation of observations in the 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms, I did catch the end of a study on possible career choices, which also exemplifies many of the characteristics of real learning. Students in Mrs. De la Cruz's room had researched key information related to a potential career that they would like to pursue, such as required education, potential salary, job duties, related jobs, etc. They then created power points and presented these to their classmates.

What follows is just one example of the kind of presentations I saw Mrs. De la Cruz's 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders give . On this day, my notes show that 7 students presented their career investigation power points. Students stood at the front of the room and faced the class as they presented. They used hand written note cards to help them remember what they wanted to say. Mrs. De la Cruz sat at the back and made notes as they presented. Here is the transcript of Javier's presentation. The following transcript and corresponding details come from my audiotaping and field notes on March 6, 2012. Line breaks correspond to each slide in his presentation:

When I grow up I want to be a doctor [Title]

Doctors make people healthier. When people get sick, doctors figure out why. They examine people, listen to them describe their health problems, and do tests to try to figure out why. They also advise about diet, exercise, and sleep.

How do you get ready?

Becoming a doctor requires more training than most other jobs. It requires 4 years of college, 4 years of medical school, and 3 years of working at a hospital.

Future:

The number of physicians is expected to grow much faster than the average for occupations through the year 2018. New machines and tools are letting doctors treat more health problems.

How much does this job pay?

Of all jobs, being a doctor usually pays the most money. Wages depend on what kind of doctor they were and general practitioners [struggles with this pronunciation]. General practitioners were \$186,044 in 2008. Specialists usually made more, about \$339,738 [misreads at first but then self-corrects] dollars. How much they earned also depends on how many hours they work and how good a doctor they were.

How many jobs are there?

Physicians held about 661,341 jobs in 2008.

Jobs like this:

Chiropractors; Dentists; Optometrists; Pharmacists; Physician's Assistant; Nurses; and Veterinarians.



Why become a doctor?

Doctors hear what is wrong. They take tests to find out what is wrong. Doctors make you feel better by recommending diet, sleep, exercise, or medicine.

Thank you!

[End of formal presentation and the class applauds.]

We can observe several things in this example of a student's presentation. First of all, we see that Javier has presented a carefully thought out and written presentation. He is using an organizational structure provided by Mrs. De la Cruz but the writing is his own. He has presented a great deal of information and clearly learned a lot. I know from sitting with Javier during the class prior to this one (March 2, 2012) that he was still struggling with how to pronounce some of the new vocabulary, such as "physician", "practitioner" and "optometrist". However during his presentation he smoothly read "physician" (which I had helped him practice) and struggled with just a few of the words. In addition, he was still working on how to read the longer numbers represented as by salary, such as "\$339,738," first reading this number as 33,000 but then he corrected himself. Furthermore, he presented this information while barely looking at his notecards, facing his classmates, and using a clear and confident voice. I highlight these aspects of his presentation because they do not come out in the transcript and because these elements help to show both a learning process and a successful presentation.

Next, I share the reactions of his classmates:

St 1: Nice talk!

Javier: Thank you, you made me cry! [Joking] Any questions or comments?

St 2: I like your doctor, like the little character [Referring to the picture]

St 3: I like the pizzazz at the end!

St 4: I like how you put more pictures than you put writing!

Javier: Thank you!

St 4: You're welcome!

Javier: [Calling on another student]

St: 5: It was cool!

[Laughter]

Javier: Is that it? Okay, I'm done!

St: A round of applause! [They all clap again.]

In the dialogue above we see that Javier's classmates were attentive and had many compliments to share. They clearly enjoyed his presentation and he enjoyed receiving their feedback. From my observations, the feeling in this exchange was friendly and supportive. Mrs. De la Cruz had clearly worked with the students to create expectations about speaking and listening. Six other students also presented on this same day. Other career topics included: lawyer, marine biologist, cosmetologist, air force pilot, zoologist, and brain surgeon. Next, I will discuss the elements of "real learning" to be highlighted in this example.

What seemed especially characteristic of "real learning" to me about this project was the way it allowed students to research a topic that related to their own interests and future lives. It also contained other aspects of real learning, such as utilizing a process-oriented approach to learning. All of these components: practice, presentation, and feedback reveal a process at work. Furthermore, from my conversation with Javier during my observation prior to this one (March 2, 2012), I could tell that he was excited about

this topic of becoming a doctor. This career investigation represents “real learning” in that these were topics that students were interested in and excited about. They also practiced the many skills involved in researching a topic, taking notes, writing a rough draft, creating a power point, receiving feedback, and presenting it to their classmates. These are all skills they will need in junior high, high school, college, and beyond.

My observation of the career investigation in Ms. De la Cruz’s room became especially salient when I later realized that the main language and literacy activities taking place in the 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms revolved around either reading stories or completing packets of worksheets from the commercial textbook series *StoryTown* published by Harcourt School Publishers. In fact, this set of observations (on March 2 and March 6, 2011) was actually the *only* example I observed of a larger project which involved reading and writing in order to complete a task beyond worksheets at the 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> grade range level. Of note, I did observe many math lessons that I would characterize with elements of “real learning” and I did only observe twice a week. There were also smaller examples of “real learning” practices, such as one day on March 22, 2011 when I observed Mr. Guerrero’s students begin a writing activity on “a place they’d like to be.” On that day I also observed them engage in partner reading with their 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade reading “buddies”. I also heard and saw evidence of earlier projects, such as a study about China, from the students I interviewed and the work I saw on the walls. However, this use of a pre-packaged reading and language arts curriculum at the 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> grade level marked a major shift from the regular kinds of teaching and learning activities associated with “real learning” that so many participants described to me. In this next section, I now

turn to a discussion of this curricular shift that I observed beginning to take place at Desert Breeze during my research.

### **A Shift in the Curriculum**

As mentioned earlier, during the year of my data collection, there was a brand new principal at Desert Breeze, replacing the former principal of 21 years, Mr. Watts. Mr. Watts, had actually already retired a few years prior to this study, but had decided to remain at the school for a few more years, working as consultant. To my knowledge, this decision came about from a mixture of not being quite ready to retire, and wanting to help direct the search for a replacement principal who shared the same educational values and vision currently in place at the school. However, after a few more years, Mr. Watts had decided to retire again, in order to devote his full attention to creating and managing the Orchard Community Learning Center, a non-profit community center which partners with the school and will be discussed further below. During my last year as a teacher there, he had formed a principal search committee, which included teachers and parents, and this committee assisted in writing interview questions as well as with the interview process. From conversations with Mr. Watts, I knew that the school's top candidate had been vetoed by the school district, which assigned someone else to the position instead.

Along with the change in leadership, other curricular shifts, such as the one to the use of *StoryTown* as just described, were visible as well. When I asked the new principal during our interview to tell me about his experience at Desert Breeze so far he remarked:

I think that we have a great school culture. The kids, overall, are extremely well behaved. The staff is extremely dedicated to the future of these kids. The families are more involved than I've seen at other schools. It's a great place to work in that regard. It's a great culture.... We need to continue to do and support the things that are working well here at Desert Breeze. So, things like the Arts - we just talked

about the concert last night. That's not happening at other schools, so we need to really try to continue that. But at the same time, Desert Breeze students are not achieving academically. We have a rating of “D” with the district or with the state and “D” is not good because they didn't even give “F’s”. So, academically, we are not anywhere close to where we need to be. So, my two priorities are to convince staff and community that I'm here to preserve the things we are doing well and develop them even further, as long as the budget allows, and the other thing is that we are going to teach kids how to read and do math and they are going to be proficient in language and math by the time they leave Desert Breeze. So, that part is a little bit painful because we haven't been doing it. So, we have to. There's no choice. [Interview, 11/18/2011]

From the new principal’s perspective, Desert Breeze was succeeding in terms of the school culture, family involvement, and the Arts, and failing academically, which needed to be fixed. For him, raising test scores represented the way he could ensure that Desert Breeze students would do better on the state’s report card. In addition, part of this focus on raising test scores meant that the new principal had put a giant grid of reading and math district benchmark scores on one entire back wall of the school’s conference room. Not surprisingly, Desert Breeze teachers were having some strong reactions to this new focus on raising test scores. Teachers shared with me that they saw a curricular shift starting to happen at the cost of losing focus on what is most important – seeing the whole picture of who children are. As one teacher commented, "I don't give a crap about the sticky note... what about this kid?" [Field notes, 12/2/2012] Another teacher remarked, “I never went to school to count my kids’ test scores and put their test scores on the wall with sticky notes with their test scores on it!” [1/6/2012] In addition to the new focus on test scores, there have been curricular shifts as well, most notably within the fifth and sixth grades.

As briefly mentioned above, the fifth and sixth grade teachers are now using a basal textbook series called *StoryTown*. Fifth and sixth grade teachers had mixed feelings

about it. One teacher said she although she liked certain aspects of *StoryTown*, such as the emphasis on vocabulary, she also felt that the scripted nature of the program restricted much of her freedom to teach. Another, new teacher, said that he liked how it was improving students' reading scores on the quarterly district benchmark tests, remarking, "You can't argue with that!" Some of my observations of the use of *StoryTown* include the use of weekly packets of worksheets that followed a similar sequence of activities each week, the use of "round robin" style reading (in which students are called on by the teacher, in turns, to read aloud), and more of an emphasis on completing the packets than authentic reading practices. Another curricular change that I noticed this year was that the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade team of teachers had volunteered to give up their students' second Special Area class time so that they could spend more time using the *StoryTown* program. That teachers would give up students' time in the Special Area classes again marked a significant shift in curricular practices at Desert Breeze. However many teachers were negotiating this change in values and curricular focus at the school, as the examples of "real learning" offered above demonstrate.

In conclusion to this section, the curriculum at Desert Breeze is characterized by two main guiding principles: teaching to the whole child and learning that is real. The resultant curricular practices are those that have been described in detail above: offering a wide array of Special Area classes, providing learning experiences that go beyond the classroom walls, such as trips to the Orchard and to Prescott Pines. The guiding principle of real learning also influences a variety of curricular practices that are designed to make learning more "real" and meaningful. The values of "whole child" and "real learning" also mean that there is a dual language program offered at the school. We saw that the

Dual Language program has a long history and has undergone many changes. This year it appears that in many ways the Dual Language program has become more symbolic than academic in the sense that most instruction observed was in English. We also saw that Spanish is still highly valued and spoken across the campus even if most of the instruction is in English.

Finally, this section discussed how the curriculum is starting to change at Desert Breeze, due to the priority of the new principal to raise test scores. As mentioned above, the new principal believes that Desert Breeze is failing academically and that he has “no choice” but to raise test scores. This belief has led to a heightened focus on test scores, which is quite different for the school. Teachers are reacting to these changes and talked to me about ways they hoped to continue teaching in ways they found more “meaningful”. In the next section we will turn to take a look at some of the other practices aside from curricular practices, which characterize the culture at Desert Breeze.

### **Community Building Practices**

As just mentioned, there are a variety of practices, other than those directly related to the curriculum at Desert Breeze, that also characterize the cultural practices at Desert Breeze. Many of these practices may be considered as community-building practices since they contribute to communication and relationships across the school. These practices include using Spanish, cultivating relationship, and involving parents. Each one of these will be explored next.

#### **Building Community by Using Spanish**

Because the Desert Breeze school community values Spanish, and believes that Spanish is an important part of the cultural identity of students, families, teachers, and

thus, the school community as a whole, as well as being important for family communication, and future academic and professional success, this means that Spanish is used across the campus, both for learning and for campus-wide events. Many participants expressed the idea that one of the major ways that the school helps all parents to feel welcome is by valuing and using Spanish across the campus, the language spoken by the majority of parents in the Desert Breeze neighborhood. As junior high teacher, Ms. Kessler, remarked, "Parents know that speaking Spanish is okay" [Interview, 1/6/2012].

Using Spanish across the campus contributes to welcoming all parents to Desert Breeze and is perhaps one of the most defining cultural practices at Desert Breeze. Almost everyone I spoke with told me that valuing the Spanish language and Spanish speakers is a big part of what makes Desert Breeze who they are. As mentioned in chapter four's section on the Dual Language program, creating a school culture of valuing Spanish began when the former principal first arrived at Desert Breeze to find that "the Spanish-speaking parents weren't there" [Interview, 1/6/2012]. Furthermore, the former principal suggested that having the Dual Language program helped to change this state of affairs, creating a campus where Spanish is welcome. As another teacher suggested, "I think it had a lot to do where parents felt, 'We're important!' - Just as important as anyone who speaks English, as anyone who speaks Spanish. Everyone was kind of treated equal" [Interview, 4/5/2012].

As mentioned, Spanish is used across the campus. For example, Spanish is used during the weekly Monday morning rituals, wherein the entire school community recites the pledge of allegiance in both Spanish and English. Spanish is often heard in social conversations on the sidewalk, cafeteria, and playground. Spanish is used as a part of the



official painted lettering on all the doors of key school sites such as the office, creating bilingual signs such as: "Office/Oficina" or "Library/Biblioteca". Another part of what makes Spanish so prominent is that not just students, but teachers, staff, and parents speak Spanish on campus. The majority of the school faculty and staff are bilingual. As Mr. Serrano described it:

First of all, you speak the language at school. Almost everybody on this campus, if you look at our K-1-2 teachers, all but one of them are Latinas - All but one, right? They're all Mexicans, but they're all Latinas, right? So, there's some value there. There's some value there, and every one of them, except for one, can speak to the kids in Spanish. [Interview, March 23, 2012]

In the quote above we hear the idea that having a faculty of bilingual teachers, many of whom are Latina, particularly at the K-2 level, when many students come to school speaking Spanish, sends an important message of value to the community. Furthermore, it is important to note that in addition to the K-2 team, many more of the school's faculty and staff are bilingual. Bilingual personnel on campus include the following: the former principal (who still works with the school in his new role as the Orchard director), the assistant principal, the three school secretaries, the Intervention Specialist, the School Programs leader, the two ELL coordinators, the parent center coordinator, as well as many other teachers, paraprofessionals, and other staff members such as cafeteria and custodial staff. Such a large number of school staff that speaks Spanish undoubtedly sends a strong message to the community about the value of Spanish at the school. As 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, Becky Hammill, described it:

I can't speak for other people, but I still feel it's a culture here. You still hear kids on the sidewalk talking Spanish. A teacher will go back and forth in Spanish, um, the book baskets that you see around campus have bilingual books, are Spanish and English books. Um, it still looks like a bilingual atmosphere even though you may not see the instruction at K-3 or K-4. It's in English but I just feel we have

those roots, so it's carrying through. I guess, I don't know if it's so conscious or not, but I feel like that's just who we are and so it's just so evident... Like that's just who we are at Desert Breeze and so, it would be odd if it weren't, in my eyes. And our marquee and our notices that go home, everything, the pledge that we do at morning crew, just, you can feel it, it's still there, you know. [Interview, Nov. 29, 2011]

As we hear in this quote above, for this teacher, and many others I spoke with, using Spanish is "just who we are at Desert Breeze". The School Programs Leader, Mr. Serrano, remarked: "You can feel it when you walk on this campus. People are speaking Spanish. The [new] principal started calling me Pepito... So, wow! That says something right?" [Interview, 3/23/2012] Another teacher also mentioned the new principal's efforts to speak Spanish, saying: "Sometimes he'll try and speak in Spanish because he knows that's what our school culture is" [Interview, 4/5/2012]. As mentioned in the opening anecdote of chapter four, I also observed the new principal use Spanish to greet the hundreds of parents gathered for the winter band concert.

In the eyes of many, using Spanish across campus is about more than just language. As the band teachers suggests:

Part of it is the Arts, but part of it is, I think, could be the language, too, and the way Hispanics are perceived here and accepted. I think, here at Desert Breeze, more than at other schools. I think that they see that the culture is, I think, preserved a little more here, I think, than other schools. [Interview, 11/10/2011]

As the above quote hints, speaking Spanish is not just about acceptance of language, but of the people who speak that language. He suggests that the way people of Latino background are perceived and accepted is something special at Desert Breeze, "more than at other schools". In fact, the state's anti-bilingual education legislation policy, along with other recent legislation, such as the Senate Bill 1060 mentioned earlier, is often interpreted as being not just anti-Spanish but anti-Latino.

Many students I spoke with mentioned this message in relation to the state's policies. For example, one student compared the state's recent policies to way African-Americans have historically been discriminated against in the U.S.:

I actually made an observation. Separation or segregation, I don't want to say it, but for African Americans, I think that was happening for Mexicans because back then they didn't want African Americans anywhere, and they wanted to kick them out. But now it's the other way around. Now Americans are trying to kick us out, so I think that's what's happening now. It's not cool. [Focus Group #1, 12/5/2011]

In the quote above, unfortunately, we hear how one student perceives such a combination of policies to be a form of segregation. He was not alone in feeling the policy to be discriminatory. Another student explained:

Like that law, that one law actually - What's it say about Hispanics or something? You have to have papers... It's like what? Are you kidding me? What does that have to do with anything? I always thought that America was a very immigrant, like immigrants, you know? From Europe, from Mexico, Canada, Japan... It's like a big salad, you know? Like you have your lettuce, your tomato - I see America as a big salad, it's true, because it's mixed and it makes it taste good. You see, like a good country, so when they do that kind of stuff, it's like, "Don't you think of the roots, like it naturally came from? Like you came from? Like, don't judge! [Focus Group #8, 3/9/2012]

Feeling a sense of acceptance, welcome, and freedom to be who you are at school offers a powerful contrast to the political hostility perceived by these young people.

Related to this idea of the messages students take away from the surrounding political landscape, this same group of former Desert Breeze students, as mentioned above, spent a great deal of time describing the transition they'd made from Desert Breeze to their new high school, where the majority ethnic group is Anglo and the majority language is English. At Desert Breeze they were used to attending school with a majority Latino population where both English and Spanish were an integral part of the culture. They had many examples of how difficult this transition from one school "world"

to the other had been, saying of their new school, “It’s, like, shocking to them to hear conversations in Spanish.” Another student told me of how she had considered going by a nickname because none of her teachers could pronounce her name correctly, saying, ““It’s going to sound weird but I was considering changing my name, like saying the second part of my name [only] because I thought people would have an easier time saying it – that’s how stressed out I was with the whole name situation!”

This group of students also told me how surprised they’d been that no one at their new school knew much about the recently passed Senate Bill 1060, which requires all immigrants to carry their proof of citizenship with them at all times and permits law enforcement officials to detain anyone suspected of not being a citizen. For example, one student explained, “At my school we didn’t have one conversation about what was going on, which, to me, I would come home and turn on the TV and that’s all everyone would talk about. So, knowing that, in [their new school], people didn’t know what was going on was, like, shocking!” All of these students comments help to explain Diego’s earlier comment, as described earlier that, “At [Desert Breeze] it’s like more me” and help to show how important a school community that understands what’s going on in their own “world” is to these students. At Desert Breeze speaking Spanish and making connections to students’ home worlds is important whether in terms of the politics surrounding those home worlds, learning how to pronounce students’ names, or in relation to bringing in curricular elements that also connect to students’ backgrounds or family backgrounds. All of these practices help Desert Breeze to reflect the community of students and families that attend the school. As the band teacher, Emilio Garcia, also suggests about Desert Breeze:

A climate that it's okay to come here and to share your culture and to share your language and to share your food, which we love, and the music, which I'm a small part of helping, too... they feel comfortable... I can come over and speak Spanish and not feel like I'm going to get--- whatever. [Interview, 11/10/2011]

In these words we hear the idea that Desert Breeze offers an accepting climate, one in which Spanish speakers can feel comfortable and safe. Many of the people I spoke with mentioned the idea of safety in connection with what they considered to be the "sacred ground" of school. As expressed in the quote above, part of feeling safe at school is being able to speak Spanish at school.

### **Building Community Through School Rituals and Events**

There are a variety of rituals and events that take place regularly at Desert Breeze, which also seem to contribute to the overall sense of community. One of the most notable of these is what Desert Breeze school members call "Monday-morning ritual" or "Crew". This is a weekly gathering of the entire school in the gymnasium each Monday morning for the Pledge of Allegiance, school announcements, and class performances. Parents are welcome at this weekly school event and many are present each Monday morning. One of the ways Desert Breeze strives to make this an inclusive event for everyone is by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance in both Spanish and English. Classes often perform poems, songs, or other types of performances for the rest of the school. In addition to these weekly school-wide meetings, there are other regularly scheduled events, which bring part or all of the school community together, some of which were discussed earlier, such as the annual Arts Quest Camp, the winter Arts Extravaganza, and Academic Expo nights, among others.

## **Building Community by Cultivating Relationships**

As we heard in chapter four, relationships are highly valued at Desert Breeze. As such, cultivating relationships amongst all members of the school community is a key cultural practice in which many members participate. For example, teachers cultivate close relationships with their students in a variety of ways. One way that students spoke of is by taking the time to talk to them about personal matters. Many students spoke of the concern teachers have, not only for their academic success, which was important to them, but also for their well being as people. One junior high student, told me:

Teachers are respectful to you here... they actually care about your education and how you're going to be in the future, and that's pretty cool because at some other schools, they just have teachers that, like, teach their certain things, and they don't tell you anything else. [Focus Group #4, 12/15/2011]

When I asked him and the others in his focus group how the teachers showed that they cared, the students gave me the following answers:

St 1: Because they, like, tell us to stay after school and work on what you need to, or during recess, or like, they just have a conversation with you about your future and all that.

St 2: Like, if you don't do your homework, he makes you stay in for recess and if you forget again, like for a week or something. And also like, with Ms. K, if we get off task she makes us stay in for recess and do it all over.

Sarah: Okay, so you guys don't get upset about that?

St 1: No, because they're actually teaching you something like manners.

St 3: I like it because if we're in Mr. Dominguez's class and you were, like, you had a problem, he'd be able to ask you if there was a problem. Like, he would actually care if, he would ask if there was a problem and if there was anything he could do to help you. [Focus Group #4, 12/15/2011]

In the exchange above we hear that, for this group of students, the fact that teachers took the extra time to talk to them, or even made them spend their recess catching up on homework, showed students that teachers cared for them.

Teachers also commented upon the fact that many teachers put in extra hours at Desert Breeze. For example, the band teacher, Mr. Garcia, remarked, “I think that’s what makes our school special, too. We have a lot of the teachers that volunteer and work with the kids after school” [Interview, 11/10/2011]. In fact, this same band teacher puts in countless uncompensated hours working with students, particularly with former Desert Breeze students who now return to school to continue playing together as the High School Latin Jazz Band. Parents, too, noticed the extra time that teachers put in to work with students after school. Parent and parent coordinator, Mrs. Orellana, commented, “They do offer tutoring as well. That is an opportunity for them to get that extra help for those kids that are learning English, they do get tutoring. I think that’s—I do see some teachers go just a little bit beyond, just trying to make those kids learn a little bit more” [Interview, 4/11/2012].

Many of the junior high students also expressed feeling like their teachers understood them, as this next excerpt shows:

St 1: Well, yeah, like all the teachers, they understand you if you don't get something. Well, I guess some teachers - they've, like, been where you have.

Sarah: Okay, so you like that? You feel like some teachers... when you say, "They've been where you have" what do you mean?

St 1: Well, some teachers are also Hispanic, too, like us.

Sarah: Mm-hmm, sure. So, and some of those teachers are bilingual also...? [Student nods her head in agreement.] All right, so what else?

St 2: Being a student at Desert Breeze is like, happy. If you've been a student at this school for a long time, you like, connect to it. Like, how teachers are your friends and some are part of your family, and you could tell some teachers how you feel... Like, pride in being a student at Desert Breeze. [Focus Group #3, 12/7/2011]

These students' comments reveal what a close connection they feel to their teachers, to the point that the teachers feel like "part of their family". It is interesting to note that for these students, having teachers who share their own ethnic background, as well as language, helps them to feel that these teachers understand them. While this was the only group to specifically mention shared ethnicity, other students did mention how having teachers who spoke Spanish was important to them, as did this student: "The most important is that teachers know both languages, and for like, when they have the conferences, they know both languages. My mom only knows, and my dad, Spanish, so the teachers know that, too" [Focus Group #5, 12/16/2011]. While shared ethnicity and/or language is certainly not necessary for close teacher-student relationships, these students' comments do let us know that shared experience may play a role in facilitating student-teacher mutual understanding.

While the students spoke of their teachers in general, many students spoke lovingly of their math and science teacher, Mr. Dominguez. Their comments included how they felt he treated them like family, how he took time to notice how they were feeling, how he would talk to them on-on-one, and how he helped them prepare for high school and college. These all show important ways that teachers cultivate meaningful relationships with students, as the following snippet suggests:

St 1: I think the teachers here really help us with [feeling safe] because they make us feel comfortable. A lot of the new kids we have, like...[student two jumps in]



St 2: Like they already feel, like, they've been here since a long time.

Sarah: Really? They say that? [Students are nodding yes] Wow!

St 2: I like how Mr. Dominguez makes us feel like, safer [they are all agreeing with her] like, the way he talks to us like, if he was one of us, or like a brother or something.

Sarah: How do you think he does that? What does he do or what does he say that makes you feel comfortable?

St 3: He explains to us that we're part of his family

St 4: Yeah

St 3: And we feel, like, safe around him, like when we're around any teacher. Or like, sometimes, when like, since he knows us so much, since we've been here the whole year and stuff, he knows how we usually act, and if we're not acting in our usual way, he'll come talk to us and be like, "Oh, are you okay? I've seen you like this and that..." So like, he worries about you, and it makes you feel, like, good because you know that somebody...

St 4: Cares about you  
[Focus Group #3, 12/7/2011]

In the comments above we hear the idea that these students feel safe with their teacher because he treats them like family and knows them well enough to notice if there is something bothering them. They describe how the fact that he talks to them is important to them. Thus, we hear that talking to students, getting to know them, and treating them in a way that suggests they are valued members of the classroom “family” are important ways that teachers cultivate good relationships with students.

Former students also spoke fondly of Mr. Dominguez and described how his dedication to helping students before and after school is yet another important way teachers helps student to feel valued. For example, one former student commented, "He is still coming in at 6:30, helping kids that don't, that still don't understand. He's helping

them, and you don't see that happening" [Focus Group #8, 3/9/2012]. These former students also still remembered his signature motto, recounting to me: "And then, oh yeah, like Mr. Dominguez's quote, 'Impossible is nothing!' That's another one. You can't forget that!" [Focus Group #8, 3/9/2012] One student told me how she and her younger sister had very recently remembered this message in relation to a situation in their life. She explained:

I think it was either today or yesterday, [her younger sister] actually used that quote because we were saying, like, "Oh, we can't do that!" and she was like, "Impossible is nothing! That's what Mr. Dominguez says." So, it's something that, we haven't see him - well, I personally haven't seen him in a while - but it's like something we'll always think about and that we'll always carry on with us like that, to always try our best. [Focus Group, 3/9/2012]

Positive messages such as this one are also ways in which teachers not only foster meaningful relationships with their students but also do so in ways that students can then carry forward into their futures.

Mr. Dominguez has clearly has made a lasting positive impression with his students. From my own observations, he was an extremely dedicated teacher - arriving early in the morning, well before class started, and then staying until the evening, long after the final bell rang, to tutor and coach students. In fact, every time I saw him, even during his already short lunch break, he always had a classroom full of students whom he was helping. Even during the week of AIMS, when I stopped by after school he had a class full of students who he was preparing for the high school Advanced Placement algebra test, so that the students could receive high school credit for the algebra class they took with him. He coached a sport every season and always appeared highly involved with his students. I know from a past conversation with Mr. Dominguez that one of our

shared former students, a student who I had personally struggled with, in terms of behavior and schoolwork, had later called Mr. Dominguez from high school to report that he was earning straight A's and to thank Mr. Dominguez for “not giving up on him” [Personal communication, 3/18/2010].

Mr. Dominguez was only one of many teachers of whom students spoke lovingly. Former Desert Breeze students also described the affection they felt for another one of their junior high teachers, Ms. Spangler:

Because we were all like, very close. We'd respect Ms. Spangler, like, listen to her, and take her seriously... She'd always say, "I just loved your 6th grade class" and I'm like, "I know and we loved you, too!" And we just had that... She was like our... not our teacher, but like our mom. Like she'd teach us things, like not from the textbook, but things that are useful. Like, she'd show us videos, she'd... like many activities, like she provided those gardens outside and like, around school. She promoted that. She's one of the... like a big part because she's like a vegetarian, you know? [Focus Group #8, 3/9/2012]

Similar to the way current students described feeling like they were a part of Mr. Dominguez's family, here former students describe feeling like Ms. Spangler was "like our mom". These descriptions show the closeness students felt to teachers. The ways in which teachers cultivate close relationships with students is certainly a key part of what makes so many school members consider Desert Breeze to be a strong community.

Teachers, too, echoed the students' sentiments, mentioning how important their relationships with students were. They often spoke of the joy they felt in working with their students. For example:

I've really enjoyed working with kids and I really enjoy working with the middle school age group. I have siblings that are the same age, that are 12 and 14, so sometimes I think that my students kind of fill the void of not being home with my family. It's been rewarding to watch the kids grow and learn, and struggle along the way, too, because it's not always about simple learning experiences. [Interview, 4/20/2012]

In the quote above we hear that this teacher also considers her students to be a kind of “surrogate” family. She also expressed how she felt that she learned from her students:

It hasn't been easy getting to know them. Nor has it worked every time with every student, but I think that I'm learning how to be a better teacher and how to be more able to interact with a variety of personalities amongst the age group. They've taught me a lot about myself and hopefully I've taught them something along the way, too. [Interview, 4/20/2012]

Some important ideas in the two quotes above are the way this teacher mentions how she feels her students have become like family, a common sentiment at Desert Breeze, and also her comment on how she's learned a great deal from her students. This idea of mutual teaching and learning also reflects a way that teachers cultivate relationships with their students – seeing teaching and learning as a two-way rather than one-way street.

Junior high Dual Language teacher, Ms. Kessler, remarked:

And they know we're with them. *Estamos con ellos adentro de la misma situación.* [We're with them inside the same situation.] I don't know, that we're part of that same...we're part of the same process that, it's not like here we are and they're divided from the experiences. No, we're basically going through the same thing” [Interview, 1/6/2012].

In this quote we hear Ms. Kessler positioning herself with her students, commenting that they share the experience of school together. The belief that students and teachers are co-learners is another aspect of “real learning” as described by Desert Breeze school community members.

Another way that teachers seemed to cultivate relationships with students was by sharing aspects of their personal lives with students and creating a sense of community within their classrooms. For example, I noticed during my observations in Mr. Guerrero's 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> grade Dual Language classroom that he shared many personal stories with his

students, such as stories about growing up in the same community the school is located in, stories about his own family and children, stories about his life and earlier career in the Marines, and stories about overcoming challenges.

One day while observing shortly before AIMS week, the week that students take the state's high stakes end of the year exam, Mr. Guerrero shared a story about competing in the Iron Man triathlon with his students. He shared the difficulties he overcame during this strenuous competition and pointed out his trophy from the competition, which was displayed in his classroom. Students asked many questions and were highly engaged during this time. He also showed them a picture of his graduation from ASU and talked about how hard he worked and studied to graduate with honors. He told the students that if he could accomplish these things, they could, too. Finally he finished by telling them that he believed in them. [Field notes, 4/4/2012] As mentioned, sharing personal stories with his students was an everyday practice in Mr. Guerrero's classroom and seemed to be an important part of how he cultivated a close relationship with his students. My observations showed that there seemed to be strong classroom community in place since I noticed that many of students participated actively in class and seemed to feel comfortable sharing their ideas. Mr. Guerrero one day told me how great it made him feel when one of his students accidentally called him, "Papi" [Daddy] demonstrating to him that she felt comfortable and safe in his classroom [Field notes, 3/16/2011].

Of course, teachers do not only cultivate strong and meaningful relationships with the students at Desert Breeze. Many teachers spoke of the positive relationships they shared with one another and with the parents at Desert Breeze. Many teachers expressed

that one significant aspect of teaching at Desert Breeze was the relationships they had with one another. For example, Ms. Kessler said:

So when I went to Desert Breeze, I know, politically speaking, that not everybody was at the same page, pedagogically speaking we were not at the same page, but there was... *había una camaradería enorme*. There was a strong camaraderie. So it felt like, wow, you can really do some good work here. [Interview, 1/6/2012]

Her feelings of camaraderie were echoed many times by other teachers. Her colleague, Ms. Spangler agreed, saying, "For me, what's important here is I like the teamwork, like being able to work with my colleagues. I really like that. It's important to me... Like here I feel loved" [Interview, 1/6/2012]. I know from my own past experiences as a teacher at Desert Breeze that there were many whole-staff activities and events that helped to build this community. For example, most staff meetings often began with some kind of teambuilding activity, or what the Expeditionary Learning consultants called, "initiatives". These were activities where we had to take on a challenge together, such as passing a hula-hoop around a circle, with hands interlocked, where we had to use other parts of our body, like our shoulders and legs, as well as teamwork, to get the hula-hoop around. We also did activities that helped us to get to know one another, such as interviewing one another about a fact that "no one else on staff knew" and then sharing this with the group. These kinds of teambuilding "initiatives" undoubtedly help to build and sustain relationships among teachers.

Often, teachers also mentioned the former principal's role in creating structures to support these relationships such as the professional learning communities (PLCs) that he had established, citing the time to talk as one important factor those relationships had developed. For example, one teacher commented: "One of the things that's really

important is the PLCs” [Interview, 11/17/2011]. A moment later she expanded upon this idea, saying:

Yeah, I think Jim, his leadership and his idea - I think Expeditionary Learning builds community just in the circles and icebreaking activities and whatever. Then the fact that he set up a structure to allow people to sit down and talk to each other helped develop relationships as well. [Interview, 11/17/2012]

Here we hear the idea that it is the former principal’s leadership, as well as practices associated with Expeditionary Learning, such as “the circles and icebreaking activities” that helped to form relationships among teachers. From my own recollections, the former principal also arranged for teachers to take many trips together for professional development. Memorable past trips for me include: a weeklong literacy cadre in Prescott, several Expeditionary Learning conferences and leadership retreats around the country, and a three-day math expedition to Mexico, where we stayed with host families and roomed together. These out-of-town trips really allowed us to get to know one another on a personal level, and consequently led to smoother working relationships. I did not hear of any such staff retreats and professional development opportunities this year as I observed, but one structure that continued were the professional learning communities (PLCs) in which all members of a grade-range team work together in planning and professional development. As one teacher put it:

When I came here and there were double planning times and teams that had common time to plan and work together, that was an attraction, and that's what builds community because people have time to sit down and talk to each other and not just rushing to get their lesson plans done. [Interview, 11/17/2012]

In this teacher’s opinion having “time to plan and work together” is an important structure that helps facilitate relationships among teachers. This common planning time also provides teachers with time to learn together. For example, during the time of my

observations, the junior high team was reading Janet Allen's (2000) *Yellow Brick Roads*, published by Stenhouse, together, in an effort to learn more about teaching literacy to adolescent students. Teachers met as PLCs twice weekly and based on the words of the teachers above, this time to talk, learn, and plan together lends itself to strong teacher relationships.

While educators clearly work hard to cultivate relationships with their students, colleagues, and students' families, parents also cultivate relationships with teachers and other families in a variety of ways. One of these ways is by inviting teachers to family events. One of the most striking examples of friendship I encountered was a story about a junior high teacher who accompanied her students' family on a vacation to Mexico. Teacher, parent, and students (siblings and cousins from the same family had all had Ms. Spangler as a teacher) all mentioned this significant relationship to me separately from one another. As one of the students described it: "When [her brother] and I were in Ms. Spangler's class, we actually called her our 'Mama Spangler' and then once we started saying that... we loved her so much, once she traveled with us to Mexico!" It was clearly a special relationship.

Many parents expressed feeling that they could stop by the classroom anytime to talk with teachers about a concern. This led to a feeling of trust and confidence in the teachers. For example, one mom told me:

Tambien me siento en confianza con los maestros. Confianza que puedo preguntar a los maestros en confianza, "Cómo va mi hija? Cómo se comporta mi hija?" O sea, no son maestros que, que... o sea, me gusta porque tengo confianza aquí, en esta escuela y tengo oportunidad de hacerles preguntas a los maestros sobre mis hijas. [Interview, 3/8/2012]



[I also feel a sense of trust with the teachers. Confidence that I can ask them questions with trust, "How is my daughter doing? How is she behaving?" Or in other words, they're not teachers that, that... or, it's that I like it because I have confidence here, in this school and I have the opportunity to ask questions to the teachers about my daughters.]

Of the close relationship between teachers and parents, one teacher remarked: "Aside from that, we were just like a family. One thing, and it's weird because some of our colleagues, they'll say, 'You become friends with your parents!' Like, we'll go yard sale'ing or... I don't know!" [Interview, 4/5/2012]

As demonstrated above, cultivating relationships at Desert Breeze is an important process and practice which helps to build community at Desert Breeze, which in turn, as I will discuss more thoroughly in chapter six, is part of both how and why the school community negotiates Arizona's language policies. Another important result of these relationships is how many people I spoke with mentioned feeling a great sense of trust and safety at the school. They talked of feeling that the door was always open to them and that they could easily approach one another. This sense of trust is significant because it undoubtedly contributed to the high level of participation when it came time to learn more about the waiver option the school was offering. It also probably meant that many parents trusted the teachers' opinions and more readily signed up for the Dual Language program and waiver option than if this sense of trust had not already been established. In addition to the way the cultivation of relationships helps to build a sense of community at the school, there are many programs that bring parents to campus that also build that community, such as this year's Family Health Ambassadors program, as well as the presence of the parent center and full-time parent coordinator, as will be discussed more fully below.

## **Building Community Through Parent Involvement**

*Parent Center.* The school's parent center is another important structure at the school that facilitates parent involvement. A full-time parent coordinator, Isabel Ortega, runs the center. Isabel told me that she herself used to be a parent volunteer - that's how she started getting involved with the school. Her current responsibilities include: welcoming new parents to the school, acting as a liaison between parents and teachers, and providing resources for families, such as student uniforms and information on various health services which families might need. She works to raise parent awareness of how to support their children with school at home. She described how she felt both about her job as a parent coordinator and being a parent at Desert Breeze:

I actually really enjoy my position here. I've gotten an opportunity to meet a lot of parents. There's still a lot more that I don't know and I would like to meet them. You get to hear a lot of feedback and you get to motivate them to come and be involved and offer them programs...I love being a parent of Desert Breeze in general. I just love the community - the parents are awesome. I mean we do have some parents from just, parents that are... I mean parents are just... they feel so welcomed here, I think, once our students and children know that our parents are welcomed here. [Interview, 4/11/2012]

The center also has several computers with *Rosetta Stone* and parents are welcome to stop by anytime during the school day to use this English instruction computer program. What is important about the parent center is that it is another structure in place designed to support and encourage parent involvement. Over the course of my observations, I stopped by the parent center many times and almost every time I stopped by, I would find parents at the center -working on *Rosetta Stone*, eating lunch, volunteering, or just socializing.

***Family Health Ambassadors Program.*** As briefly mentioned earlier, one family program offered at the school this year was the “Family Health Ambassadors Program”. This was a program funded through St. Luke's Hospital Health Initiatives and based upon a grant proposal written by the former principal and other teachers. Because the community surrounding Desert Breeze has a much higher than average incidence of diabetes, the program was designed to educate families about basic health and nutrition habits as well as how to plant a garden. The underlying idea of the Health Ambassadors program is that the participating families will in turn raise awareness within the community of the basic health concepts stressed in the program, and in doing so become health “ambassadors” or promoters within the community. The program also includes a community development component with the goal of getting families more involved in community, such as local workshops and social events. The health classes were offered at Desert Breeze's library and the gardening classes were given at the Orchard Community Center. Furthermore, all of the participating Health Ambassador families have children at Desert Breeze, making the program closely allied with the school. I had many occasions to observe family involvement in this program since I also served as an outside evaluator of the program.

The Family Health Ambassador's program was a powerful learning experience for the families as evidenced by the following quote:

Por ejemplo, me gusta, como le digo, me gusta ir a la huerta, convivir con mis hijas, que miren ellas, que ayuden, o es que es algo sano también para ellas. En la huerta hay mucho espacio... O sea es algo especial porque convivo con mis hijas y para que aprendan como hacer la plantura que comen, como hacer una caserola de verdura, para que ellas se enseñen de muchas cosas. Y luego tambien me gusta porque ellos les llevan a ellos a la huerta [at school] porque siembran y se ponen a comer allí también y hay narajas y todo. Y me dice, "Oye, mamá, están bien ricas

las narajas que comí" o me dice, "Oh, mamá, ayer plantamos eso!" o "comimos fresas" o así, cosas que tienen allí. [Interview, 3/8/2012]

[For example, I like, as I mentioned, I like to go the Orchard, to spend time with my children, so that they can see and help, or it's that it's something healthy for them. At the Orchard there is a lot of space... It's something special because I spend time with my daughters and we learn how to plant what we eat, how to make a vegetable casserole, so that they learn about many things. And then, I also like it because they take them to the Orchard [while at school] because they can plant and they eat there, too, and there are oranges and everything. And [my daughter] tells me, "Hey, Mommy, the oranges I ate are really good" or she tells me, "Oh, Mommy, yesterday we planted this!" or "We ate strawberries!" and things like that, that they have there.]

From this mom's perspective, participating in the Family Health Ambassadors Program and spending time at The Orchard, where the family gardens are located, has provided a healthy and enjoyable way for her to spend time with her daughters. The reason this program is important to discuss in context of this study is that family programs such as this one, and access to community spaces such as The Orchard, are important ways that families get involved with Desert Breeze school and with their children's learning.

Furthermore, almost certainly, opportunities like this one contribute to the sense of community at the school. The Family Health Ambassadors Program serves as just one example of the learning, which takes place at the nearby community center. As discussed in chapter four, Desert Breeze students also take classes at The Orchard, such as Ms. K's class's investigation into greenhouse gardening and service learning in support of a local women's shelter. More about The Orchard Community Learning Center will be discussed in more detail below.

***The Orchard Community Learning Center.*** The Orchard Community Learning Center is a community learning space newly created by the former principal of Desert Breeze in December of 2010. The center is located a quarter of a mile from the school on

land that includes a citrus orchard, houses, stables, chicken coop, an empty pool which has recently been converted to a fish hatchery, and plenty of land for the school and community gardens. In fact, due to the work of families in the Family Health Ambassadors program (discussed above), there are about 20 family garden plots located in the large open area on the south side of the property. As a new venture, it is still being conceptualized and developed, but the overall vision includes the idea of creating a community space that includes gardens, a citrus orchard, and animals for the purpose of educating both Desert Breeze students and their families and with the potential for developing a future co-op for the families.

The Orchard continues to grow as a place for community education. For example, as I was nearing the end of my data collection, a series of "peñas" or community meetings were just beginning. Some of these peñas were planned to center around themes introduced through family movies nights. I attended the first of these movie nights, in which the film *Precious Knowledge*, a documentary produced by former students and teachers of Tucson's banned Ethnic Studies program, which narrates the events surrounding the Ethnic Studies ban and how students and teachers were resisting this state-sanctioned shutdown of a highly successful education program, in which 90% of all high school students in the program graduated from high school and went on to college. After the documentary was showed, the small group of parents who had come for the movie spoke candidly about how saddened they were by the closing of this program. They asked for a re-airing of the movie so that they could bring their teen-age children and more families, in order to have a discussion about the documentary with more people. This is an aspect of The Orchard that is just beginning to develop yet it shows

another dimension of The Orchard as a community gathering space and venue for consciousness-raising. As such, it is a significant extension of the school and important to discuss here as one of the many structures that facilitates parent involvement with the school and builds community amongst the families and involved staff members. One parent commented:

Pues, sobre las plantas y como se las cultivan y la huerta y sí, por ejemplo, han aprendido porque el otro día íbamos a poner un árbol y mi esposo siempre ha tenido la pregunta acerca de si debe presionarlos y le dijo Alejandro, no debe de presionarlo porque nos dijo el maestro que cuando uno está presionandolos, mueve la raíz y tiene que ponerlo y no presionarle y me quede "Oh! Yo aprendí algo!" Es algo que aprendieron. [Interview, 2/8/2012]

Well, [they learn] about plants and how to cultivate them and the orchard and yes, for example, they have learned because the other day we went to plant a tree and my husband has always wondered if he should press them down and Alejandro told him he shouldn't because the teacher told him that when one is pressing down, the root is moved and you have to put it in and not press down and I was like, "Oh! I learned something!" That's something that they learned.

Many other parents and teachers had many similar positive comments to make about The Orchard.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, the beliefs and practices at Desert Breeze serve as evidence of the culture “of community” that's been established at Desert Breeze and help to show how this community has been sustained. The school culture of community has been shaped by certain key beliefs, such as the belief that language is key to identity and to building bridges among different linguistic worlds and certain key practices, such as involving parents and cultivating relationships amongst all school community members and using Spanish campus-wide. These practices have allowed for the relationships to be built at Desert Breeze but these relationships also help reinforce these practices, which in turn,

create the sense of community described by so many. In addition, the practice of cultivating relationships is important because relationships help to build and sustain the strong sense of community at Desert Breeze. As these students expressed:

Sarah: What does it mean for you guys to be a member of the Desert Breeze community?

St 1: Cool because it's the only school that has an Orchard.

Sarah: Okay, so what meaning does that have for you? Why is that meaningful to you?

St 1: That you feel like you're already a part of the community.

St 2: It feels good because I've been in this school for eight years, and like I said, I feel a part of the Desert Breeze community. It feels good to be a part of it.

St 3: I think it's the same thing. It feels good to be a member of the family of staff and everyone.

[Focus Group #5, 12/16/2012]

This strong sense of community is important because it helps to sustain the culture at Desert Breeze.

Returning to the concept of culture introduced in the methodology section of chapter three, we now have a picture of the culture of community at Desert Breeze. Keeping in mind that culture includes: "the shared beliefs, values, and rule-governed patterns of behavior, including language, that define a group and are required for group membership" (Goodenough, 1981; Saville-Troike, 1978), we have seen what some of these shared beliefs, values, and patterns of behavior are. Based upon my interviews, focus groups, and observations, the culture at Desert Breeze may be described as one in which people share a strong community experience, one which many characterize as being like a "family". The family feeling was described as arising from the shared beliefs

and practices in place at the school. What emerges from these descriptions is the key role played by all Desert Breeze school community members in helping to create a school culture of community and inclusion through the use of certain key practices, as highlighted in this chapter. A more in-depth look at these roles and the way they helped to increase agency for each group of people at the school: students, parents, teachers, and the former principal are the topic of chapter six.



## Chapter 6

### A CULTURAL PROCESS THAT INCREASES AGENCY

#### **Introduction**

Returning to the concept of culture, Wolcott (2008) explains that ethnography allows us:

To describe what the people in some particular place or status ordinarily do, and the meanings they ascribe to the doing, under ordinary or particular circumstances, presenting that description in a manner that draws attention to regularities that implicate cultural process” (p. 73).

Throughout chapters four and five I have discussed the key beliefs and practices in place at Desert Breeze, calling attention to certain regularities that seem to implicate a cultural process. In this next chapter I will do several things. First, I will discuss the key actors involved in this cultural process. Although their roles have been indirectly mentioned throughout my discussion of beliefs and practices, it is important to explicitly highlight these actors and their roles. Next, I will bring these three elements of actors, beliefs, and practices together, in order to show how they implicate a cultural process at work. Then, I will discuss the ways in which this cultural process increases agency for each group of actors. Finally, I will conclude by showing how increased agency for each group creates a “collective agency” for the school community as a whole.

#### **Key Actors**

Each group of actors plays a key role in creating the culture of community at Desert Breeze. The former principal plays a key role by acting as a catalyst for various aspects of the school’s culture. As many key participants described, he had a vision and brought this vision into play at Desert Breeze through the use of various key practices.

Teachers, too, play a key role in helping to shape the culture at Desert Breeze. Many participants spoke of the key role that teachers play in both creating and teaching the curriculum. As such, their role might be characterized as that of curriculum creator. As also noted by many Desert Breeze participants, parents, too, play a key role in supporting and sustaining the culture at Desert Breeze by participating actively in the life and operation of the school and by supporting the work of teachers. As such, parents may be considered to play a significant supporting role. Finally, students may additionally be considered key actors in the cultural process at Desert Breeze. Students are involved by helping to actively participate in key practices at school. As such, I characterize their role as being a participatory role. As will be shown in this section, each one of these roles: catalyst, curriculum creator, supporter, and participant are necessary to sustaining the cultural process in place at Desert Breeze. Mr. Garcia, the band teacher, captures this group effort when he said, “Jim kind of created the climate for Desert Breeze but it’s the teachers, they keep it going and make it happen—and the kids and the community, but it’s all interconnected” [Interview, 11/10/2011].

### **Former Principal as Catalyst**

The former principal, Jim Watts, played a key role in catalyzing the establishment of the culture at Desert Breeze School. While this role has been hinted at many times throughout chapters four and five, I explicitly discuss his role here as a “catalyst” for the cultural process in place at Desert Breeze. In order to do so, I will revisit some of the key examples and quotes, which illuminate this role. As many participants described, he had a “vision” for the school and put that vision into place through certain key practices. For example, 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, Becky Hammill, remarked, “I think at the beginning Mr.

Watts had a very strong role in the Desert Breeze community and what our goals were... his vision is still very strong and alive here..." [Interview, 11/ 29/11] Parents, too, attributed the school's environment and programs to the leadership of Mr. Watts. As Mrs. Lopez commented, "Yo pienso que tiene mucho que ver con la administración de la escuela, no? La persona encaragada de la administración." ["I think it has a lot to do with the administration of the school, right? The person in charge of the administration."]

[Interview, 3/1/2012] Students, also, commented on Mr. Watt's role in their experience of school, saying, "Mr. Watts was a big part because he saw us grow... He knew about us... Like he was there all those years for us. Like, Mr. Watts played a big part, there's no doubt" [Focus Group #8, 3/9/2012]. It is clear from comments like these that Desert Breeze school community members feel that the former principal played a key part in establishing the culture at Desert Breeze. Next, I'll examine some of the specifics of this key role.

***Establishing the Dual Language Program.*** As we hear from the comments revisited above, Mr. Watts clearly played a key role in catalyzing many of the cultural process in place at Desert Breeze. While this role encompassed many aspects, there are a few specific beliefs and practices, which may be attributed to him. The first of these is helping to establish the Dual Language program at Desert Breeze. As he told me, "When I first came to Desert Breeze, the Spanish-speaking adults were not welcome on campus and they were not there" [Interview, 1/6/2012]. Based upon his previous experiences as both a teacher, during which he learned Spanish both by taking classes and by befriending his students' families, and a vice-principal, wherein he helped to start a bilingual program at his old school, he was "very much interested in doing bilingual

education”. He took a parent’s suggestion to try out the dual language model and the very next year of his tenure as new principal, “we started with a K/1, so two classes started that first year with families that signed up for dual language” [Interview, 1/6/2012]. Related to this interest in bilingual education, not only did Mr. Watts begin a Dual Language program that has now reached its 22<sup>nd</sup> year of operation, but he also began certain practices, which promoted the use of Spanish campus-wide. This promotion has turned into a variety of practices, which make use of Spanish in which all community members now participate, such as using Spanish, as well as English, for announcements during Monday morning ritual, the pledge of allegiance, school communications, student-led parent conferences, and many other school events. As one teacher commented, the use of Spanish for school-wide events has become so embedded within the culture that even the new principal, “Sometimes he’ll try and speak in Spanish because he knows that’s what our school culture is” [Interview, 4/5/2012].

***Cultivating Relationships With and Amongst the School Community.*** Another belief that has been translated into a key practice, which may, at least in part, be attributed to the former principal, is that of a campus-wide valuing of and focus on cultivating relationships. As mentioned in chapter four, when I asked Mr. Watts what he felt the “sacred ground” of a school should be, he told me, “I say that the sacred ground of a school is one that places the primary principal of operation in relationships: relationship to self, relationship to other human beings, relationships to animals, to the plant, to the experience...” [Interview, 1/6/2012] Many participants told me of the ways in which Mr. Watts encouraged relationships amongst all involved with the school. One of these ways was the creation of “Professional Learning Communities” or PLCs

amongst the teachers. As one of the Resource teachers told me, “I think that Jim was very big at forming PLCs... the first year I was here was when people had double planning times” and “That’s what builds community because people have time to sit down and talk to each other and not just rushing to get their lessons done” [Interview, 11/17/2011]. The use of PLCs was just one example mentioned by teachers as to how Mr. Watts facilitated close relationships amongst teachers and between teachers and the administration. Other ideas, as discussed more in depth in chapter five included having an “open door” policy and creating a team of “teacher liaisons” which met regularly with Mr. Watts and acted as intermediaries between the former principal and the various PLCs.

***Putting Various Community-Building Structures in Place.*** As also discussed in chapter five, Mr. Watts put various structures and programs in place, which facilitated the development of relationships amongst all school community members. Those structures and programs aimed specifically at parents or parents and their children include the Parent Center, staffed by a full-time parent coordinator, parent programs, such as the Family Health Ambassadors Program, the newly formed Orchard Community Learning Center, and parent volunteerism and employment at the school. Many parents who began as volunteers became part of the faculty and staff at Desert Breeze. Teachers, too, are involved in many of the programs listed above and further develop relationships with parents and students in this way. For example, during my observations within the Family Health Ambassadors Program, I observed the involvement of several faculty members, such as the SIPs leader, Mr. Serrano, and other classroom teachers, like Mr. Dominguez and Mr. Simpson, the “Farm to School” teacher. Furthermore, Mr. Watts supported many of the structures and programs, which involved teachers and students or all three –

teachers, parents, and students, such as the annual Prescott Pines Arts Quest camp. All of these structures and programs, in the eyes of many, helped to create what so many described as “un ambiente muy familiar” [“a family-like environment”] [Interview, 3/1/2012].

*Hiring Like-Minded Teachers.* A fourth and final example of the role of Mr. Watts is that of hiring teachers. Many teachers shared with me that they came to Desert Breeze specifically to work with Jim Watts. Mr. Garcia, the band teacher told me, “I wanted to make a change to a school where I thought I would get really, really good support” [Interview, 11/10/2011] and “I called Jim and so that’s how I ended up here. I came back here because of him and the stuff going on here” [Interview, 11/17/2011]. There were many comments like this when I asked teachers how they came to Desert Breeze school. Even if they didn’t know Mr. Watts when they were hired, Mr. Watts certainly played a role in picking the teachers at Desert Breeze. As Mr. Serrano, the SIPs leader pointed out, “Jim was here for 22 years. The last 3 years, every single teacher that was here, was here for Jim Watts. No other school could say that... Jim was our leader and we all believed in him” [Interview, 3/23/2012]. This role that Mr. Watts played in a hiring process wherein, “people started gravitating here that have similar beliefs” [Interview 11/8/2011] also important to consider. As the Intervention Specialist, Mrs. Chacón laughingly declared, “I think a lot had to do with Mr. Watts. He was our rebel!”

Thus, we see that Jim Watts played a key role in catalyzing the sharing of certain beliefs and practices at Desert Breeze: the belief that relationships should be a “primary operating principle of a school”, the use of Spanish for instruction and the running of the school, and the development of community through practices such as Monday morning

ritual and student trips to places like Prescott Pines. These community-building practices not only develop relationships amongst all involved, they also provide students with opportunities to learn “beyond books” and to have the kinds of experiences, which help them to “have open minds” as Mrs. Lopez commented [Interview, 3/1/2012]. Finally, Mr. Watts played a key role in hiring the faculty at Desert Breeze, both by finding and attracting like-minded teachers.

### **Teachers as Curriculum Designers**

Teachers, too, play a significant role in contributing to the cultural process at Desert Breeze in a variety of ways. As with the former principal, the key role of teachers has been alluded to throughout chapters four and five but in this section, I will directly highlight what this role includes, briefly returning to some of the key examples explored more in depth in earlier chapters. Some of these ways, as discussed in chapters four and five, include: designing the curriculum and providing certain kinds of “real learning” opportunities for students, and, like Mr. Watts, by cultivating relationships with their students, families, and the former principal. Just as many participants spoke about the key role of Mr. Watts, they also attributed many of the shared beliefs and practices to the work of teachers. For example, parent and Parent Coordinator, Mrs. Inéz, commented, “I do see some teachers go just a little bit beyond just trying to make those kids learn a little bit more” [Interview, 4/11/2012]. Teachers, themselves, commented upon the role of teachers at the school, making comments similar to this one, “I think that’s what makes our school special, too. We have a lot of teachers that volunteer and work with the kids after school” [Interview, 11/10/2011]. Thus, teachers play a key role in creating the culture of the school in a variety of ways: planning, teaching, collaborating, and helping

students through the extra work that they do to help students achieve. As students in one focus group commented, “The teachers are really nice” and “The comprehend you” or “The teachers help you to understand what you are going through, like learning another language” [Focus Group #1, 12/5/2012]. These are just examples of the many times students spoke of the importance that teachers had for them in their school experience.

***Creating the Curriculum.*** One key role played by teachers is that of creating the curriculum at Desert Breeze. This is true for both the Special Area teachers and the content area teachers. As discussed in chapter four, for many teachers, the curriculum they create is based upon a shared belief in the “whole child” and the need to reach as many aspects of that “whole” person as they can. Many teachers also share the belief that learning should be “real” in order to be “meaningful”. As shown in chapter five, both of these beliefs are translated into a variety of curricular practices. I briefly return to just a couple of examples which emphasize the key role teachers play in creating that curriculum. For example, Ms. Kessler told me that for her, learning is about, “Offer[ing] kids the possibility of exploring ideas” and “[Not] spoon-feeding them knowledge [but] respecting them as... thinking human beings” [Interview, 1/6/2012] During my observations in her classroom, I saw this idea come across in the way she asked students to make the final decisions regarding the best way to create their final biography power points and in the way she planned a learning experience that would allow students to combine their learning with service to the community. Another example of the role that teachers play in creating curriculum can be seen in the way Mr. Dominguez offered students the opportunity to learn about math through the examination of real world issues



like war spending in the Middle East. These are clear examples of the powerful role that teachers play in creating and implementing curriculum.

*Cultivating Relationships with Students and Their Families.* Another important role that teachers play is in cultivating relationships with their students and their students' families. In terms of relationships with students, we hear several examples of this in chapter five when students discussed the way they felt that Mr. Dominguez made them feel "safer, like the way he talks to us, like if he was one of us, like a brother or something" [Focus Group #3, 12/7/2011] and the way Ms. Spangler "was like, not just our teacher, but like our mom" [Focus Group #8, 3/9/2012] or the way "Mr. Garcia, with band, like, he supported us so much" [Focus Group #8, 3/9/2012] and how "Mr. Dominguez, to this day, is still coming in at 6:30, helping kids that don't, that still don't understand" [Focus Group #8, 3/9/2012]. All of these serve as examples of the ways in which teachers actively cultivate close relationships with their students and often go the extra mile in order to help them.

### **Parents as Supporters**

Just as with the former principal and teachers, parents contribute to the school's culture in several key ways. These ways include being involved in the life and operation of the school, cultivating relationships with teachers and other school community members, such as other parents, and making decisions about the kind of education program they want for their children. As Mr. Garcia, the band teacher commented, "Any time that I do anything I have so many parents involved. They want to help. They see what we do" [Interview, 11/10/2011]. When I asked 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, Mrs. Winters to describe her experience at Desert Breeze she said, "I think of families. I see a lot of

families” [Interview, 11/8/2011]. As the new principal, Mr. McCormick, commented, “The families are more involved than I’ve seen at other schools. It’s a great place to work in that regard. It’s a great culture.” [Interview, 11/18/2011] As we hear from these quotes, parents play a key role in creating the culture at Desert Breeze. Just as with the above two sections, I will briefly revisit just a few key examples in order to expressly point out the key role that parents and other family members play at Desert Breeze.

*Involvement with the Life and Operation of the School.* One primary way that parents contribute to the school’s culture is by getting involved with the life and operation of the school. As described in chapter five, parents are involved in the school in many ways. These include volunteering in a variety of ways, working at the school, participating in regular school events, and participating in family programs. We heard many examples in chapters four and five of parents who began volunteering in teachers’ classrooms or started out working as paraprofessionals who are now classroom teachers or occupy other key faculty positions, such as the Parent Coordinator and Intervention Specialist. Mrs. Orellana, the parent coordinator told me, “I started volunteering with Mrs. Switmore... I wanted to come and be part of being an involved parent. Little by little, that’s how I really realized how important parent involvement was by being involved in learning” [Interview, 4/11/2012]. As discussed in much greater detail in chapter five, many parents get involved in a wide variety of ways at Desert Breeze. This involvement by parents, as faculty and staff, as volunteers, and as participants in the various programs and structures, such as the parent center and in family programs, like the Family Health Ambassadors Program, contributes in important ways to the school’s culture.

### *Cultivating Relationships with Teachers and Other Community Members.*

Another key way that parents contribute to the school's culture is by cultivating relationships with teachers and other school community members. Parents cultivate relationships with teachers in a variety of ways. They do this by stopping by their children's classrooms to talk with teachers regularly, by supporting teachers in their work (i.e. volunteering as chaperones, volunteering to do fundraisers for the band, etc.), and by volunteering in teachers' classrooms, as discussed above.

There were two especially compelling examples of how parents cultivate relationships with teachers and others. The first was a story I heard about how one parent, Mrs. Lopez, along with her children, invited one of their teachers, Ms. Spangler, to accompany them to Mexico. All parties – teacher, students, and mother - expressed feeling a special connection to one another, likening that connection to a familial relationship. For example, one student said that Ms. Spangler was like their “mom” or a “tía”. The mother, Mrs. Lopez also affirmed the closeness she felt to Ms. Spangler as a “comadre”.

The second example was the relationship that I observed between Mrs. Orellana, the parent coordinator, and Mrs. Lesdema, a newer parent at the school. Mrs. Lesdema volunteered in the parent center nearly every day as well as within the Family Health Ambassadors Program and it seemed to me that Mrs. Orellana had adopted a kind of mentoring role with Mrs. Ledesma, inviting her to join the district's Parent Advisory Council. Perhaps in part due to this mentorship, I saw Mrs. Ledesma often approach Carol, who was the director of the Family Health Ambassadors program. Mrs. Ledesma often sought Carol out and initiated many conversations with her (and with me) in

English, which I took as a sign of her desire to cultivate relationships with the broader surrounding community.

***Making Decisions About Educational Programs.*** By getting involved, parents make themselves visible and heard, two important components of helping in the not only the life but the operation of the school. A third key way that parents play an important role in the cultural process at Desert Breeze is by “weighing in” and making key decisions about the curricular offering at Desert Breeze. The former principal, Mr. Watts, told me how he “started the Dual Language program on a parent’s request” who said, “Let’s just do it!” [1/6/2012]. Ms. Kessler added that the reason parents support the Dual Language program is that “[P]arents are very sophisticated when it comes to understanding why being bilingual and bicultural is the way to go” [1/6/2012]. When it came time to offer parents a waiver option in order to first keep the Dual Language program and later the mainstream content area classes for ELs, the EL coordinators told about the active role parents played in this process, saying, “[P]arents talk to each other, and so that’s how the word spread, and so a lot of parents encouraged, you know, ‘I wouldn’t do that if I were you’” [Interview, 4/9/2012]. Parents, too, spoke of their involvement with the school and what it meant to them. As one mother, Mrs. Inéz, shared, “Ir a la huerta y convivimos los padres de familia... Eso es algo muy bonito” [We go to the Orchard and spend time together as parents... This is something very beautiful.”] As active participants and supporters of the school, parents play a key role in helping to create the culture at Desert Breeze.

## **Students as Participants**

Finally, students also play an important role in contributing to the culture of the school as active participants in the social and curricular practices at school. While student participation can perhaps be seen as a “reflection” of the school culture in the sense that they are not in a position of authority to “catalyze” or “implement”/”create” these practices, their beliefs and actions play a significant role in reinforcing the school’s culture. Students contribute to the school’s culture primarily in these ways: by “buying into” and sharing in the collective beliefs about what constitutes “real” or meaningful learning. From hearing many student perspectives throughout chapters four and five, we know that students very much value the kinds of learning opportunities provided at the school, especially the Special Area classes, the opportunity to take trips, to work at the Orchard, to work with the school’s animals and gardens, and to learn in both Spanish and English. They also contribute by cultivating relationships with other school community members, especially their relationships with other students.

***Sharing in Key Beliefs About Learning.*** Many times students shared with me the value they placed on the kinds of learning opportunities provided at Desert Breeze. Much of what students spoke about included opportunities to learn “beyond books” as Mrs. Lopez put it, such as: the Special Areas classes, time spent outdoors and learning about the natural world, either at the school or the Orchard, and the opportunity to take trips, such as the annual Prescott Pines Arts Quest Camp. As one student commented, “I think an experience that I’ve had is the Arts Quest Camp because I get to express myself more and I get to learn more stuff...” [Focus Group #1, 12/5/2011] Because these are meaningful experiences for students, they undoubtedly increase the likelihood for

students to “buy into” the curricular culture at Desert Breeze. For example, one junior high student told me, “Like all the different specials that we have, like, most schools don’t normally have the Orchard and the animal habitat and it’s really cool that we have that... because you have more different stuff, like, not only reading text books and stuff” [Focus Group #3, 12/7/2012]. These quotes help to show how student value and share many of the same beliefs that parents and teachers do, in regard to the value of the curriculum at Desert Breeze.

*Cultivating Relationships and Socializing One Another.* Many participants spoke of the role that students play in cultivating relationships with one another and perhaps, at times, “socializing” each other into the culture at Desert Breeze. Students themselves told me about how they felt students at Desert Breeze treat each other well. One junior high student commented, “The students, like the students are, well you could be very good friends with them. They’re not, they don’t do anything bad to you...” [Focus Group #5, 12/16/2012] Another student commented, “A lot of the new kids we have, like...” and her friend completed her thought, “Like they already feel like they’ve been here since a long time” [Focus Group #3, 12/7/2012]. The two EL Coordinators spoke to me about the role they saw students taking in relation to other students. For example, Mrs. Suárez told me, “It’s a close community... I think that’s why all kids are accepting. Even the Special Needs kids, and they’re accepting of it because we grew up with it” and “You see these other kids who come from out of area and they’ll come in like they’re tough and stuff like this, and they’ll embrace them, and they tell them, ‘We aren’t like that’” [Interview, 4/9/2012]. This quote helps to show how students take an active role in “socializing” newer students into the culture at Desert Breeze. And students

not only socialize one another in terms of behavior toward one another but also in terms of language use. EL Coordinator, Mrs. Sanchez, remarked, “Because the school he came from was probably all in English, so he became that way, but when he came here and realized, ‘Wow, they speak Spanish freely here. They speak English freely, too’... I hear him speaking more Spanish now” [Interview, 4/9/2012]. These examples help to show the active role that students take in helping to support the culture at Desert Breeze.

We have now looked at all of the pieces of the cultural process. In chapters four and five, we looked at key beliefs and practices but the roles of the various school community members, as key actors, in creating and sustaining these beliefs and practices had not been explicitly highlighted. We can now bring each of these cultural elements together. Each group of actors at Desert Breeze shares certain beliefs about children, language, and learning that influence their actions. SIPs leader, Mr. Serrano, said, “We’re child-centered and everything emanates from that” [3/23/2012]. Third/fourth grade teacher, Becky Hammill, said speaking Spanish on campus is “who we are” [11/29/2011].

These ideas shape people’s beliefs about who they are as a school community, and because of these beliefs, people at Desert Breeze engage in a set of shared practices. Teachers teach in certain ways because they believe in the idea of the whole child. Parents like and support the ways in which teachers teach because they see the value it has for the whole child. Each of these elements: actors, beliefs, and practices, creates a cultural process at Desert Breeze that values children as “whole” people and believes that learning is an active process, which should be “real” or “meaningful” and go beyond traditional academics. Speaking Spanish across campus and teaching and learning in

Spanish within the Dual Language program; cultivating relationships with others; participating in key community-building practices such as Monday morning ritual, student performances, and trips such as the annual trip to Prescott pines, all of these build the culture of community in place at Desert Breeze. These practices create shared experiences, which in turn influence and reinforce their beliefs.

### **A Cultural Process that Increases Agency**

Putting all of these together, the actors, beliefs, and practices at Desert Breeze imply that a cultural process is at work. Returning to Wolcott's (2008) idea about ethnography, we have seen the regularities amongst what key actors say and do at Desert Breeze, and the meaning they give to that doing. While the beliefs and practices held and practice by each group of actors, as described above, is in place for the purpose of educating children, we can also see that this cultural process serves another important function. Although most participants I spoke with did not directly address the concept of agency, many expressed related ideas such as parent "voice" and student "ownership." As such, cultural process just described can also be seen as a process, which increases agency for all involved. In other words, increased agency is an important result or "by-product" of the cultural process just described. While increased agency is significant for all involved, increased agency for children and their parents is most significant, and will be my focus, since these two groups often have the least amount of agency in school, particularly children and parents from "minoritized" communities. This cultural process of increasing agency will be discussed next.



## **Revisiting the Concept of Agency**

As discussed in chapter one, Barker (2008) describes agency as “the socially constituted capacity to act” (p. 234). What he means by this is that no individual is completely “free” to act outside of his or her circumstances and that those circumstances are both socially produced and different for each individual. What Barker (2008) means by “socially produced” is that agency or what he calls, “culturally generated agency” is “enabled by differentially distributed social resources” (p. 234). So, to put it simply, agency is enabled (and thus also decreased or increased) by the having (or not) of social resources. These social resources can include, as Barker points out, “the values and discourses of my family and educational experiences” (p. 234). This is where I see the concept of agency as so well suited to characterizing the cultural process in place at Desert Breeze. If agency is a capacity to act, which is enabled by social resources, then we can see many examples of how the social resources of not just the educational experiences (which are multifaceted) at Desert Breeze, but also language and social networks or relationships, are increased for the school community members at Desert Breeze. This next section will show how.

### **How Beliefs and Practices Increase Agency**

*Beliefs.* As just discussed above, the beliefs held by school community members influence their actions. For example, because many educators at Desert Breeze, including the former principal, value the concept of the “whole child” they have created a set of curricular and community practices that address this concept, such as a wide array of Special Area classes, a Dual Language program, and opportunities to learn both outdoors and about the natural world. Related to this concept of the “whole child” is a belief that

learning should be “meaningful” or “real”, an umbrella term for a set of related ideas. Again, because of this belief, educators at Desert Breeze design learning experiences that address many facets of “real learning” such as “academic experiences... [that] are integrated with real world issues” [Interview, 11/8/2011], that “incorporate a lot of conversation” where “students talk... where they’ll have to talk about a problem...” [4/20/2012]. Teachers believe that “[student] writing, their reading, the presenting that they do, the listening and speaking... everything is revolved around something meaningful to them” [Interview, 11/29/2011] and that students should have opportunities to “create their own meaning... create their own knowledge” and “explore ideas, of becoming frustrated with certain things because we’re [not] spoon-feeding them knowledge” [Interview, 1/6/2012]. In chapter five, I demonstrated how these beliefs associated with “real learning” were translated to the curriculum. Because these beliefs influence the curriculum, they are an important part of the process of increasing agency. However, it is the actual practices themselves, the engagement with and use of these practices that increases agency and I now turn my focus to these practices. This set of practices may be considered to be “redistributing” the social resources that enable people to act.

*Use of Spanish Increases Agency for Parents.* One very significant way that social resources are redistributed at Desert Breeze is through the use of Spanish. Initially, Spanish speakers were “not welcome on campus and they were not there”. In this earlier scenario, Spanish speakers were disenfranchised from the school. They were not even to be found on campus, let alone seen to be an integral part of how the school works. Spanish speakers had no agency at the school. Even teachers who spoke Spanish “were

ostracized” if they spoke Spanish on the sidewalk. But now, as described in chapters four and five, speaking Spanish is a key part of how people see the identity of the school – the “who we are”. This is certainly a major piece of how agency is shared at Desert Breeze School. Agency is shared by bringing others into the fabric of the school who were previously invisible.

Desert Breeze school community members also see speaking Spanish as an important part of helping parents “to feel welcomed” at school. The ability of parents to use Spanish at Desert Breeze and to feel welcomed at Desert Breeze means that they have access to the school in a way that they wouldn’t if Desert Breeze primarily used English or were an English only school. Because so many faculty and staff are bilingual, and because parents know that speaking Spanish is welcome and accepted at school, they can come to school and speak to the majority of faculty and staff in Spanish.

Many parents expressed to me how being able to use Spanish was one important part (but not the only part) of the “confianza” or confidence they felt at school. The ability to: 1) talk to faculty and staff in order to gain information, to express concerns, and to socialize and develop relationships 2) participate fully in all community events at school, such as Monday morning ritual, student performances, and student-led conferences because these events are conducted in both languages and 3) assist students in classwork that is done in Spanish and/or understand what students are learning about because that work is completed or shared in Spanish and 4) to feel welcome and valued because Spanish is used at school are all very important social resources that give parents a greater capacity to be involved in their children’s education and in the life and operation of the school. This involvement allows parents to have more control and say so

over what happens at school and more control over helping their children to be successful at school. In fact, not only are parents present, they are active participants and decision makers. Ms. Spangler pointed out that during the search for a new principal, parents were invited to be part of the search committee, saying, “Well, they interviewed principals, remember? When they interviewed the principal, they asked interview questions in Spanish” [Interview, 1/6/J2012].

*Use of Spanish Increases Agency for Students.* Using Spanish at school for both school-wide functions and as a language of instruction also increases agency for students. Many of my participants told me that they see Spanish as an important part of identity for the majority of students at Desert Breeze. Furthermore, they see bilingualism as a means of increasing future possibility. Because students can use this linguistic resource at school, which many students told me sometimes helped them to understand the reading that they were doing or the concepts that they were learning about in class, this is another way their resources are socially redistributed. Students have an additional tool for learning at Desert Breeze that most students across the state are not permitted to use at school. Thus, students have more agency or capacity to act at school.

Within the classroom, as a language of instruction, the use of Spanish provides Spanish-dominant students the opportunity to continue learning content while they learn English. It provides access to the content area curriculum of social studies, math, science, and language arts – key content that many English learners miss out on in other English Only (English Language Development) classes across the state. Lillie et al (2011) point out how missing content is one of many critical areas of concern with the state’s ELD block. Learning in Spanish as well as English provides students with a way of sharing

their learning with their parents. As one student said, “If my parents see, I want my parents to know what I’m doing” [Focus Group #3, 12/7/2011]. This is an important way that students are able to connect their home and school worlds and provide their parents with access to what they are learning as well. The use of Spanish as a language of instruction elevates the status of Spanish and provides students with an opportunity to process what they are learning in both languages. Many students said that choosing to do some things in Spanish gave them the opportunity to understand the content better, while others said that Spanish was challenging, and they applied what they knew in English to help them in Spanish.

***Cultivating Relationships Increases Agency for Parents.*** The practice of cultivating relationships is also an important practice which increases agency for all involved, but again, particularly for parents and students. Because parents, especially from minoritized communities, typically are not given a great deal of opportunity to give input into what happens at school, the fact that there are so many close relationships amongst teachers, parents, and students, in various different configurations, increases the capacity of parents to act. These relationships act as pathways of transmitting important knowledge from one person to the next and one group to another.

Likewise, the close relationships between parents and teachers help for both groups to share important information with one another. Teachers can share how students are doing in school and what parents can do to help their children with school. In return, parents teach teachers important ideas and concepts about who their children are, what their home and family experiences are like, and how best to support children in school. In other words, these relationships create partnerships, which support children. These

relationships, again, increase the agency of parents because parents feel a greater sense of “confianza” or trust in teachers and feel that they can approach teachers when they want and need to.

***Cultivating Relationships Increases Agency for Students.*** The way teachers cultivate strong relationships with teachers also increase student agency. Students expressed this in different ways and about different teachers, but one thing that stands out is the way that these relationships increase student agency in one way or another. Many students told me how their teachers took extra time to make sure they understood the concepts being taught in class or how they took time to tell them about how to do well in high school and how to prepare for and apply to college. Students also felt like teachers cared about them on a personal level, taking time to notice if something was wrong, and making them feel like a valued family member. All of these actions help teachers to transmit or share important social resources – the knowledge and the know-how to do well in school and also communicate to students the belief teachers have that students are valued and important.

As a specific example, many junior high students described the multitude of ways in which their math teacher, Mr. Dominguez, helped them. Examples included spending large amounts of time both before and after school to help kids do the following and more: complete math homework they didn’t understand, prepare for AP tests, fill out high school applications, etc. In this way, Mr. Dominguez was increasing the “socially distributed resources” of these students, and in so doing, he was also increasing students’ agency.

*Offering a Wide Array of Special Area Classes Increases Agency for Students.*

An important part of teaching to the “whole child” is offering a wide array of Special Area classes to students at Desert Breeze. This wide array of classes increases agency for students in a variety of ways: 1) Students develop even more skills beyond traditional academics, such as band, music, art, drama, etc. 2) School becomes more enjoyable for students and hence students are more likely to come to school 3) Students are provided additional venues for self-expression and 4) Students’ cultural backgrounds are incorporated into the curriculum, such as in the case of the Latin Jazz Band. One mother, Mrs. Lopez, addressed this additional growth and learning provided by the Special Area classes through two remarks. In her first remark, she noted:

Yo pienso que eso [the family-like environment] tiene mucho que ver con la administración de la escuela, no? La persona encargada de la administración. Es de, que apoya los programas, que apoya a los niños, que no más solo aprenden de los libros pero sino que exploran, que conozcan afuera de la escuela cosas nuevas. [Interview, 3/1/2012]

[I think that this (family-like environment) has a lot to do with the administration of the school, right? The person in charge of the administration. I mean, he supports the programs that support students, so that they not only learn from books but they also explore, so that they get to know new things outside of school.]

In this mother’s description of the environment and learning at school, we hear how she values the “family-like environment” and the opportunity to learn “beyond books”, as do many other school community members. According to Barker (2008), “culturally generated agency is enabled by differentially distributed social resources” (p. 234). We can view this type of curricular practice, which has educating the “whole child” as the goal, as a practice that extends children’s agency by providing them with many different kinds of learning experiences, not just those typically found in schools. A moment later,

while talking about the many trips that students take at Desert Breeze – both the Arts

Quest Camp to Prescott and the band trips they take to California - she said:

Muchos no han visto tampoco el mar y los maestros los llevan a la playa o sea, son muchos conocimientos para ellos, pues. Cosas nuevas. Hay muchos niños, yo creo, que nunca han salido de aquí y todo eso les ayuda tener mejor perspectiva de la vida de crecer, verdad? De lo que yo creo como persona, porque están conociendo cosas que ellos, pues, no conocían o que muchas veces los papás no tienen la posibilidad de llevarlos a ciertas partes.... Yo pienso que todo eso para un niño les ayuda a crecer, internamente, a tener un mente más abierto al mundo porque están conociendo cosas nuevas.  
[Interview, 3/1/2012]

[Many of them have not seen the sea and the teachers take them to the beach, or, what I mean is, these are many new discoveries for them. New things. I believe there are many children that have never left here and all of this helps them to have a better perspective of life, right? What I personally believe, because they are getting to know things that they, well, they didn't know, or that often, their parents don't have the possibility of taking them to certain places... I think that all of this for a child helps them to grow, internally, to have a more open mind for the world because they are coming to know new things.]

This second quote is also important because here Mrs. Lopez expresses how she believes that the curriculum at Desert Breeze, which includes opportunities to travel and experience new places – such as a camp experience in the forest or a trip to the sea during a band competition trip – is going to help students “have a better perspective of life growing up” and is “to have a more open mind” because they are coming to know “new things”. Both of these ideas: exploring and learning new things outside of school and gaining a broader perspective are social resources that have been redistributed to students at Desert Breeze. By providing students with the opportunity to travel and go to camp, to learn how to play music and to create other artistic expressions, the curriculum at Desert Breeze is redistributing the social resources that students at Desert Breeze have. Travel,



art, and music are all social resources, which increase the capacity of Desert Breeze students to act in terms of their future educations, careers, and lives.

As a final example, in chapter four, we heard about how having the opportunity to play in the Latin Jazz Band, allowed one student, Diego, to experience school as a place where he felt he could be more “outgoing”, a place where he could learn at “his own pace”, and where, ultimately, because he could use both Spanish and English, school felt “more like me” at Desert Breeze. Diego told me what playing in the Latin Jazz Band at Desert Breeze meant to him. He said:

Just like one thing from Desert Breeze would be Mr. Garcia in band. Like, he would be a good band director and I would tell him about some, like, let's say an accordion, like Mexican instruments, and he would tell me, like, the notes or something and, like, he showed me how to play the music I play now for money, the music that I play that I actually get paid for. That's something I took from Desert Breeze, is like Mr. Garcia's ways of teaching. Like over there [at his current high school] it's just like typical jazz and over here it was Latin Jazz, and I liked it more. Over there I don't like it as much. It's good music but I like it, it's, like, more me over here. [Focus Group #8, 3/9/2012]

As I discussed in chapter four, this student quote reveals the influence that being in the Latin Jazz band has had on his life. As a high school student, he now has his own band where he gets paid to play, is still a member of the High School Latin Jazz Band at Desert Breeze, and takes pride in the success of the band and his role in it. As I mentioned in chapter four, having played in the Latin Jazz band as a student at Desert Breeze and continuing with it now as a high school student, seem to be an important part of Diego’s identity.

Applying the concept of agency can help us to further think about what experiences like this do for Diego and the many other students like him. What Diego also seems to be talking about is an increased sense of agency from his time at Desert Breeze.

Although he did mention that he was not as comfortable or outgoing at his new high school, the impact of his time at Desert Breeze seems to be that Diego will continue to see himself as a musician. This is a view of himself that he did not have prior to his time as a student at Desert Breeze. Having this sense of accomplishment and pride increase Diego's agency in that his "socially distributed resources" have been increased.

***Real Learning Increases Agency for Students.*** Practices associated with real learning increase agency for both students in the following ways: 1) students have the opportunity to make connections between what they are learning and their own lives, making their learning more meaningful 2) Since one of the goals is for students to have more ownership, become advocates, and become agents of change in their own lives, these goals lead teachers to create experiences that will help students to do this 3) real world topics provide student with an opportunity to think critically about the world and to form their own opinions and beliefs 4) allowing students to go through a process and create a final product allows students to become creators of their knowledge and learning rather than recipients – basically real learning is designed to help students become agents in their lives.

***Involving Parents Increases Parent Agency.*** Parent involvement is another important way that parents have agency at the school. As discussed above, from the very beginning of his tenure as principal, Mr. Watts has sought parent input in key curricular decisions. Inviting parent input and sharing the decision-making with parents is certainly an example of how Mr. Watts has altered the distribution of social resources at the school and increased agency for parents. Initially, while one could say that parents were "free" to be involved in the school, the fact that English was the only language accepted at the

school created a situation of “differentially distributed social resources” wherein English-speaking parents and English speakers, in general, had an advantage. Mr. Watts began to change this by seeking to create a school campus where both English and Spanish were valued and accepted, thus producing a situation in which more parents, more teachers, and students could act.

The following quote by Mrs. Orellana also serves as an example of how parent volunteerism also potentially impacts the way they support their children’s learning at home, which is a way of increasing both parent and child agency at home. Mrs. Orellana said, “I was like, ‘Wow – I missed a lot! There’s a lot more that they [her children] still need to learn.’” In fact, this was an aspect of her job as parent coordinator that she said she enjoyed – encouraging other parents to get more involved with their children’s education. She also said:

A lot of parents don’t know that they are welcomed here; that they can come. And I tell them, not just by coming and dropping off your kids. I said, “Your teachers welcome parents.” And I also let them know that, if you pick up your child – if you actually come pick them up after school, ask your teacher, “What can I help them with at home?” It’s not just, “How did he behave today or how did she behave today?” [Interview, 4/11/2012]

Again, these two quotes about getting parents involved via the parent center and parent programs, such as the Family Health Ambassadors program, demonstrates that there are formal structures in place at Desert Breeze that encourage parents to become more involved both in their children’s education and thus increase their agency.

Many of the parents at Desert Breeze are originally from Mexico and completed their own schooling in Mexico. For many, their children’s attendance at Desert Breeze is one of their first experiences with the American school system. The parent center, parent

coordinator, and other parent programs provide a way for these parents to be mentored into this school system and to learn more about how it works and what teachers' expectations for parent support at home are. By having the parent center and parent programs in place, this helps to increase the understanding of American schools, and thus to increase the agency that parents have to work within that school system.

All of these experiences increase the agency that parents have – certainly in the school but also in their community. Many of the ways parents are encouraged and invited to participate extends beyond what many schools do. Although a common discourse within education is to partner with parents and get parents involved, the most typical ways parents are asked to get involved is by working with their children at home – reading to their children, assisting with homework, etc. Often there is some kind of organization at school, such as a PTA (Parent Teacher Association). However, the task of the PTA is often to support students through fundraising and by planning school events, such as a school carnival. Chaperoning is also a common way for parents to get involved.

What is special at Desert Breeze is that parents are also invited to get involved with the daily life of the school, by volunteering and working there, by participating in daily and weekly rituals and events, by accompanying children on the many fieldtrips undertaken, and by decision-making – from decisions about curriculum (such as the parent's suggestion to start the Dual Language program) to hiring decisions (such as who will be the next principal). Additionally, parents are invited to do all of this in Spanish as well as English. Language is often a barrier for many parents who don't speak English. At Desert Breeze, this barrier has been removed. Parent involvement is embedded in many aspects of the school: teachers, school leadership, classroom volunteers, and

auxiliary programs. Spanish-speaking families who previously may not have felt welcome and who may have been prevented by difficulties communicating with administrators and parents now participate fully.

As mentioned above, many parents told me that they felt a sense of “confianza” in the school. They told me that they feel like teachers are accessible and that they can go their classrooms at any time and ask them how their children are doing in school, knowing that teachers will tell them. For example, as cited in chapter five, one mother said:

Tambien me siento en confianza con los maestros. Confianza que puedo preguntar a los maestros en confianza, "Cómo va mi hija? Cómo se comporta mi hija?" O sea, no son maestros que, que... o sea, me gusta porque tengo confianza aquí, en esta escuela y tengo oportunidad de hacerles preguntas a los maestros sobre mis hijas.

[Interview, 3/8/2012]

[I also feel a sense of trust with the teachers. Confidence that I can ask them questions with trust, "How is my daughter doing? How is she behaving?" Or in other words, they're not teachers that, that... or, it's that I like it because I have confidence here, in this school and I have the opportunity to ask questions to the teachers about my daughters.]

In the quote above, we hear this mother’s feeling that she can approach her daughters’ teachers at any time, to ask how they are doing and trust the answer that they give her. This feeling of trust in the teachers is an important part of creating a agency for parents. Teacher accessibility, because they speak Spanish, because they have an open door policy, and/or because parents have known them over the years, all help to increase the agency of parents. Because parents feel welcomed at school and confident with the teachers they entrust with their children, parent agency is increased in the sense that parents feel a greater sense of control over what is happening at school. As the saying

goes, “knowledge is power”. Although the parents did not say much about the ability to communicate with teachers in Spanish, I feel that this is because it is almost “taken for granted” – since it is such an embedded part of the culture at Desert Breeze. When I did ask parents directly, they confirmed that being able to use Spanish at school was part of this trust, but when I asked if it was necessary, at least one parent said that it was not. To me this suggests that it goes beyond the practice of speaking Spanish at Desert Breeze and that it also has to do with the feeling of community, the sense of trust, and the relationships that have been built, that help parents to feel this way.

Perhaps the most clear-cut way that agency is increased for parents at school is in the way they have been given the option of what kind of education program they want for their children. Many teachers talked directly about the education process that took place in relation to the waiver option. Furthermore, while parents did not directly speak about the waivers per se, they did tell me why they had picked or wanted Dual Language for their children. Giving parents choices is another way to increase their agency and their power, in a very tangible way. Involving parents in other school decisions such as during the search for a new principal when parents were invited to be on the search committee and asked principal candidates questions in Spanish also increases parent agency.

Becoming involved in school makes parents more knowledgeable about educators’ expectations, beliefs, practices, etc. Parents learn more about homework requirements and what students are studying. The parent coordinator discussed this aspect of parent involvement during our interview. For example, the parent coordinator told me how she herself, started as a parent volunteer at the school, and this is how she, too, learned how much more she needed to know about what was happening at school, and

that is why she now encourages other parents to do the same. In fact, many current faculty and staff members were once parent volunteers at Desert Breeze or have children and grandchildren who attend Desert Breeze. In other words, many parents in the community started out getting involved as volunteers and ended up working at the school. Learning about school – the expectations, norms, requirements, learning and teaching, etc. increases parent agency.

***Agency and Funds of Knowledge.*** As just discussed, the cultural process in place at Desert Breeze can in many ways be seen to increase agency for students and their parents. The many cultural practices such as using Spanish, involving parents, and focusing upon the cultivation of relationships amongst all community members, may also be seen as ways in which the funds of knowledge (Moll et al, 1992) of Desert Breeze students and their families are valued and utilized at the school. L. Moll describes funds of knowledge as “those bodies of knowledge that underlie the activities of households” and Gonzalez et al (2005) explain the concept to be based upon the simple premise that: “People are competent, they have knowledge, and their life experiences have given them that knowledge” (p. ii). Because the school’s culture and curriculum encourages the use of students’ and their families’ knowledge and life experiences, the school’s culture and curriculum can be seen to be composed of, in part, the community’s funds of knowledge.

Another aspect of funds of knowledge is the idea of social networks. Moll et al (1992) write:

Our approach involves studying how household members use their funds of knowledge in dealing with changing, and often difficult, social and economic circumstances. We are particularly interested in how families develop *social networks that interconnect them with their social environments* (most importantly with other households), and how these social relationships facilitate the

development and exchange of *resources*, including knowledge, skills, and labor, that enhance the households' ability to survive or thrive (Moll et al, 1992 p. 133, my emphasis).

This idea of social networks leading to the development and exchange of resources may be related to what the two ELL coordinators described the closeness of the school community and the way in which word about the parent waiver option spread because parents actively talk to one another:

The community's really close-knitted, so parents talk to each other, and so that's how the words spread and so a lot of parents encouraged, you know, "I wouldn't do that if I were you" and so that's how they, how we, got a lot of parent withdrawals. [Interview, 4/9/2012]

We hear in the quote above, how close relationships connect parents to one another, as well as to what is happening at the school. Parents at Desert Breeze had developed a strong social network, one in which there was an exchange of information rather than a one-way flow from the school outward.

In addition, Moll et al (1992) also mention how another aspect of the concept of funds of knowledge is one in which "the 'teacher' in these home based contexts of learning will know the child as a 'whole' person, not merely as a 'student', taking into account or having knowledge about the multiple spheres of activity within which the child is enmeshed" (p. 133). This is what has happened at Desert Breeze. Through the arts and outdoors-based learning opportunities, as well as the "real learning" aspects of the curriculum, classroom teachers are given the opportunity to know the child as a *whole person* not just as a student, in the sense that they see students perform in many ways, not just traditional academics. Also, because there is a lot of crossover between the school and community, wherein many teachers themselves live within the community and where



many teachers and faculty members are also parents, this creates a social network between the school and home, blurring the traditional boundaries between the two. This crossover is what gives the school community even greater agency, where both spheres work together.

Thus, we see that Moll et al's (1992) concept of funds of knowledge is an important aspect to the way agency is generated for students and parents at Desert Breeze. If agency is "the socially constituted capacity to act," (Barker, 2008) then what we see at Desert Breeze is a is that this social capacity to act is, in fact, constituted by the community itself – by parents and students working together with educators. The incorporation of Spanish, parental knowledge and involvement in the life and operation of the school and the integration of students' experiences into the curriculum, creates the cultural process in place at the school, which in turn facilitated the way the school community negotiates the state's policies. As such, the community's funds of knowledge may also be considered as a key factor in increasing the agency of the community.

### **Conclusion**

Just as I separated my discussion of beliefs, practices, and actors into separate chapters, so that I could focus on each element of a larger cultural process first, before putting them back together, I have also divided my discussion of culture and agency into two separate sections within this chapter. First, I discussed the idea of a cultural process and how the particular cultural process at Desert Breeze creates a culture of community, focused on the whole child, real learning, community, and using Spanish. Next, I discussed how this cultural process not only creates this particular culture of community but how it also increases agency for all groups, particularly focusing on increased agency

for students and parents, who traditionally have the least amount of power or agency in schools. While I have separated my discussion of a cultural process and increased agency, they, are actually both part of a whole. Every school has a culture and every group of actors has agency, but these both came together at Desert Breeze in a particular way, a way in which all of these factors work together as a whole, in a kind of “gestalt” that enabled this group of actors to create a culture of community, which also increased their agency, placing them in a powerful position to negotiate Arizona’s set of English-only policies when these policies were passed. In other words, the culture at Desert Breeze did increase agency for the school community members, but that wasn’t its primary purpose. Agency was a sort of “by-product” of the culture, but it was this by-product, along with the cultural process in place, that enabled the key actors to negotiate, as will be discussed in my concluding chapter.

## Chapter 7

### CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

#### **Revisiting My Research Questions**

As discussed in the introductory chapter, the overarching question guiding my study was: How do school communities negotiate restrictive language education policies? Within the term school community, I included teachers and administrators (who I also collectively called educators), students and their families, and other key school community members, such as alumni, former teachers, and others who are invested in the school. Specifically, I focused on this question in the context of Arizona and used the following sub-questions to guide my study:

- 1) What characterizes the curriculum for English learners (ELs) and bilingual students at my case study school?
  - a. What characterizes the dual language (Dual Language) program offered at the school?
  - b. What characterizes the pedagogical practices that support EL and bilingual students outside of the Dual Language program?
- 2) How do key actors, processes, and cultural practices at the case study school support the negotiation of Proposition 203 and House Bill 2064? (Within the term cultural practices, I drew upon Wolcott's (2008) discussion of cultural interpretation: "To describe what people in some particular place or status do, and the meanings they ascribe to the doing, under ordinary or particular circumstances, presenting that description in a manner that draws attention to regularities that implicate cultural process" (p. 73).

- 3) What are the perspectives of key school community stakeholders in relation to the curriculum supporting bilingualism and the policy negotiation process?
- a. What are the perspectives of key school community stakeholders in relation to the Dual Language program and the pedagogical practices that support bilingualism outside the Dual Language program?
  - b. What are the perspectives of key school community stakeholders in relation to the policy negotiation process?

In chapter four, I discussed the shared beliefs that help to influence the set of shared practices at Desert Breeze. In chapter five, I discussed the key practices involved in shaping the school community and curriculum. In chapter six, I first discussed the role played by key actors in the creation of this set of shared beliefs and practices and how this cultural process creates a culture “of community” which values the “whole child”, “real learning”, community, and language and therefore uses Spanish campus-wide and involves parents, along with other curricular and community-building practices. Then I discussed how this cultural process not only creates the community and culture found at Desert Breeze, but how this community and culture also increases agency for the entire group, particularly students and parents. These three chapters have served to address each of my sub-questions, describing the curriculum, the key actors, processes, and practices, and the perspectives of key stakeholders.

In this final chapter, I first bring all of these findings together in a concluding discussion in order to answer my overarching research question of how school communities negotiate restrictive language policies. Next, I discuss the implications of my study. Finally, I outline possible directions for future research.

## Concluding Discussion – Two Answers

### First Answer – The “Nuts and Bolts”

The nuts and bolts answer of how Desert Breeze negotiated Arizona’s restrictive set of English only policies is simple – they used parent waivers. As discussed in chapter four, the majority of parents at Desert Breeze each year elect to sign waiver forms. One of these waivers allows their K-4<sup>th</sup> grade children to remain in “mainstream” English-medium classrooms, where English is taught by ESL, bilingual, and SEI-endorsed teachers, through typical academic content areas such as language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science rather than using the state’s mandated 4-hour English language development (ELD) program. The other waiver permits children at the 5<sup>th</sup>- 8<sup>th</sup> grade levels to enroll in the school’s late entry Spanish/English Dual Language program. With both of these waivers in hand, the school community can continue with the programs they offered before the state’s policy changed (or at least in part – as discussed, prior to Prop 203 the Dual Language program extended from K-8). But if negotiating the state’s set of English-only policies was really this easy – just a matter of signing waivers – then, the question becomes why didn’t and why don’t more schools across Arizona utilize this parent waiver option?

Based upon my observations, interviews, and focus groups, I assert that Desert Breeze negotiates the state’s policies through a variety of components: 1) By creating a cultural process with a set of actors, beliefs, and practices which all lead to valuing the concept of the “whole child” and, therefore, the “whole” community and 2) By increasing the agency of each group within the school community, which in turn allowed that group to act *together*, with *collective agency*. In other words, Desert Breeze is able to negotiate

the state's restrictive English-only policies and continue to offer alternatives to these policies by having an established cultural process which includes the use of Spanish, the involvement of parents, and the cultivation of relationships amongst all school community members, among a variety of other curricular and community practices. In addition, these cultural practices not only create an inclusive and "family-like" community, they also increase agency for all school community members, but most importantly, in terms of educational outcomes and the use of waivers, for students and parents.

Another component is time. Because this culture was *already* in place when the state's laws changed, people were *already* committed to this culture and acted to keep it. This culture of community was created through the sharing of certain beliefs and the use of certain cultural practices. As discussed in the first section of chapter six, these key cultural beliefs and practices were *catalyzed* by the former principal initially, and then taken up and sustained by teachers, parents, and students. This set of shared beliefs includes: 1) The belief in the "whole child" 2) The belief that learning should be "real" 3) The belief in the value of relationships and community and 4) The belief in the value of language, particularly Spanish, and being bilingual. The set of shared practices includes: a) Using Spanish across the campus, both for instruction and community life b) Cultivating relationships amongst all community members and creating the sense of community through a variety of practices c) Offering a wide range of curricular offerings that go beyond traditional academics to meet the needs of the "whole child" and d) Teaching and learning in ways that are considered "real" or "meaningful" and likewise meet the needs of the "whole child".

In addition, the creation of this culture of community and this collective agency was, and is, a dynamic process, wherein the key actors, all of whom had some degree of agency on their own, participated in the above cultural process, which in turn increased each group's agency, which in turn allowed them to act *together*. The above beliefs and practices interact in a recursive and mutually sustaining process, which increase the collective agency for all involved. Because this culture of community was firmly in place *before* the state propositions were passed, the Desert Breeze school community was able to continue teaching and learning in the way they believed best for children, with the use of parent waivers.

Again, the use of waivers is merely the mechanism of how the school's alternative language programs remain legal in the eyes of the state. Desert Breeze found a way to negotiate the state's policies and to continue offering a Dual Language program because, as one participant put it, using Spanish is "*who we are*" and to put their Spanish books away would have represented a major change in the school's culture. Thus, the answer to my question seems simple, and yet, as my findings demonstrate, in reality, this cultural process is not easy to achieve or sustain.

### **Second Answer – A “Gestalt”**

According to Merriam-Webster's dictionary, a "gestalt" is "a structure, configuration, or pattern of physical, biological, or psychological phenomena so integrated as to constitute a functional unit with properties not derivable by summation of its parts." Although the definition of gestalt suggests a "physical, biological, or psychological phenomena," I believe this concept helps me to answer my question, and so I would like to extend these contexts to include a "social phenomena". As discussed in

chapter six, the actors, beliefs, and practices at Desert Breeze, viewed together, create a cultural process. This cultural process was not designed specifically with the purpose of negotiating the state’s policy, but rather it developed around people’s beliefs. In other words, people did not create the culture in order to negotiate the state’s policy but they were able to negotiate the state’s policy *because* there was a cultural process was already in place, which supported that negotiation. It is that cultural process which influenced people’s actions and also enabled people to act. (See Figure 1 below for a visual representation of how I envision this “gestalt” of policy negotiation at Desert Breeze)

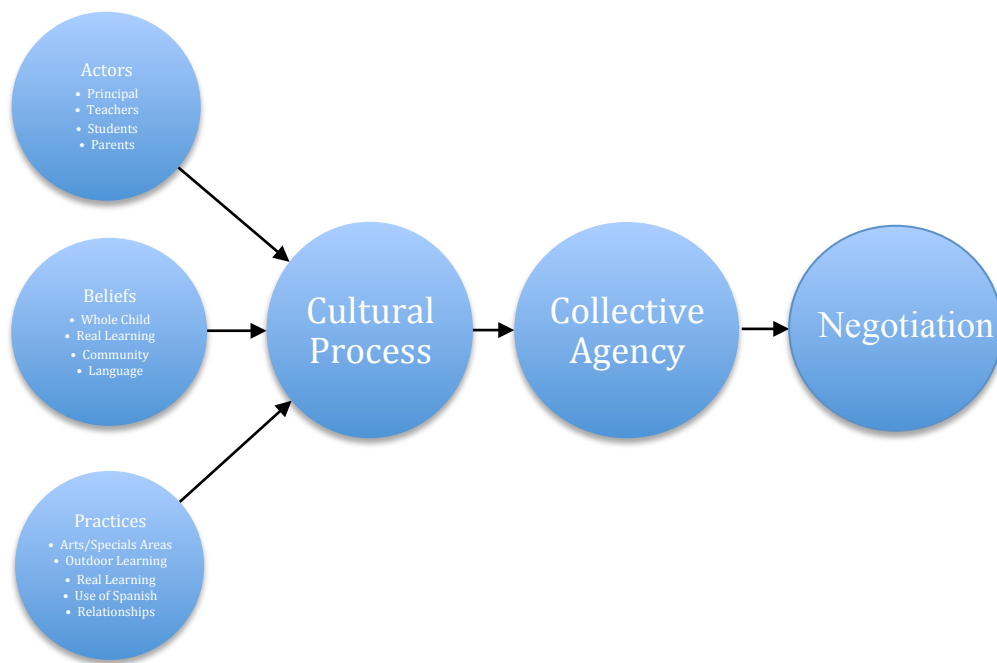


Figure 1. “Gestalt” of Policy Negotiation

Another important aspect of this cultural process is agency. As already mentioned, agency is “the socially produced capacity to act” (Barker, 2008, p. 234). This social production of the capacity to act is exactly what we see happening at Desert



Breeze. The capacity to act, for all Desert Breeze school community members, was enhanced by the social context or culture. The social context also created a place where actors had increased agency because Spanish was used, because parents were involved, and because relationships and trust had been developed. The principal had an increased capacity to declare, “This is unconstitutional!” and find a way to support this belief through the use of waivers, knowing that he had the “backing” of a faculty and staff, which “believed in him”, believed that “parents have a right to know and make decisions regarding their children’s education” and believed in the importance of language to the “whole child”. The teachers, in turn, had an enhanced capacity to talk to parents and share information about the various language programs because the lines of communication were already open and because trust between teachers and parents had already been established. They also had the support of the former principal who believed in their efforts. Finally, parents also had an increased capacity to sign waivers because they had already been welcomed into the life and operation of the school and were considered an integral part of the school community whose opinions had already been consulted in terms of language programming from the very beginning. The parents had the support of the teachers and the former principal. The teachers had the support of the former principal and the parents. The former principal had the support of the teachers and parents. Students were not in a position to be able to directly negotiate in terms of offering or signing the waivers, but they play an important role in contributing to the cultural process, which enables this negotiation to take place.

Like, Barker (2008), Menken and Garcia (2010) also discuss the importance of social context within the negotiation of policy. They begin their discussion of social

context by explaining the two “kinds” of forces that influence how educators implement policy:

Internal, individual forces—how teachers’ or school administrators’ prior experiences or personal identity shaped their interpretations and enactment of language policies...[and] external forces shaping educators’ language policy negotiations, based on the situation or context (e.g., political, community, region, etc.) within which their school or district is nested (p. 4).

The idea of these two kinds of forces, both internal and external relate to Barker’s (2008) idea of agency being “socially produced” – both of these forces, internal and external are shaped by social circumstances. For example, although considered an “internal” force, prior experiences and personal identity development take place within a social context. Barker (2008) notes how even an aspect like identity is “not something that a pre-linguistic ‘I’ simply chose...” (p. 234) We can see that the individuals and groups of actors at Desert Breeze, like the teachers discussed by Menken and Garcia (2010), were influenced by their own internal forces. For example, Mr. Watts believed in involving families from the very first year of his own teaching experience. As he said, “I went and knocked on the door of a family from Nayarete and just kind of said, ‘Can we be friends?’” [Interview, 1/6/2012] These prior experiences and personal identity surely influenced his belief that parents had the right to decide for themselves what kind of educational program they wanted for their children.

However, it is what Menken and Garcia (2010) say about “external forces” that is especially applicable to understanding the process of negotiation at Desert Breeze. External forces are “based on the situation or context (e.g. community)” (p. 4). We have already seen that a context of community was created and in place at Desert Breeze when the state’s policies changed. The idea of “internal and external forces” helps me to

explain my answer of a “gestalt” of components or “forces”. It was the many beliefs and practices, as well as the actors themselves, as well as the increase in the capacity to act, or collective agency, which facilitated the use of waivers and thus the successful negotiation of the state’s policies.

Furthermore, Menken and Garcia (2010) assert that, “Whereas the role of individual sense-making accounts for certain aspects of implementation, other research shows how an individual’s situation or social context can also greatly affect policy implementation” (p. 5). This idea, too, helps me to explain what has occurred at Desert Breeze – that it is the “social context” which has affected the process of policy negotiation at Desert Breeze. Returning to Barker (2008) supports this idea, in that he says, “the existence of social structures (and of language in particular) is arguably an enabling condition of action” (p. 236). We see that at Desert Breeze, it is the existence of the social structures put into place – close relationships, structures which encourage parent involvement, the Dual Language program, and the use of Spanish in all aspects of the school’s social life, that enable the school community to act. In particular, Barker (2008) mentions language as a specific “structure” which enables action. As previously discussed, the use of Spanish at the school has clearly been an enabling condition for action.

Therefore, it doesn’t work to talk about the culture by itself. It doesn’t work to talk about agency by itself. They must be brought together, as part of the whole cultural process or “gestalt” that makes up the Desert Breeze school community. Furthermore, the conditions were already “ripe” to negotiate the policy when it passed because of the enabling conditions of the cultural process that was in place. The school community was

already “poised” to act, so to speak. The social context of the cultural practices and beliefs enabled each group of actors to act.

As described in chapters four and five, what I found at Desert Breeze was a school culture “of community” based upon certain shared beliefs: the “whole child”, “real learning”, the importance of relationships, and the importance of language, particularly Spanish, in terms of its connection to culture and identity, as well as the belief in the increased opportunities that being bilingual brings. These beliefs lead to a set of shared practices: using Spanish campus-wide, cultivating relationships, involving parents, building community, and teaching in ways that address the “whole child” and may be considered as “real learning”.

In fact, the concept of the whole child could be considered as the overarching value at Desert Breeze, for all of the practices discussed. Because the community at Desert Breeze values the concept of the whole child and sees children in this holistic way, they also value children’s language, families, and home culture, and due to valuing these aspects of whom children are, they act in certain ways – that is to say, they also engage in a shared set of practices. As discussed above, these shared practices include: using Spanish across the campus, in all school-wide events; offering a wide range of Special Area classes, which include many Arts classes such as band, Latin Jazz Band, and visual art; teaching children in settings outside of the classroom, which include opportunities to work outdoors and travel to other places, both close (the Orchard Community Learning Center) and distant (trips to Prescott Pines Camp and California); teaching about real world issues such as child labor and domestic abuse; asking students to choose individual topics of study within larger themes and to create their own final products and thus “co-

creating” the curriculum with teachers; and teaching through a variety of “authentic” practices such as self-selected independent reading and classroom conversations. These curricular and community practices are interrelated but can all be seen to stem from the concept of teaching the whole child, which many participants described and one educator explained thus, “We’re child-centered and everything emanates from that” [Interview, 3/23/2012].

The school culture created a collective identity of “this is who we are” which included valuing the whole child, Spanish, and families. This “who we are” is, in fact, the “sacred ground” of school at Desert Breeze. Because speaking Spanish and valuing children and their families are “sacred” to the school community members at Desert Breeze, the school community chose an alternative education program to the one the state mandates. Parent waivers were the mechanism the former principal found to give parents a choice about the kind of education program they wanted, but he could not have implemented the use waivers on his own. Because Desert Breeze was already a community in which parents were highly involved and that valued Spanish and a holistic curriculum and therefore wanted “regular” academic English-medium classes at the K-4 level and a Dual Language program at the 5-8 level, it was easier for the community to act.

In other words, a “gestalt” of key actors, their shared beliefs, shared practices, and the resultant increased agency facilitated the waiver process. Students had increased agency because there was a curriculum that encouraged student voice and choice, and because they could use their linguistic and cultural resources at the school. Parents had increased agency because they, too, could use Spanish at school and because they were

invited to contribute to the life and operation of the school. Parents were invited by the former principal to help make curricular decisions – such as in the example of how a parent suggested that the principal begin a Dual Language program. Parents also contribute to the life and operation of the school by participating in a wide variety of ways: volunteering, working for the school, and by participating in school events, such as Monday morning ritual, and parent programs, such as the Family Health Ambassadors Program. Teachers also had increased agency because of the curricular approach of the school – they were given freedom in planning the curriculum. For example, traditionally, at Desert Breeze, teachers were given the time and support to plan together and to choose themes and design learning activities, such as learning “expeditions” rather than following a pre-packaged curriculum, although this practice is beginning to change with a new school-wide focus on raising test scores. Teachers were also given more voice by participating in the principal’s grade-range liaison team and by finding the former principal’s door always open. Finally, the former principal’s agency was increased because he enjoyed the collective support of parents, students, and teachers.

The former principal can be seen to be a key actor in that he acted as a catalyst for many of these shared beliefs and practices. However, he could not have created the school’s community and culture alone. By inviting the active involvement of the other school actors – teachers, parents, and students and by seeking out those teachers who shared in his vision of teaching the “whole child”, the former principal, in collaboration with teachers, parents, and students created a network of people and a set of practices to be shared. Teachers, students, and parents are also key actors in the process of sharing beliefs and participating in shared practices at the school. Teachers, students, and parents

are active participants and thus co-creators of the school's culture of community. Hence, the former principal acted as a catalyst but he acted in collaboration with the teachers, parents, and students to create a school community centered upon a set of shared values and practices. These shared values and practices facilitated the use of parent waivers, and thus the continuation of the language education program already offered at Desert Breeze.

Now that the former principal, Mr. Watts, is no longer in the principal's position of authority, we see that this position, as well as the personal identity of Mr. Watts, was an important piece of the whole and we see why the concept of the whole or gestalt is so important. As junior high Dual Language teacher, Ms. Kessler, said, "How can you sustain that [sacred ground] if pieces of that whole are taken away? So you take one piece and then the whole structure becomes shaky and then you take another piece and there's no solid basis to continue working with things" [Interview, 1/6/2012]. As mentioned at the end of chapter five, there is a shift that is beginning to take place in the cultural process that has been sustained for long at Desert Breeze. During my group interview, with Ms. Kessler, Mrs. Spangler, and Mr. Watts, Ms. Kessler and Mrs. Spangler spent a long time discussing ways that they could continue teaching in the ways that they wanted. This year of transition had been frustrating for them, along with many other teachers. Mr. Watts pointed out how in the world of school:

None of us have been raised in a culture that has encouraged critical thinking, questioning all things, being responsible for your own very actions. We haven't been raised that way, culturally speaking, in Education. So that now when we need to do that, and the principal isn't protecting that 'sacred ground', they don't know what to do. [Interview, 1/6/2012]

Yet, Ms. Kessler and Ms. Spangler kept discussing how to keep that “sacred ground” of the school and Ms. Kessler remarked, that “As long as Desert Breeze is attached to or working with the Orchard Community Learning Center, there’s a way to circumvent certain things and still do work that is meaningful” [Interview, 1/6/2012]. During my observations I saw many teachers continuing to try to teach in the ways they believe lead to “real learning” and struggling with the reasons, both local and national, why this struggle should have become so difficult.

### **The Complex Reality of the School’s Negotiation Process**

As discussed in several sections of the preceding chapters, the process of negotiating policy, both the state’s set of English-only policies, and the new principal’s school policy of prioritizing test scores above all else, is not simple, easy, or straightforward. Rather, the reality of negotiation is complex and needs to be examined more fully. While we have seen in the previous chapters that Desert Breeze has been able to successfully continue to offer two alternative language education options to the community’s families – both a late entry Dual Language program and “mainstream” English-medium classes at K-3 (rather than adopting the state’s prescribed 4-hour model), this negotiation has been tempered with many setbacks and constraints as well. This section critically examines these setbacks and constraints and considers what they mean for the possibility that school communities have to negotiate policy and work as sites of social change and justice.

#### **Policy Constraints**

To begin, although the Dual Language program did continue after the passage of Proposition 203, the state’s policy also constrained the ways in which the Dual Language



program was able to continue. The legal loophole found by the former principal was a waiver option for students aged 10 and older. This stipulation, along with the school's own self-study of their Dual Language program, prompted the school's decision to change to a late-entry model. As a result, the program changed from a thriving K-8 program to a much smaller late entry 4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade program and later, to a 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade program, consisting of only 4 classes. This change to a late-entry model meant that all EL students at the K-4 level are now taught primarily in English, and the way in which the state's policy has greatly limited access to the school's Dual Language program cannot be overlooked. About this change, former 3<sup>rd</sup> grade Dual Language teacher, Becky Hammill, pointed out that:

I still it's a culture here. You still hear kids on the sidewalk talking Spanish. A teacher will go back and forth in Spanish; the book baskets that you see around campus have bilingual books... It still looks like a bilingual atmosphere even though you may not see the instruction at K-3 or K-4. It's in English but I just feel we have those roots, so it's carrying us through. [Interview, Nov. 29, 2011].

However, it is important to note that having a bilingual culture or a culture that values bilingualism is not the same as a formal instruction program in Spanish and this change has affected language use in the community, as voiced by several parents.

Several parents I spoke with lamented that their youngest children, who have not had the opportunity to go through the K-8 Dual Language program, but are now learning in English only, are forgetting some of their Spanish. For example, one mother commented:

Pues, que a mí me hubiera gustado que [the Dual Language program] había continuado porque ahora tengo problemas con el niño, porque ahora quiere puro inglés y pues, con la experiencia que tuve con los otros niños, ellos no dejaron el español, verdad, pero con él, sí, puro inglés, y quisiera que hubiera quedado por siempre pero no, que no se olvide. [Interview, 2/8/2012]

[Well, I would've liked it if [the DL program] would've continued because now I have problems with my son, because now he wants [to talk] pure English and well, with the experience I had with the other children, they didn't leave behind their Spanish, right, but with him, yes, pure English, and I would've liked for that program to continue, but no, and hopefully he won't forget.]

This mother's comment is just one of several more like it, wherein parents described how their youngest child seemed to be losing some of their Spanish language ability and preferred to speak in English. These comments demonstrate that despite the school's efforts to maintain the use of Spanish at school, the state's policies have reduced the ability and desire to use Spanish amongst the community's youngest members.

### **Financial Constraints**

Financial support for the Dual Language program is another important constraint to consider. As already mentioned, when the Dual Language program first began, the school applied for and received federal Title VII funding. Teachers described the energy and momentum the program enjoyed, in large part thanks to the funding they'd received during those earlier years. For example, Mrs. Hammill, who was then a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade Dual Language teacher, commented, "We had that funding for travel and conference tuition and all that. I mean it was challenging and it was... it pushed me a lot, you know... right away I was part of something, like you said, powerful!" [Interview, 11/29/2011] Mr. Serrano, the SIPS leader, exclaimed, "Those were heady days... We'd go to conferences! We'd go everywhere! We had money like you would not believe... Those were the golden days, right?" [Interview, 3/23/2012] This federal funding supported professional development for teachers, via opportunities to travel to conferences and visit other Dual Language programs as well as to recruit Spanish-speaking teachers from other countries.

It also provided funds for books and other materials in Spanish as well as to compensate teachers for the additional planning work that they did.

Federal funding is, of course, subject to legislative support, which rides upon the currents of public opinion and discourse. During the '90s, the earlier support that bilingual education enjoyed, came under attack and eventually the Bilingual Education Act was replaced, making federal funding for bilingual programs much more difficult to obtain. Desert Breeze's Dual Language program continued, but without further financial support. As the former principal, Mr. Watts, commented:

Since then, there hasn't been a dime to add to the Dual Language program in and of itself. It's been how we crafted it and it's had its ups and downs. Ups in the sense of becoming self-sustaining and reliant, which is cool, but also downs in the terms of "It's work!" and especially when it's counter-cultural or counter-political in an effort to be human. [Interview, 1/6/2012]

In Mr. Watts's words, we hear of the difficulty of continuing the Dual Language program, although I know from my tenure as a teacher at Desert Breeze, that Mr. Watts always found a way to work around this difficulty. For example, he was able to allocate some of the school's already strained budget to occasionally offer a small compensation to the Dual Language teachers for all of their additional work. He also gave a yearly stipend to all teachers for book purchases, which could be used to purchase materials in Spanish. This year, the Dual Language teachers told me they'd had no such time or monetary support for planning or purchasing books and materials to go along with planning their learning expeditions, resulting in less Spanish instruction. Clearly, the lack of financial support took a toll on the Dual Language program.

## **Ideological Constraints**

As also earlier discussed, underlying ideologies, coupled with circulating public discourse, may also be seen to impact the school's curriculum and culture in general. As discussed in chapter four, two Desert Breeze teachers in particular expressed their concerns about the way they felt the curriculum at Desert Breeze left other cultures (i.e. Anglo) and history (i.e. "American) out. For example, Mrs. Hammill's comments that, "My students knew more about Benito Juarez and the history of Mexico than they did about our own history" and that "I do feel that the American, whatever it is, we as Americans, whether you were born here are not, I feel that we need to have an identity to be strong also" reflect a larger discourse within the U.S. about what it means to be American and how this American identity is crafted. Historically, immigrant peoples have largely been expected to assimilate to the mainstream U.S. culture, as expressed by the "melting pot" ideal of unity. Although Mrs. Hammill says, "without losing their own culture and value for that," loss of cultural identity has precisely been the problem. Although we are ostensibly a nation of immigrants, the vast majority of immigrants lose their language and with it, a key part of their cultural identity within a few generations.

It is not a simple matter to keep one's "own culture and value" and yet "feel pride to be a part of this American dream", as Mrs. Hammill suggests. She mentions that "something has to be the glue to join us all together as Americans" but what is that glue? Too often, historically, English has been the first marker of becoming "American". Thus, we see that even at a school that supports the use of Spanish and views Spanish as an important piece of the "whole child," this larger national discourse of Americanism may

be seen in action, a discourse, which reflects a long-time national conflict about American identity and the ensuing questions of language and culture.

### **Sociopolitical Constraints**

Another important factor, which also makes the process of negotiation at Desert Breeze a complex process to consider, is the wider social and political climate of Arizona. English-only legislation is but one of a series of recent policies, which affect the Latino community within AZ. As discussed earlier, there is recent legislation such as Senate Bill 1060 and the state's Ethnic Studies ban to consider. Desert Breeze students were very much aware of these policies, viewing them as discriminatory. When such vitriolic policies are in play to the extent that children feel themselves to be discriminated against, this is an important part of the sociopolitical context that cannot be overlooked.

The fact that parents feel such a strong sense of “confianza” or trust, and feel welcome and valued, at Desert Breeze becomes even more salient in the face of the kinds of policies and the media discourses at play in AZ. For example, Mr. Garcia, the band teacher, who grew up within this same school district, and whom recalled to me how he felt embarrassed as a child due to his Spanish accent commented, “Part of it is the Arts, but part of it is, I think, could be the language, too, and the way that Hispanics are perceived here and accepted, I think, here at Desert Breeze more than other schools.”

[Interview, 11/8/2011] We hear in his words, his belief that the use of Spanish and the acceptance of the Latino community is an important part of what helps parents to feel welcome on campus. Third/fourth grade teacher, Becky Hammill, also spoke about the level of comfort and safety that students feel at Desert Breeze, “ I just think that the kids are, that we feel safe, and that they feel accepted, no matter what... I hear from other

people, ‘Oh my gosh, your kids are so comfortable in their own skin!’” [Interview, 11/29/2011] The fact that Desert Breeze has been able to create a school culture where Latino families, the majority of whom are Spanish speaking, and many of whom are recent immigrants, feel welcome and safe becomes a huge victory against the backdrop of a state that not only criminalizes immigrants but to does so to such an extent that many Latinos, many of whom are U.S. citizens, feel themselves targeted.

### **High-Stakes Testing Constraints**

The quality of administrative support cannot be overlooked as an important factor, which has the potential to both enable and constrain. The former principal, Mr. Watts, had been bilingual and created the Dual Language program. He also used both Spanish and English daily, with parents, students, and staff, and in all school-wide events, encouraging others to do the same. For Mr. Watts, speaking Spanish was an important way to welcome all students and families at the school and to ensure educational equity for those students and families.

In contrast, the new principal, Mr. McCormick, while expressing that he supported bilingualism, did not make the program a priority, at least during his first year as the new principal. He did not meet with the Dual Language team during the first semester of school, and met with them only once during the second semester. Again, he stated to the team that he supported the program but they continued to feel unsupported by his actions. This situation, coupled with the fact that the strongest message teachers felt the new principal to express was the importance of raising the school’s test scores, resulted in the fact that the Dual Language teachers taught very little in Spanish during the 6 months of my observations. In fact, I never observed direct instruction in Spanish in

two of the four Dual Language classrooms, and in the third Dual Language classroom, I observed only a half hour of daily grammar skill instruction in Spanish. There was only one Dual Language classroom, where I observed a substantial amount of instruction delivered in Spanish. In addition, many students told me they felt their English skills to be stronger, and given the choice, elected to do their work in English. This lack of Spanish instruction within the school's Dual Language program during the year of my study, demonstrates that the Dual Language program, while clearly valued by all in the school community, has been compromised.

### **Conclusion**

In light of these constraints, the fact that there is continued use of Spanish for the daily life and operation of the school, becomes all the more remarkable. This success can be seen in many ways, such as the fact that the new principal attempted to use Spanish for school-wide gatherings like the winter band concert, and the fact that so many students expressed their pride to be learning in both languages and saw great value in being bilingual. Furthermore, Spanish can still be heard across the campus, in all areas of the school. Students, teachers, and parents clearly value Spanish and see Spanish as important for many reasons – as part of cultural identity, for academic learning, for family communication, and for future career possibilities. The fact that the school still identifies itself as a place that speaks Spanish, and as a key piece of “who they are” at Desert Breeze, represents the most successful part of the negotiation process.

When I last asked about the status of the Dual Language program at the school, Ms. Kessler told me that the new principal is talking of starting a new K-8 Dual Language program at Desert Breeze [Personal Communication, 9/26/12]. It is clear that

the culture and curriculum at Desert Breeze are shifting, but perhaps the new principal is also shifting? Perhaps this decision is a meeting in the midDual Language? Perhaps the cultural process in place at Desert Breeze has created a social context that has also influenced the new principal's thinking?

In my introduction, I echoed the question first raised by Freire (1993) and posed by McCarty (2002) at the end of her account of Rough Rock Demonstration School: "Can we create schools, as Paulo Freire envisioned, that are sites of social justice as well as creativity, competence, and joy?" (p. 199) I believe the answer to this question is a resounding "Yes!" but that this answer must always be negotiated for, because schools are ever in flux, and are always caught up in the tension between those forces, which constrain and which enable, the possibility for creative, competent, and joyful work to be done. The perspectives shared by Desert Breeze school community members, particularly the students, who have the most stake invested in their school experience, reveal that for many students, their time at Desert Breeze is one of joy and, hopefully, of much justice.

## **Implications**

### **Theoretical Implications**

My findings both confirm and expand upon the key concepts of agency, agency within the implementation and negotiation of language policy, and policy as a "sociocultural practice of power", as discussed in my theoretical framework. In order to explain how my study both confirms and expands upon these three interrelated concepts, I will first briefly revisit what these concepts are. Next, I will show how my study confirms these concepts. Finally, I will show how my study expands upon these concepts.



As discussed in my theoretical framework, Barker (2008) describes agency as being “the socially constituted capacity to act” (p. 234). He further explains that this capacity to act is “enabled by differentially distributed resources” which “gives rise to various degrees of the ability to act in specific spaces” (p. 234). Finally, he also says that:

Agency is a culturally intelligible way of understanding ourselves. We clearly have the existential experience of facing and making choices. We do act, even though those choices and acts are determined by social forces, particularly language, which lie beyond us as individual subjects. The existence of social structures (and of language in particular) is arguably an enabling condition of action. Thus, neither human freedom nor human action can consist of an escape from social determination (p. 236).

In all of Barker’s (2008) statements above we hear the recurring idea that a person’s ability to act, or their agency, is shaped by their social context. This social context includes certain resources, like language, which are not equally distributed or valued within society, and thus all people do not have the same capacity to act, the same agency. Other social structures or resources might include family, education, experience, money, etc.

Menken and Garcia (2010) discuss the idea of agency specifically within the context of interpreting and negotiating language policy. They focus on the agency of educators to act as “de facto” policymakers since they are the “final arbiters” (p. 1) of policy implementation in the classroom. They also describe the way in which educators’ interpretation of policy (i.e. their agency) is influenced by both “individual, internal forces” and “external forces” (p. 4). Individual or internal forces include a person’s identity and prior experiences and external forces include the political, community, and regional context in which someone finds him or herself. Menken and Garcia (2010) also suggest that, “Whereas the role of individual sense-making accounts for certain aspects of

implementation, other research shows how an individual's situation or *social context* can greatly affect policy implementation" (p. 5, my emphasis). This statement is the same idea as individual and external forces, but emphasizes the role of social context.

Thus, Barker (2008) and Menken and Garcia (2010) contend that agency is a socially produced power. Barker (2008) would say that even the individual forces of personal identity and prior experiences, as described by Menken and Garcia (2010) are in part socially produced in that "identity... is not something that a pre-linguistic 'I' simply chose. Rather, it is the outcome of *the values* and discourses of my family and *educational experiences*, which, in turn, enable me to carry out those activities as an agent" (p. 234, my emphasis). In other words, no individual grows up within a "vacuum". An individual's identity (which includes beliefs) influences his or her agency and is influenced by his or her experiences within social contexts, such as families and educational settings, like schools. What both Barker's (2008) and Menken and Garcia's (2010) ideas mean is that while it is individuals who act, their agency to act is socially created or determined by social resources, such as language, among many others, which are distributed in unequal ways.

My study confirms Barker's (2008) and Menken and Garcia's (2010) concepts of agency. During my discussion in chapter six, I demonstrated how the creation of a school culture "of community" with certain shared beliefs and practices, such as using Spanish in all aspects of school life, involving children's families at school, educating children in areas beyond traditional academics, such as music and art, and giving students and teachers greater freedom in "co-creating" the curriculum together, increases the agency of all school stakeholders. The capacity that stakeholders have to act at Desert Breeze is

produced by the social context of the school. For example, the former principal said that when he first got to Desert Breeze, the “Spanish speakers weren’t there” [Interview, 1/6/2012]. That absence of Spanish speakers was a socially produced situation. He also said that, “Spanish-speaking teachers were ostracized if they spoke Spanish on the sidewalk” [Interview, 1/6/2012]. In this case, the social resource of language was being unequally distributed at the school in that English was the only language valued and accepted on campus, which left Spanish-speakers out. What took place in the 21 years of the former principal’s tenure on campus was that this situation was changed so that Spanish-speakers were welcomed at school, Spanish was used across campus, Spanish was publicly valued by using it in school-wide events and as a language of instruction, and teachers at Desert Breeze recognized the value of Spanish as part of the identity of the whole child. This valuing of Spanish, Spanish-speaking children, and their families, was socially produced by key actors (initiated by the former principal who was soon joined by teachers, parents, and students). So, we see that my study confirms Barker’s (2008) and Menken and Garcia’s (2010) notion of agency as socially produced and of language being a primary social force.

My findings also expand Barker’s (2008) notion of agency because while Barker does say that agency is “enabled by differentially distributed social resources” he does not explain how this occurs, although he does mention that language is an example of a social resource. My study expands upon Barker’s (2008) idea by not only showing an example of how agency is influenced by the differentially distributed resource of language but by showing how this resource, along with many others, was redistributed. My study is an example of how language, along with other social resources, such as

family involvement and educational experiences, can be redistributed to increase the socially produced agency of key actors at school. In other words, Spanish, once ostracized at school, and barred from instruction by state mandate, is redistributed at the school for all to use. Barker (2008) also says that since “culturally generated agency is enabled by differentially distributed social resources, this gives rise to various degrees of the ability to act in specific spaces” (p. 234). My study shows that the actions of key school community members are redistributing these social resources. These resources are language, experience, and education.

As mentioned, the former principal played a key role in the process of creating a school culture of community at Desert Breeze. The principal brought Spanish use to the school in several ways: by speaking Spanish himself, by collaborating with parents to create a Dual Language program, and by using Spanish in campus-wide events, such as the Monday morning ritual, wherein all announcements were given in both Spanish and English and the pledge of allegiance was recited in both languages. Using Spanish in such highly visible and public ways elevated the status of Spanish, and thus of Spanish-speakers, and created a new cultural belief that Spanish is “okay.” As so many quotes gave evidence of, people feel that speaking Spanish at Desert Breeze is “who we are” – in other words, part of the collective identity of the school. Using Spanish at school increased the agency of all who speak Spanish – primarily students and parents, but also teachers.

Not only does Desert Breeze redistribute Spanish as a resource, Desert Breeze also provides many educational experiences beyond traditional academics, such as the Arts Quest camp, other travel experiences, and daily Special Area classes, which also

redistribute the learning and growth that come from those experiences. As one mother pointed out, many students who might otherwise never leave the Desert Breeze community, go to camp, or see the sea, do so, because of the educational experiences that Desert Breeze provides. In providing these experiences, Desert Breeze is redistributing and expanding the social resources that students have. We see this in the way students, especially, and also parents and teachers, talk about what these educational experiences mean and what they have learned from them.

Another social resource that was redistributed at Desert Breeze was parent involvement. Although educators typically say that they want parent involvement, parent involvement in school is usually limited to particular contexts, to organizations like PTA, parent conferences, and helping students with homework at home. At Desert Breeze, however, parents are given a much wider array of possibilities for getting involved. These include volunteering, working for the school, joining the Site Council, participating in regular school events, ranging from the weekly Monday morning ritual, to annual events, such as accompanying students to Prescott Pines or on trips to California. Parents can also be seen on campus, daily, participating in the many parent programs, such as visiting and using the resources at the parent center and participating in parent programs like the Family Health Ambassadors program. The principal, teachers, and more-involved parents, encourage newer parents to get involved. Thus while initially this involvement may have been initiated or catalyzed by the former principal, it is now encouraged by all community members. Because of this involvement, parents have more agency. They have more agency because their involvement helps to shape the school's culture. They also have more agency because they have more control over school events and the curriculum.

My findings expand upon Menken and Garcia's (2010) notion of the agency of teachers as "de facto" policymakers by examining the agency of parents and students and their role in this process of de facto policymaking. As discussed, the former principal, an educator, played a key role in the creation of the school culture of community and the waiver process. He may be considered to have catalyzed many of the key practices, such as speaking Spanish and having the strong arts program and family involvement that one finds at Desert Breeze today. However, he could not have accomplished this alone. He needed the involvement and support of teachers, parents, and students to create this school culture and to sign waivers to keep this school culture. Thus, the agency and actions of parents and students are also keys to the process of policy negotiation at Desert Breeze.

Inherent to the concepts of agency and policy is the idea of constraint, and my study also shows how certain constraints act upon the agency of key actors, such as the fact that the key actors will change - school communities do change leadership and a new principal will not act in exactly the same ways as the previous principal. As we saw in my study, while the new principal felt that the school's culture was an example of what was "working" at Desert Breeze, he also felt enormous pressure to raise the school's test scores, and as such, he had reprioritized certain practices – placing the drive to raise test scores above other traditional practices, such as the Special Area classes and the use of learning expeditions and authentic literature. As discussed, the 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> grade teachers elected to give up one of their students' special area classes so that they would have more time to use a pre-packaged reading curriculum, *Story Town*, with the students. Both of these practices – giving up a special area class and using a pre-packaged curriculum -

reflected a real shift in the curriculum at Desert Breeze. Thus, my study shows how constraints, such as the pressure to raise test scores, can and do influence how key actors, such as a new principal, act.

Therefore, my study confirms Barker's (2008) and Menken and Garcia's notions of agency by providing an example of how agency is socially produced. My study also expands upon their notions of agency by showing how redistributing the social resources of a community can increase both individual agency and the collective agency of the community. These are my new insights regarding the concept of agency. Future studies applying the concept of agency should keep in mind how agency is increased by redistributing the social resources of a community, particularly a school community.

### **Research Implications**

My study adds to the current research on policy negotiation by showing the role of parents in helping educators to negotiate policy. There are a number of studies, as depicted in both Menken and Garcia's (2010) and McCarty's (2011) edited volumes of language policy negotiation, but few of these studies focus on the role of parents and/or students in the policy negotiation process. They sometimes mention collaborative relationships amongst teachers and others (Bloch et al, 2010, Johnson and Freeman, 2010), such as university consultants, or hint at the decision-making power of parents (Ambatchew, 2010, Berry et al. 2010, and Shohamy, 2010) or how students help to co-create curriculum (Zakharia, 2010) but they do not bring the role and voices of parents and students to the forefront.

My study shows how parents and students are also key actors in the policy negotiation process. Parents play a key role by 1) helping to create the culture of the

school by sharing beliefs and participating in key practices 2) helping to make decisions regarding the curriculum and signing parent waivers to keep the current curriculum and 3) helping to educate about the waiver option and 4) mentoring other parents. Students help to negotiate policy, indirectly, in the sense that they help to sustain the culture of a school, in this case the culture of community. In other words, if the students did not buy into the key beliefs and practices at Desert Breeze, the teachers and parents would not be able to sustain these practices. For example, students reinforce the value of the Dual Language program by believing it to be important. They also reinforce the value of the Orchard by believing it to be important. If students did not value these experiences and find them meaningful, then they would be much harder to continue.

Many recent studies focus on the role of educators. Therefore, my study expands the current literature on policy negotiation by looking at the key role played by all actors, highlighting the role of parents and students. My study also adds to Ricento and Hornberger's (1996) notion of language planning and policy by adding parents and students to the heart of the language planning and policy "onion". To sum up, my study has two important research implications: 1) that we need to add families and students to the center of the language policy and planning onion and assign them the role of de facto policymakers as well 2) we need to explore further the role of agency in policy negotiation.

### **Pedagogical Implications**

There are several things that other school communities can learn from my study. One implication is that in order for school communities to negotiate policy at a school-wide level, strong relationships amongst all stakeholders have to be cultivated. These



relationships build community and this community increases agency for all involved, as discussed above. In addition, shared beliefs are important for shaping a collective school culture or identity. Obviously, you can't tell people what to believe, and even shared beliefs won't be monolithic (as demonstrated at Desert Breeze - although most participants support the valuing of Spanish and Latino culture, some people thought that this perhaps went too far), but if people do share a set of similar beliefs, this is helpful to creating a collective identity for the school. If that collective identity does not believe in a particular policy, such as the state's restrictive English-only policy, then when a community shares a collective identity of this is "who we are" it is easier for the community as a whole to negotiate the policy.

Another pedagogical implication from my study is that the principal plays a key role in catalyzing both the creation of a school culture and the particular mechanism for policy negotiation. However, we saw that at Desert Breeze while the former principal acted as a catalyst, he did not dictate. He sought the input of teachers and parents and in this way gained greater buy-in and participation from those other actors. In other words, he invited them to actively participate in the operation and life of the school. The former principal made an effort to consult parents about key decisions such as the creation of the Dual Language program, the principal-hiring committee, and the language education programs at the school. He believed parents had a right to know and so he informed parents and gave them a choice.

Principals also gain much greater buy in and support from the community when they give back to the community. Mr. Watts lives in the same community as the families and students of Desert Breeze. In many ways, he and the other teachers could be seen to

be giving back to the community: creating home libraries, beautifying the school, keeping the campus open during evenings and weekends, and by being active in the politics of the community. Furthermore, even after retiring, Mr. Watts continues this community work. During the year of my study, he acted as chairman of a committee to support district students by encouraging voters to vote for school bonds in the upcoming election. He also formed the Orchard Community Learning Center in his last year as principal and now continues to run it full-time as the director. He sent his own children to Desert Breeze, demonstrating his belief in the value of the education being offered at the school. Finally, Mr. Watts also shows how he values the community by speaking their language. The fact that Mr. Watts spoke Spanish had a lot to do with his ability to work with the community and to earn their respect. As parents said – this language ability wasn't necessary, but clearly it helped.

In sum, educators gain a lot of power by engaging with the community. When they support the community, the community supports them in return – this is the idea of redistributing social resources. By redistributing the social resources of the community, all gain more power. As demonstrated at Desert Breeze, this process of building a community and redistributing the social resources of that community takes a long time. At Desert Breeze, the former principal was there for 21 years. This work must be genuine and cannot be “lip service”. The community truly felt valued by the former principal, and in return, they valued him and the vision and practices in place at Desert Breeze.

Policymakers, too, can learn by the example set by the former principal and community at Desert Breeze. The former principal did not take a “top-down” approach, but rather shared his leadership, worked within the community, consulted the community,

valued the community's language and expertise, and thus his policies of Dual Language, using Spanish, valuing the whole child, creating real learning experiences, etc. were valued and participated in. When policymakers set policy, whether they are classroom, school, district, or state policymakers, they need to take the time to learn what the community knows, wants, needs, etc. and then they can help to ensure that their policy matches the community.

### **Future Directions**

There are several possible directions for future research that can be undertaken, based upon my study. In terms of future research at the particular setting of Desert Breeze, it would be interesting to continue studying what is happening at the school during this time of transition due to the change in principal. As discussed, changes could already be seen taking place. The curriculum was beginning to change due to the new heightened focus on test scores. However, as also mentioned, a teacher recently told me that the new principal is now thinking to bring in a new K-8 Dual Language program at the school.

One question to consider is whether this decision might be, at least in part, due to the strong school culture already in place at Desert Breeze. As teachers noted, the new principal recognized that speaking Spanish was part of the culture and attempted to use Spanish himself.

It would also be interesting to study the role of the Orchard Community Learning Center and the former principal who is still involved indirectly with the school by directing this nearby community center. What is the relationship between the school and the community center? How will the role and work of the previous principal in his new

role as the director of the community center continue to affect the school? How will the use of the Orchard by Desert Breeze teachers, students, and families continue to affect the culture of the school? More follow-up research with more Desert Breeze graduates in high school and beyond could also be of value. It would be interesting to talk with more graduates about the meaning their experience at Desert Breeze has had for them and how this carries forth in their current lives. Finally, it would be interesting to follow up on this study by talking to people in the district office to learn more about their perspectives of Desert Breeze.

Extending my research beyond Desert Breeze, it would be interesting to compare the findings from Desert Breeze to studies in other school contexts, both within the US and internationally. Since I am going to be looking at how schools implement language policy in Barcelona, Spain, another future direction for my own research can be to compare what Desert Breeze does to schools in other contexts like Barcelona.

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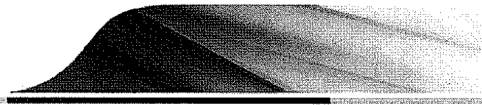
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APPENDIX A  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



To: Aya Matsuda  
EDUC - HIR

for From: Mark Roosa, Chair   
Soc Beh IRB

Date: 10/07/2011

Committee Action: Expedited Approval

Approval Date: 10/07/2011

Review Type: Expedited F7

IRB Protocol #: 1109006922

Study Title: Sacred Ground

Expiration Date: 10/06/2012

The above-referenced protocol was approved following expedited review by the Institutional Review Board.

It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to obtain review and continued approval before the expiration date. You may not continue any research activity beyond the expiration date without approval by the Institutional Review Board.

Adverse Reactions: If any untoward incidents or severe reactions should develop as a result of this study, you are required to notify the Soc Beh IRB immediately. If necessary a member of the IRB will be assigned to look into the matter. If the problem is serious, approval may be withdrawn pending IRB review.

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of this study, such as the procedures, the consent forms, or the investigators, please communicate your requested changes to the Soc Beh IRB. The new procedure is not to be initiated until the IRB approval has been given.

Please retain a copy of this letter with your approved protocol.

APPENDIX B

SCHEDULE OF INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS

<b>Actual Interviews and Dates of Interview/Focus Group</b>			
<b>Administration</b>	<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Parents</b>	<b>Students</b>
Former Principal (1/6/2012)	DL Teacher #1 Ms. Kessler (1/6/2012)	DL Parent #1 (Mom) (2/8/2012)	Focus Group #1 – 4 sts (DL 7 <sup>th</sup> /8 <sup>th</sup> ) (12/5/2011)
Current Principal (11/18/2011)	DL Teacher #2 Mr. Dominguez (4/20/2012)	DL Parent #2 (Mom) (3/8/2012)	Focus Group #2 – 4 sts (DL 7 <sup>th</sup> /8 <sup>th</sup> ) (12/6/2011)
School Improve. (SIPS) Leader (3/23/2012)	DL Teacher #3 Ms. De la Cruz (4/5/2012)	DL Parent #3 (Mom) (3/1/2012)	Focus Group #3 – 4 sts (DL 7 <sup>th</sup> /8 <sup>th</sup> ) (12/7/2011)
Both EL Coordinators(2) (4/9/2012)	DL Teacher #4 Mr. Guerrero (4/11/2012)	Non-DL Parent #1 (Mom)	Focus Group #4 – 3 sts (DL 7 <sup>th</sup> /8 <sup>th</sup> ) (12/15/2011)
Intervention Specialist (4/5/2012)	Non-DL Teacher #1, Ms. Spangler (1/6/2012)	Non-DL Parent #2 (Mom) (4/9/2012)	Focus Group #5 – 3 sts (DL 7 <sup>th</sup> /8 <sup>th</sup> ) (12/16/2011)
Parent Coordinator (4/11/2012)	Non-DL Teacher #2, Ms. Stanley (4/20/2012)	Non-DL Parents #3 & #4 (Mom and dad)	Focus Group #6 – 1 st (DL 7 <sup>th</sup> /8 <sup>th</sup> ) (12/20/2011)
	Non-DL Teacher #3, Ms. Matthews (4/17/2012)		Focus Group # 7 – 2 sts (DL 7 <sup>th</sup> /8 <sup>th</sup> )
	Non-DL Teacher #4, Ms. Stoltz (4/10/2012)		Focus Group #8 – 4 sts (Former DL & Non-DL) (3/9/2012)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> /4 <sup>th</sup> Classroom Teacher & Parent (11/29/2011)		Focus Group #9 – 3 sts (Former Non-DL) (4/ 12/2012)
	3 <sup>rd</sup> /4 <sup>th</sup> Classroom TeacherParent (11/8/2011)		Focus Group #10 –5 sts (DL 5 <sup>th</sup> /6 <sup>th</sup> ) (4/13/2012)
	Band Teacher (11/10/2011)		Focus Group #11 –2 sts (Non DL 5 <sup>th</sup> /6 <sup>th</sup> ) (4/5/2012)
	Resource Teacher (11/17/2011)		Focus Group #12 -2 sts (Non DL 5 <sup>th</sup> /6 <sup>th</sup> ) (4/10/2012)
	Former Classroom Teacher (Non-DL) and Grandparent (11/14/2011)		
(7 total)	(13 total) (3 teachers are also parents)	(7 total)	(37 total)
Number of Total Interview and Focus Group Participants: 64			

APPENDIX C  
SCHEDULE OF CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

7 <sup>th</sup> / 8 <sup>th</sup> Grades			
Ms. Kessler* (DL)	Mr. Dominquez (DL)	Ms. Spangler	Ms. Stanley
1. Oct. 19 2. Nov. 1 3. Nov. 3 4. Nov. 8 5. Nov. 15 6. Nov. 29 7. Dec. 6 8. Dec. 13 9. Dec. 19 10. Dec. 20	1. Oct. 20 2. Oct. 25 3. Nov. 10 4. Nov. 17 5. Dec. 1 6. Dec. 8 7. Dec. 16 8. Dec. 21 9. Dec. 23	1. Oct. 19 2. Oct. 25 3. Nov. 8 4. Nov. 15 5. Nov. 29 6. Dec. 6 7. Dec. 13 8. Dec. 19	1. Oct. 20 2. Nov. 1 3. Nov. 17 4. Nov. 21 5. Dec. 1 6. Dec. 8 7. Dec. 15 8. Dec. 20
Total: 37 classroom observations, approximately 2 hours each; 74 hours total			
5 <sup>th</sup> /6 <sup>th</sup> Grades			
Ms. De la Cruz (DL)	Mr. Guerrero (DL)	Ms. Stoltz	Ms. Matthews
1. March 2 2. March 6 3. March 21 4. March 28 5. April 3 6. April 10	1. March 5 2. March 22 3. April 4 4. April 11	1. Feb. 2 2. March 1 3. March 8 4. March 20 5. March 27 6. April 2 7. April 9	1. March 7 2. March 23 3. April 5 4. April 17
Total: 21 classroom observations, approximately 2 hours each; 44 hours total			



APPENDIX D

PARENT CONSENT AND STUDENT ASSENT FORMS

Classroom Observations and Focus Groups Parental Permission Form

*Sacred Ground: A Case Study of How One School Community Negotiates Restrictive Language Policy*

Dear Parent:

I am a PhD Candidate under the direction of Professor Aya Matsuda in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College at Arizona State University. I am conducting my dissertation research on how your child's current/former elementary school (referred to by the pseudonym of Desert Breeze School) implements and negotiates Arizona's current language education policies, which restrict bilingual education and mandate a four-hour English language development block. As part of my study I would like to observe in classrooms in order to learn about what characterizes the curriculum for English learners (ELs) and bilingual students at my case study school. I would also to hold group interviews or called focus groups, with students in order to learn more about their perspectives of the curriculum offered at their elementary school.

I am inviting your child's participation, which will involve one or both of the following activities:

1) Classroom Observations

Classroom observations will involve the observation of classroom activities, discussions, and interactions. I may also ask to collect copies of student work. Classroom observations will be video and audio taped for purposes of transcribing the activities, discussions, and interactions, but videos will be destroyed upon completion of the transcripts. Audio files will be retained in order to have a way to verify transcripts.

2) Focus Groups

Focus groups will involve participation in one approximately 60-90 minute focus group discussion, which is a guided group discussion based upon questions that address the following key points. Focus groups will consist of 4-5 students, who are either current students at this case study school or have graduated from the school. Your child will be asked to reflect upon and discuss the following key points:

- Themselves, their backgrounds, and their experiences with language and language learning leading up to now
- Their experiences at Desert Breeze Elementary School
- Their understandings of the state's policies regarding language education in school and how Desert Breeze implements these policies
- How they understand their experiences with language and learning language, being a member of the Desert Breeze community, and the programs/curriculum that support bilingualism
- The ways in which the Desert Breeze school community interprets and implements the state's and school's language education policies

ASU IRB Approved	
Sign	<i>Mark Pasa</i>
Date	<i>10-7-11 to 10-6-12</i>

1

- How they see themselves in the future

Focus groups will be video and audio taped for purposes of transcribing the conversations, but videos will be destroyed upon completion of the transcripts. Audio files will be retained in order to have a way to verify transcripts.

In the case of participation in focus groups, complete confidentiality of students' responses cannot be guaranteed since they are sharing their answers with a group. However, in the analysis of the conversations, and possible subsequent presentations and/or publication of the findings, pseudonyms, or fake names, for the students and their school will be used.

When not in use, all data will be stored in a locked cabinet at ASU, Farmer 344E. The videos used for recording the focus groups will be destroyed as soon as the transcriptions are complete. Videos will not be used in presentations or publications. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your child's name will not be known.

Your child's participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to have your child participate or to withdraw your child from the study at any time, there will be no penalty, nor will your child's grade be affected in any way. Likewise, if your child chooses not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty and your child's grade will not be affected. The results of the research study may be published, but your child's name will not be used. A pseudonym or fake name will be chosen for the use of any direct quotes in the dissertation write-up or any other potential presentations and publications.

Although there may be no direct benefit to your child, the possible benefit of your child's participation is that this study will help teachers, administrators, policy makers, parents, and students understand more about students' experiences at a school where restrictive policy is being negotiated case in order to inform language education policymaking as well as to help contribute toward current theory regarding how language education policy is implemented and negotiated in school. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your child's participation.

If you have any questions concerning the research study or your child's participation in this study, please call or e-mail me at 602-577-2843 or [sarah.newcomer@asu.edu](mailto:sarah.newcomer@asu.edu) or Dr. Aya Matsuda at 480-965-7504 or [aya.matsuda@asu.edu](mailto:aya.matsuda@asu.edu).

Sincerely,

Sarah Newcomer

ASU IRB	
Approved	
Sign	<i>JW for Mark Rooda</i>
Date	<i>10-7-11 to 10-16-12</i>

1) Classroom Observations:

By signing below, you are giving consent for your child \_\_\_\_\_ (Child's name) to participate in the classroom observation portion of the above study, as described under #1 above.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Printed Name Date

By signing below again you are giving consent for your child \_\_\_\_\_ (Child's name) to be video and audio taped during the classroom observations.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Printed Name Date

2) Focus Groups:

By signing below, you are giving consent for your child \_\_\_\_\_ (Child's name) to participate in the focus group portion of the above study, as described under #2 above.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Printed Name Date

By signing below again you are giving consent for your child \_\_\_\_\_ (child's name) to be video and audio taped during the focus groups.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Printed Name Date

If you have any questions about you or your child's rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you or your child have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

ASU IRB	
Approved	
Sign	<i>Mark Koser</i>
Date	10-7-11 to 10-10-12

*Sacred Ground:  
A Case Study of How One School Community Negotiates Restrictive Language Policy*

I have been informed that my parent(s) have given permission for me to participate in a study concerning how my current or former elementary school (referred to by the pseudonym or made-up name of Desert Breeze School) implements and negotiates Arizona's current language education policies, which restrict bilingual education and mandate a four-hour English language development block.

I understand that my participation may require one or both of the following:

1) Classroom Observations:

This part of this study involves the observation of classroom activities, discussions, and interactions as well sometimes collecting copies of student work.

I understand that the classroom observations will be video and audio taped so that the discussions can be listened to and written down and turned into documents called transcripts. The videos will be destroyed upon completion of the transcripts but the audio files will be kept in order to verify (check) transcripts in the future.

I also understand that things I say, my actions and my class work may be used in presentations and publications. However, I understand my name will not be used, but a pseudonym, or fake name, will be used when presenting and/or publishing what I have said or done during my class.

2) Focus Group Discussions:

I will be asked to participate in one 60-90 minute focus group discussion, which is a guided group discussion based upon questions around a particular topic. The kinds of questions that we will discuss in this focus group are listed below. Focus groups will consist of 4-5 students, who are either current or former Desert Breeze students. I will be asked to reflect upon and discuss the following key points:

- \*Me; My background; My experiences with language and language and learning up until now
- \*My experiences at Desert Breeze
- \*My perceptions, thoughts, and feelings about the curriculum, teaching practices, and school-wide community practices (the things people across the school do) which support students who are learning English as a second language and/or who are bilingual in both English and Spanish
- \*My understandings of Arizona's current language education policies
- \*My understandings about my school's current language education policies
- \*How I see myself in the future

ASU IRB	
Approved	
Sign <i>MD for Mark Roosa</i>	
Date <i>10-7-11 to 10-6-12</i>	

I understand that the focus groups will be video and audio taped so that the discussions can be listened to and written down and turned into documents called transcripts. The videos will be destroyed upon completion of the transcripts but the audio files will be kept in order to verify (check) transcripts in the future.

I also understand that my responses are not completely confidential since I will be sharing them in a group setting. However, I understand my name will not be used, but a pseudonym, or fake name, will be used when presenting and/or publishing what is said during the focus groups.

My participation in this project is voluntary and I have been told that I may stop my participation in this study at any time. If I choose not to participate, it will not affect my grade in any way.

1) Classroom Observations:

I also give my assent to be audio and videotaped. Audio and videotapes will be used to record (transcribe) what I say. Videos will be destroyed as soon as transcription is complete.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

2) Focus Groups

I also give my assent to be audio and videotaped. Audio and videotapes will be used to record (transcribe) what I say. Videos will be destroyed as soon as transcription is complete.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

ASU IRB  
Approved  
Sign for Mark Rossy  
Date 10-7-11 10-6-12

APPENDIX E  
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

***Sacred Ground: A Case Study of How One School Community Negotiates Restrictive Language Policy***

**Part I: Focused Life History – Placing Participants’ Experience in Context:**

Let’s talk about you, your background, and your experiences with language and language learning leading up to now, and how you came to be a part of the Desert Breeze (DB) school community...

- ✓ How do you describe your linguistic, cultural, and ethnic background?
- ✓ Tell me about some of your early experiences with language/learning language...
  - With your family?
  - At school?
  - With friends?
  - In your neighborhood?
  - At work?
- ✓ How did you come to be a part of DB School?
- ✓ How did you think about language and learning language prior to your time at DB?
- ✓ Is there something else you would like to say in regard to this?

**Part II: Details of Experience – Concrete details of participant’s experience:**

Let’s talk about your experience at DB...

- ✓ Tell me about being a/an \_\_\_\_\_ (educator, student, parent/family member, or other role) at DB...
  - What are some words you would you to describe your experience here? That do not describe your experience here?
  - What aspects of being a part of DB are important to you? Not important? Would you like to keep/change?
  - Do you have a choice about being here? Why or why not?
    - If so, what elements/reasons have influenced your choice to be at DB?
    - If given a choice, what elements/reasons would influence your decision to stay or leave?
- ✓ Tell me about the experiences of \_\_\_\_\_ here at DB...
  - The educators
  - The students
  - The parents and families
  - Examples of either positive and/or negative
  - Experiences that stand out in your mind
- ✓ What characterizes the following...
  - The curriculum for ELs and bilingual students?
  - The DL program offered at this school?



- The teaching practices that support EL and bilingual students outside the DL program at this school?
- ✓ What are your thoughts and/or feelings regarding any or all of these curricula and teaching practices?
- ✓ Tell me about the state's policies regarding language education in school...
  - What are they?
  - What are your thoughts/feelings/experiences with them?
- ✓ How does DB interpret and implement these policies?
- ✓ Tell me about the school's policies regarding language education here at DB...
  - What are they?
  - What are your thoughts/feelings/experiences with them?
- ✓ Is there something else you would like to say in regard to this?

**Part III: Reflections on Meaning - Intellectual and Emotional Connections:**

Let's talk about how you understand your experiences with language and learning language, being a member of the DB community, and the programs/curriculum that support bilingualism...

- ✓ Tell me about what your experiences with language and learning language mean to you...
- ✓ Tell me about what your experiences with being a member of DB school community mean to you...
- ✓ Tell me about what the ways the DB school community approaches language and learning language mean to you...
- ✓ Tell me about what the ways in which the DB school community interprets and implements the state's/school's language education policies mean to you...
- ✓ Where do you see yourself going in the future?
- ✓ Is there something else you would like to say in regard to this?

\* Note: This interview/focus group format is based upon McCarty, et al (2010) and Seidman (2006).

