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## The Promise and Potential of Two-Way Immersion in Catholic Schools

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*Two-Way Immersion (TWI) is a method of instruction designed to facilitate the learning of a second language by non-native speakers. Unlike traditional methods of teaching a second language, TWI is grounded in the equal presence, respect, and value of the two languages and their related cultures. Moreover, the goal of TWI is the building of communities of intercultural competence and appreciation. In this article, I argue that TWI is especially appropriate for many Catholic schools given the current and growing presence of Latino Catholics. However, the establishment and maintenance of an effective TWI school is not a panacea for efforts to increase the access and inclusion of Latino families in Catholic schools. I present the example of Holy Rosary Regional School/Juan Diego Academy, a recently established TWI school in Tacoma, WA to discuss the hard choices that must be made regarding outreach, staffing, curriculum, and funding. The article concludes with a consideration of the promise and potential of TWI for Catholic schools in the United States.<sup>1</sup>*

### Keywords

Two-way immersion, Latino families, outreach, staffing, curriculum, funding

Given the low enrollment of Latino students in Catholic schools, it is no surprise that much discussion is focused on strategies to increase the access that Latino families have to these schools. However, access is just the beginning. The ultimate goal of increased Latino enrollment in Catholic schools is the enhanced completion and related expansion of life chances for Latino students and their families. Access and completion, however, are limited by the reality of the financial capacity of many Catholic schools that are fundamentally dependent on tuition for the largest part of their operating revenues and the difficult choices that have to be made regarding the distribution of those resources. Access and completion are also severely limited by

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1 I would like to thank Gabriela Malespin for her excellent work as a research assistant.

the modern reality that the staffing model that brought Catholic education to previous waves of working class immigrants, grounded in the low cost operation of schools when nuns, brothers, and priests were most of the teachers and administrators, is no longer viable given the dwindling numbers of religious. In many parts of the country, the buildings that housed Catholic education are still there, but the students and personnel to fill those buildings are not.

This contemporary reality requires that Catholic schools consider new models of organizing education that have a realistic chance of overcoming the above-described limitations. What models exist for providing a superior educational product that simultaneously meets the educational needs of Latino students, is highly attractive to non-Latino families, and is financially sustainable? What models exist that see Latino families and their linguistic and cultural resources as assets that can directly contribute to the provision of a superior educational experience for all students? What models can also begin to build intercultural communities grounded in the Catholic faith and that are fully consistent with the Gospel and the current calls of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) to build parishes where distinct Catholic faith traditions enrich and enliven the worship of all practicing Catholics? These questions are at the core of the discussion that follows.

### **Two-Way Immersion**

Two-way immersion (TWI), also referred to as dual language instruction, is a model of education that utilizes linguistic and cultural difference to enhance learning for both English-dominant students and those who are dominant in another language. TWI programs can be established for any two languages and related cultures. My discussion will focus on Spanish-English and Latino/Hispanic and non-Latino/Hispanic communities, as this configuration is most often used to serve Latino students. Key to the TWI model is the way that that difference is utilized as a pedagogical resource for both groups of students. The fact that students come from distinct linguistic and cultural communities is considered a critical asset in teaching and learning. The goal of TWI is to educate students to be fully bilingual and biliterate, i.e., able to speak, read, and write with equal competency in both languages, by fifth to sixth grade. Additionally, all students are to be fully competent in relevant subject material such as literature, mathematics, and science. Notice that this is very different than transitional bilingual and English as a second

language (ESL) programs where non-English speaking students are instructed in such a way that they might become competent in English, but receive no instruction that allows them to retain or advance their native language.

Most TWI models seek to enroll equal numbers of students who are Spanish-dominant and those who are English-dominant. In the case of Latino students, those who are Spanish-dominant are very likely to be immigrants or the children of immigrants raised in a Spanish-speaking household. English-dominant students can be of any racial-ethnic background and can even include Latinos who have been exposed to Spanish, but are not bilingual to any significant degree.

There are two basic models of instruction. In one method of TWI, the 90:10 model, 90% of content instruction in kindergarten and first grade occurs in Spanish and the other 10% in English. The English instruction is to provide basic skill development in speaking and writing English. Additionally, reading instruction is provided in Spanish to both English-dominant and Spanish-dominant students. Each successive year of schooling includes more content instruction in English. By fifth to sixth grade, content instruction is split 50-50 in both Spanish and English. In another method of instruction, the 50:50 model, students are instructed equally in Spanish and English throughout the elementary grades. In some variants of this model, literacy instruction occurs first in the student's primary language and in others they are taught to read and write both languages equally (Lindholm-Leary, 2012, p. 257).

In both methods of instruction, it is clear that Spanish and English are valued as equal resources in the classroom. Although one language may have greater presence in specific years of instruction, the goal is for students to ultimately move seamlessly between the two languages; each language has equal value and status in the classroom. Both languages are used to structure classroom and school enrollment, instruction, curriculum, and student assessment of academic performance. It is also apparent that the ideal linguistic and cultural competency of administrators and staff is also equal in both Spanish and English and in Latino and non-Latino cultures. Bilingual, biliterate, and bicultural administrators, teachers, and staff serve as both resources in the school and as models of what students who complete the program can be.

### Successes of Two-Way Immersion

There is much research that concludes that TWI promotes the academic success of both Spanish-dominant and English-dominant students. One representative study compared the academic achievement of students in TWI programs to those who received instruction through more traditional curricula. After examining data from 1985-2001, it was found that students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds who were enrolled in TWI programs outperformed comparable students who received instruction through English as a second language and those who studied in English monolingual programs. Both Spanish-dominant and English-dominant TWI students outperformed their peers in reading and language comprehension in English (Thomas & Collier, 2002). One representative study found that TWI students outperformed their peers in math and science as well (Marian, Shook, & Schroeder, 2013). Other studies have revealed similar results (Alanís, 2000; Senesac, 2002; Lindholm-Leary, 2012). Moreover, Lindholm-Leary (2012) concluded that “Taken together, data from these various studies indicate that [TWI] programs are capable of promoting academic performance for students of different backgrounds, including those subpopulations identified as at risk for academic difficulty” (p. 258).

It is also the case that TWI programs tend to receive high levels of support from both Spanish-dominant and English-dominant parents. Spanish-dominant parents are especially supportive because of the way that these programs both promote bilingualism and encourage heritage language maintenance (Potowski, 2004; Romero-González, 2008). English-dominant parents are attracted to the distinct advantages their children can have in an increasingly multilingual and multicultural world (Baig, 2011). Interestingly, one study found that Latino parents with children in TWI programs were supportive of this model of education regardless of their socioeconomic status and even participated in parent meetings and other school activities at noticeably high rates (Linton, 2004).

One final set of successes found in research on TWI programs is that teachers tend to use culturally aware and integrated approaches in their teaching. This was demonstrated in high levels of student led classroom techniques that promoted multicultural appreciation. Moreover, it has been found that students from both language groups value the benefits of bilingualism and both groups tend to foster significant social connections with one another (Howard, Sugarman, & Christian, 2003). Another study found

that students in a TWI program were likely to form cross-cultural friendships and improved the sense of self-esteem of Spanish-dominant students (Giménez, 2014).

In sum, researchers find that TWI programs can promote greater academic achievement for both Spanish-dominant and English-dominant students, including Spanish-dominant students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. They also find that TWI receives strong support from both Spanish-dominant and English-dominant parents. Finally, researchers find that students in TWI programs tend to develop significant cross-cultural friendships and significant appreciation for both bilingualism and multiculturalism.

### **Continuing Challenges of Two-Way Immersion**

Despite the successes noted above, researchers have also found that TWI programs face continuing challenges. Although such programs have been in existence in public schools for at least 25 years, problems remain that must be directly identified and addressed if the benefits of TWI are to be maintained and expanded.

One set of challenges addresses the demands made on teachers in such programs. A study of 181 teachers across 12 different TWI programs found that, although they were largely supportive of the goals of this model, they found the work very labor-intensive (Howard & Loeb 1998). Teachers also indicated that they faced frequent tensions with parents regarding whether their children were receiving sufficient instruction in subject content, given the focus on second language acquisition (Howard & Loeb 1998; Walker & Tedick, 2000). Tensions with administrators have also been identified and focused on the need for additional resources for classroom instruction (Howard & Loeb 1998). Another study again found teacher concerns related to a lack of necessary curricular resources and also indicated that there were considerable difficulties in achieving expected levels of bilingualism and biliteracy (Wiese, 2004). Other studies have found that some teachers reported having to continually report and justify their programs' successes to administrators who seemed to question the effectiveness of TWI (Giménez, 2014; Walker & Teckick, 2000).

A recurring challenge faced by teachers in TWI programs was being consistently faithful to a fully bilingual program. Despite a teacher's best intentions, it was difficult for them to avoid translation while in the classroom,

which worked against the structure of strict language usage at designated times required in TWI programs (Alanís, 2000; Giménez, 2014; Lindholm-Leary, 2012; Wiese, 2004). Another related challenge noted in studies is the risk of uneven language development. Not surprisingly, a number of researchers find that there are many more English language curricular resources than there are resources in Spanish (Amrein & Peña, 2000). Also, because state standardized tests tend to be in English, teachers often spent more time prioritizing instruction in English to help students be in a better position to score highly on such tests (Alanís, 2000). Researchers have also found that even Spanish-dominant students seem to prefer speaking English in peer conversations when the focus was on issues related to popular culture and other student interests (Potowski, 2004). Students were also found to place a higher value on English than on Spanish because of social cues that emphasize English over Spanish, which can come from parents, peers, and teachers (Potowski, 2004; Senesac, 2002). One author posited that TWI programs risk teaching a watered down version of Spanish, especially in primary grades (Valdés, 1997).

One final critique made of the impact of TWI programs is that they rarely acknowledge that, given the power advantages that are held by English-dominant speakers as compared to Spanish-dominant speakers, the greater acquisition of Spanish by English-dominant speakers removes an advantage, in jobs for example, that were previously held by Spanish-dominant speakers who were, nonetheless, functional in English. This critique is grounded in a critical interpretation of power asymmetries between these two communities. Counterintuitively, as more English-dominant students, largely Caucasian, become effectively competent in Spanish, employers may prefer to hire such individuals when they are of age, over Spanish-dominant, bilingual Latinos who may have succeeded in such TWI programs as well (Scanlan & Palmer, 2009; Valdés, 1997).

These continuing challenges to the successful implementation of TWI programs indicate that teachers, administrators, parents, and students must continually work to realize the potential benefits of bilingualism, biliteracy, and biculturalism, as the successes of TWI make evident. Just having a TWI program, however, does not guarantee success.

## Two-Way Immersion and Catholic Schools

Scanlan and Zehrbach (2010) present a useful framework for understanding why TWI is consistent with fundamental tenets of Catholic social teaching and is, therefore, particularly appropriate for Catholic schools. They argue that three fundamental values of Catholic social teaching are fully consistent with a TWI approach to Catholic education: (a) an emphasis on “human dignity,” (b) pursuit of the “common good,” and (c) “a preferential option for the marginalized” (p. 76). The emphasis on valuing the language and culture of distinct communities, as required by TWI, aligns with “the understanding that all people are made in the image and likeness of God, and, therefore, endowed with intrinsic value” (p. 76). By not privileging one language or culture over another, TWI embodies the value that no language or culture is more valuable than any other. As such, the dignity of all peoples is equal despite the rigid hierarchies of race and class that structure so many social relations in the U.S. and other societies. The pedagogical approach of TWI begins with an acknowledgement of full and equal dignity for all students, families, and cultures present in the classroom.

The value of the common good builds on the first value by understanding that dignity is realized only “through community and in relationship with others” (Scanlan & Zehrbach, 2010, p. 76). TWI is grounded in the mutually beneficial relationship that accrues when two languages and cultures are valued equally in building tolerance, respect, and understanding across distinct communities. Fundamentally, a larger, more communicative, more integrated community that breaks down traditional barriers and, through a commitment of parents to provide educational opportunities to their children, builds a more united community that can facilitate the recognition and reconciliation necessary to pursue the common good.

Lastly, TWI, as it applies to Spanish-dominant and English-dominant families, seeks to overcome the historical marginalization of Latinos within the educational system of the US. Although there is no doubt that progress has been made in expanding educational opportunity and success for Latinos over the last several decades, it is still the case that they have among the lowest secondary school and postsecondary completion rates. To the extent that these patterns of educational attainment are caused by the historical marginalization of Latinos by schools and universities whose leaders often tend to understand Spanish and aspects of Latino culture as deficits to be overcome through education, TWI sees them as assets to be effectively utilized to promote academic success.



More recently, the current emphasis of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) on the critical need for the Catholic Church in the United States to build ministries of “intercultural competence” in acknowledgement of the contemporary reality that the sharing of parish life by increasingly distinct linguistic and cultural communities is even more aligned with the approach of TWI (USCCB, 2015). The USCCB states:

The mandate of the Committee of Cultural Diversity in the Church, and its corresponding Secretariat, is to be present on behalf of the Bishops’ Conference to the many cultures, ethnicities and races that today constitute the Roman Catholic Church in the United States. The goal is to encourage the inclusion and fuller participation of all God’s people in the life and ministry of the Church by building up their Catholic identity in a spirit of unity in diversity... Throughout the United States we experience a profound demographic shift as Hispanics, Asians, Africans, Caribbean people, and many other communities of non-European origin are on the rise. Today, as ever, the Church’s mission to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ and promote the life and dignity of each and every human being has much to do with insight into cultures. Catholic parishes are moving from mono-cultural patterns to ones we call ‘shared,’ that is, to parishes in which more than one language, racial or cultural group seek to celebrate the Eucharist and embody Christian community. For ministers and pastoral workers to be effective in this diverse environment, the right knowledge, attitudes and skills need to be developed. (2015, n. p.)

To this end, the USCCB developed a training module entitled *Building Intercultural Competence for Ministers* (USCCB, 2012) and a reference report entitled *Best Practices for Shared Parishes: So That They May All Be One* (USCCB, 2014) that are available to promote building intercultural faith communities within Catholic parishes. The entire focus of TWI is to ground the next generation in the importance of building intercultural communities of understanding and common vision and giving them the linguistic and cultural tools to do so, which is completely aligned with this mandate of the USCCB. TWI is not only aligned with historical understandings of Catholic social teaching, it is fully aligned with the priorities identified by the USCCB for building a broader, more integrated Catholic community in the United States, given the country’s growing multilingual and multicultural diversity.

### **Becoming a TWI School: The Story of Holy Rosary Regional School/Juan Diego Academy, Tacoma, WA**

In this section, I present an analysis of the founding of a TWI school to help explain the circumstances that may need to exist to facilitate the adoption of this model of Catholic education. What becomes evident through this discussion are the hard choices, some with greater risks than others, that need to be made in order to begin the process of establishing a TWI school. The establishment of the Juan Diego Academy (JDA) at Holy Rosary Regional School (HRRS) in Tacoma, WA, makes clear that innovation in Catholic education is not for those who are risk averse. However, it also demonstrates that innovation is possible and that much learning can be experienced by a constellation of stakeholders in Catholic education who are committed to simultaneously expanding educational opportunities for Latino students, providing a superior academic product to all students, and building an intercultural community grounded in a common devotion to the Catholic faith.

#### **Choosing the TWI Model**

Among the major actors in the operation of Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese of Seattle is the Fulcrum Foundation. Fulcrum was established under the leadership of former Archbishop Alex J. Brunett in 2002, when it was incorporated as a 501(c)(3) organization (Fulcrum Foundation, 2015). Fr. Stephen Rowan was the first head of the Fulcrum Foundation. Fulcrum now has an endowment of approximately \$30,000,000 and provides assistance to Catholic schools through tuition scholarships, assistance to schools in need, and funding for special initiatives to promote academic excellence and faith formation. It has most recently been able to provide upwards of \$3,000,000 per year to Catholic schools and to families with children enrolled in Catholic schools.

Beginning in 2005, the Foundation set aside \$100,000 per year to promote diversity initiatives at Catholic elementary/middle and high schools. The goal of these initiatives was to increase the enrollment of students from communities who did not have an historical tradition of attending Catholic schools, especially Latinos, Vietnamese, Filipinos, and African Americans. Schools were encouraged to apply to the Foundation with specific proposals as to how they would use these monies. Grants generally ranged from \$10,000 to \$15,000 per year. Most schools that applied used the resources to

provide scholarships to students from underrepresented backgrounds who qualified for need-based aid. The monies were used to provide financial assistance to these families and, in this way, make it easier for them to afford Catholic school and supplement the tuition revenues available to the school. Both were very worthy goals and fully consistent with the mission of Fulcrum.

Foundation leaders became concerned, however, when they noticed that once the grant period ended, there seemed to be little organizational, curricular, or other longer-term institutional impact that came from the use of these funds. There was also concern that families may have found it difficult to continue to send their children to Catholic school once the diversity-related financial aid was removed. The long-term impact of these diversity initiatives seemed very limited. Access was increased temporarily, but there was no long-term institutional innovation that would sustain increased diverse enrollment. As a result, the Foundation decided to temporarily suspend distributing monies from the diversity initiative and hold them in reserve until a new model of promoting the increased enrollment of students from families with diverse backgrounds was developed. After consulting with a number of education scholars and reviewing innovative models of educational practice at a number of Catholic schools with sizeable Latino enrollments, Fulcrum decided to invest in the establishment of a two-way immersion, Spanish-English, bilingual and bicultural school. The school that was chosen for this effort was Holy Rosary School in Tacoma, WA.

Holy Rosary School was, like many other Catholic schools in the US, experiencing patterns of enrollment decline over the past two decades. In 2008-09, for example, the school was operating at approximately 25% capacity, and enrollment in each of its K-8 grades was below 50% capacity. At times, classes were combined across grades in order to economize on teaching costs. An entire floor of the early-1900s building was not utilized because of the small number of students. The school's budget was supplemented annually by generous donors and others in order to meet the school's financial obligations. Clearly, Holy Rosary was not sustainable over the long-term.

The idea of a two-way immersion, Spanish-English, bilingual-bicultural model was driven by a desire to meet two specific goals. One was providing a curriculum-driven incentive to encourage Latino families to enroll at Holy Rosary. As in so many other parts of the country, the population of Latino families in the larger Tacoma area is growing. Many of these families speak Spanish as their primary language. A well-structured, adequately funded,

two-way immersion program has been shown to be among the best ways to improve the academic achievement of Latino, Spanish-dominant students (Howard, Sugarman, & Christian, 2003; Lindholm-Leary & Borsato, 2001). The two-way immersion program would encourage Latino families to enroll in Holy Rosary School with the expectation that their children would receive a superior educational opportunity with long-term benefits. The second goal was providing children in English-dominant families, both Latino and non-Latino, an opportunity to become fully bilingual. The goal of tapping this market of English-dominant parents was to provide a consistent source of tuition-based funding for the school. Additionally, by attempting to enroll equal numbers of English-dominant and Spanish-dominant families, the school could serve as a focus for building an intercultural community that could benefit the school and the related parish.

As Latinos continue to become a larger percentage of all Catholics in the US, they must increasingly share school and parish space with English-dominant families. This limits the extent to which parishes and schools develop segregated parallel structures of service provision, a practice consistent with the historical tradition of nationality-based Catholic worship and related services. With an effective two-way immersion program, with 50-50 participation by Spanish-dominant and English-dominant families and students, the parish and school could facilitate cross-cultural learning for both students in the classroom and parents in larger school and related parish activities. The Fulcrum Foundation considered this a more viable approach and decided to invest a substantial portion of the \$300,000 that had accumulated from reserving monies from its earlier diversity initiative to establish a two-way, Spanish-English, bilingual-bicultural program at Holy Rosary School.

### **Building Relationships with the Latino Community**

Among the first challenge faced by all involved in this effort was how to build active, genuine, culturally responsive relationships with Latino families who might consider enrolling their children in this program. There were a number of issues to overcome in order to meet this challenge: The principal of Holy Rosary at the time was not bilingual; only one teacher spoke Spanish fluently, and none of the office staff spoke Spanish or were very familiar with elements of Latino culture. Moreover, despite a sizeable Latino population in the surrounding neighborhoods, the parish did not offer masses in Spanish, which made it necessary to conduct outreach through other parishes in the larger Tacoma area that did offer Spanish-language masses.

In order to facilitate outreach efforts, the school hired a Latino Outreach Coordinator. Her modest salary was paid with funds from the Fulcrum Foundation. The Outreach Coordinator developed and implemented a plan to announce the establishment of the new two-way immersion program at Holy Rosary School. She spoke at all Spanish language masses held in the parishes in and around Tacoma. She advertised on local Spanish-language radio. She received complimentary advertising in small, local Spanish-language newspapers. She organized Spanish-language information sessions at Holy Rosary School. Most importantly, she developed personal relationships with a wide variety of Latino leaders, influential people, and Latino parents in the region. She worked non-stop for six months prior to the opening of the school to ensure that the initial enrollment of the pre-K and kindergarten classes was as close to 50% Spanish-dominant Latino as possible.

The key to success was her intimate knowledge of Latino culture, her full linguistic capacity in Spanish, her bicultural understanding of the community, and her knowledge of how Latino families access information about schools. She did not simply take out advertisements in traditional Church and news outlets, nor did she simply wait for Latino parents to express their interest in the two-way immersion program. She actively recruited in a variety of parishes and community centers. Once she identified a potential family, she contacted them several times to address any questions or concerns they had. Additionally, she worked in direct consultation with the Office of Hispanic Ministry in the Archdiocese to maximize contacts and credibility with Directors of Hispanic Ministry. She utilized their networks and credibility to expand the reach of her recruitment efforts.

The Outreach Coordinator was critical in determining the name and icon to be given to the new program. The chosen name, Juan Diego Academy (JDA), and icon, a rose, reflect important aspects of traditional Mexican culture. Juan Diego was the young man to whom the Virgin Mary appeared in the image of the Virgen de Guadalupe. The sign that Mary gave to Juan Diego to prove her appearance was a dozen red roses. The choice of Juan Diego and the rose made it very clear to the predominantly Mexican immigrant Latino community in the Tacoma area that the new program respected traditional Mexican culture. It also had the effect, however, of educating all of the staff at the school of the power of culturally responsive symbols in establishing relationships of openness, genuine welcoming, and trust with Latino families.

### **Implementing a Plan for Institutional Transformation**

Among the most significant challenges faced in establishing the TWI program was integrating the new program within the existing structure of the school, which continued to offer a traditional English-only curriculum alongside the TWI program. The JDA was designed to grow over time. In its first year, dual-language instruction would be offered to children in pre-K and kindergarten. After the first-year, dual-language instruction would expand to include the first grade, so that two-way immersion is then occurring across three grades. With each succeeding year, an additional grade of dual-language instruction would be added. However, what happens at the school in those grade levels that are not immediately affected by the new curricular design? Those involved in implementing the TWI program frequently discussed how to make sure that students not enrolled in the TWI program were not marginalized by the emphasis on the students in the new program. In essence, teachers and others at the school who were not part of the innovation had to accept the TWI program as their program too, although they were not directly part of it. This was the first major step in developing a new school culture that was inclusive of Latino communities.

Much time and effort were also devoted to assuring that the pastor and principal were committed to the success of the JDA over the long-term. The additional monies made available to Holy Rosary Regional School through the Fulcrum Foundation were attractive in helping the entire school meet its continuing financial challenges. What oversight structures would need to be implemented to limit the extent to which these extra monies would be used exclusively for the Juan Diego Academy and not be simply folded into the school's general operating budget? At the same time, how could the school's overall operating budget be managed to protect both the traditional programs and the JDA?

A final challenge related to school governance. Holy Rosary School is a parish-based school. As such, the Pastor is the Ordinary and maintains full authority over all hiring, curricular, and budgetary decisions at the school. Additionally, pastors can be reassigned as determined by the Bishop. Moreover, because Latinos were not a significant segment of the parishioners at Holy Rosary parish, how could the interests of non-parish families be served, given the historical commitment of pastors to their local parishioners?

To limit the extent to which a Pastor had the formal authority to determine the future of the Juan Diego Academy and to acknowledge the larger

regional reach that was key to the success of JDA, the governance structure of the school was modified to include a board of limited jurisdiction and the formal name of Holy Rosary School was changed to Holy Rosary Regional School (HRRS). Board members were appointed by the Bishop. The Pastor is still the canonical leader of the school and in this role must work very closely with the new Board on all issues related to both the JDA and HRRS.<sup>2</sup>

The story of building the JDA highlights some of the major implementation challenges faced by HRRS/JDA, including the complexities of policy and practice that confront schools that attempt to transform in major ways to innovatively serve both Latino and non-Latino families. In the next section of this article, I reflect on lessons learned through the implementation of the TWI program at Holy Rosary Regional School/Juan Diego Academy.

### **Learning from the Holy Rosary Regional School/Juan Diego Academy**

The JDA now offers two-way immersion in grades pre-K through 3. They have been able to sustain the momentum to serve Latino and non-Latino families together. Since the first year of the pre-K and K classes, the JDA has seen enrollment close to classroom capacity. Prior to opening the JDA, enrollment at HRRS had not reached this level for more than 30 years. From an enrollment perspective, the JDA was a resounding success for both the JDA and HRRS as a whole, as enrollment in traditional grades also received a boost. Older brothers and sisters of students enrolled in the JDA sometimes became new students at HRRS. The additional attention received by HRRS as a result of the JDA also sent the message to the larger community that good things were happening at HRRS and that the school was on the move.

Meeting budgetary obligations continues to be a challenge at HRRS/JDA. The presence of the JDA spurred a commitment by the school leadership to outside fundraising from private donors and foundations. Funders like to see innovation. There was no doubt that innovation was occurring at the HRRS/JDA. However, annual fundraising is no substitute for consistent and predictable revenues driven largely by tuition payments made by families with children enrolled at a school. Moreover, developing a predictable funding model is critical to the future progress of the HRRS/JDA. Two-way immersion must exist at every grade level at least through grade six if the

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<sup>2</sup> For a general discussion of the challenge facing Catholic schools in modifying traditional structures of governance see Foundations and Donors Interested in Catholic Activities (FADICA) 2014.

students are to become fully bilingual and biliterate. Any annual crisis in funding places the entire school agenda of transformation at risk. The stakes are very high for the entire commitment to HRRS/JDA if the finances are not fully stabilized.

Despite these challenges of organizational capacity, feedback on the value and virtue of the program has been overwhelmingly positive. For example, the following parent testimonials appear on the HRRS/JDA website:

When our youngest son was ready for Kindergarten last year, we were resigned to enrolling him in our neighborhood public elementary school. In the summer, however, we saw an article on Holy Rosary's new dual immersion program. We scheduled a tour right away, and signed our son up on the spot. It was clear to me that [former principal] Dr. Uhl and the planning committee knew what they were talking about and had done all the right things to prepare for a dual-immersion program. During our two years at the school so far, we have watched our son grow linguistically in two languages as well as culturally. He is getting a value-added education—learning what all first graders typically learn, with the addition of Catholic values, bilingual assets, and a multicultural perspective that he couldn't get elsewhere.

We would definitely recommend HRRS-Juan Diego Academy. The experience has exceeded our expectations. AnaSofia started her first year at HRRS as a kindergartener. Even though one parent in the house was proficient in Spanish (Mom), it wasn't often spoken to her. She has a very basic Spanish vocabulary that she rarely used. The past year at HRRS has changed that. She has not only built up her vocabulary, but she is actively seeking to speak Spanish with her mom, something that wouldn't have happened otherwise. We realize now how peer interaction, as well as amazing teachers, has built up her confidence and her knowledge. AnaSofia now comes home with such enthusiasm over the new songs and stories she knows, in English and Spanish....The biggest difference is that she knows her subjects in English and Spanish. AnaSofia can seamlessly do her math homework in both languages. It's amazing to see that.



I would absolutely recommend this environment for your child. It is as comforting as if you are present. The staff at HRRS is the best, they each display a level of respect and commitment to your child that will reflect in them wonderfully. Sending my daughter to this school is the best start I could have given her.

Yo recomiendo la escuela HRRS-Juan Diego Academia a todos mis amigos porque es una escuela que cuida de todos los estudiantes y siempre se preocupa por ellos. Mis hijos están aprendiendo en los dos idiomas. Se siente bien tener esa sensación que como padre tomas la decisión correcta al inscribir a tus hijos en HRRS. Una decisión que con el tiempo descubres que es lo mejor.

[I recommend HRRS/Juan Diego Academy to all of my friends because it is a school that cares for all students and always cares about them. My children are learning two languages. It feels good as a parent to feel that you've made the right decision to enroll your children in HRRS. A decision that, over time, you discover is the best.]

The two-way immersion program was the principle driver for us when enrolling our child at HRRS-Juan Diego Academy. We have loved the program and it has been amazing to watch our daughter blossom as she is learning another language. I think that being multilingual is a gift that we are fortunate to be able to provide to our children and one that will aid them in numerous ways later in their lives. We plan to continue at the school and look forward to sending our other children there as well. ("Parent testimonials," 2015)

These testimonials demonstrate the impact that the HRRS/JDA has had on influencing both Latino and non-Latino parents to see Catholic schools as providing unique opportunities for their children to learn and grow. The hard choices made to take the risk of investing in this innovative pedagogical model by the Fulcrum Foundation, the pastor, the principal, and the Office for Catholic Schools of the Archdiocese opened the space to rebuild a Catholic school and increase Latino access to that school at the same time.

Time will reveal if this effort is financially sustainable over the long-term. Annual fundraising is now a very important part of the school's budget. Achieving the necessary balance between full-tuition paying students and those whose families cannot afford to pay the full amount remains a significant challenge. As the program continues to develop, enrollment data will indicate whether the school is sufficiently stable to maintain dual language instruction. The first principal has left for another opportunity and the current principal is fully committed to making HRRS/JDA successful. Major changes in staffing among administrators and teachers could also have a significant impact on the long-term success of the program. Nonetheless, HRRS/JDA is now more viable as a Catholic school than ever before. Its enrollment is higher than it has been in the last 20 years, there is a hopeful, energetic spirit among teachers and staff, and parents continue to value what their children learn through TWI. These are all benefits that the innovation of TWI can take credit for bringing to HRRS/JDA.

### **The Promise and Potential of Two-Way Immersion**

The ways that TWI can serve the interests of a variety of major stakeholders in Catholic education is reflected in the fact that there are at least 14 schools that are members of the Two-Way Immersion Network for Catholic Schools (TWIN-CS).<sup>3</sup> This network was established at the Barbara and Patrick Roche Center for Catholic Education at Boston College in 2012, and the Roche Center continues to sponsor the TWIN-CS network. The goal of the network is to facilitate sharing best principles and practices, as well as lessons learned, in order to increase the capacity of these schools to serve their students and families. It is "composed of principals, teachers, field mentors,

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<sup>3</sup> The schools are: St. Matthew School, Phoenix, AZ; All Souls School, Alhambra, CA; Saint Sebastian School, Los Angeles, CA; Escuela de Guadalupe, Denver, CO; Our Lady of the Holy Rosary-St. Richard Catholic School, Culter Bay, FL; Saint Helen, Fort Lauderdale, FL; St Mary's Catholic School, Boise, ID; Archbishop Borders School, Baltimore, MD; The Academy of Saint Matthias the Apostle, Lanham, MD; Risen Christ Catholic School, Minneapolis, MN; Most Holy Redeemer Catholic Academy, Flushing, NY; All Saints Catholic School, Ft. Worth, TX; Santa Clara of Assisi, Dallas, TX; St. Leo the Great Catholic School, San Antonio, TX; St. Mary Magdalen School, San Antonio, TX; Holy Family Bilingual Catholic School, Seattle, WA; Holy Rosary Regional School/Juan Diego Academy, Tacoma, WA; Sacred Heart School, Washington, DC; Notre Dame Primary School, Milwaukee, WI (TWIN-CS 2015). There is also a very well known at St. Procopius, Chicago, IL, that has had a TWI program for a long period of time.

parents, board members, and other leaders from Catholic schools across the country” (TWIN-CS, 2015). Most of these schools have Spanish-English TWI programs. TWIN-CS expects to produce a series of studies examining how these programs are serving their students and their families. Its ultimate goal is to be a center of research and idea dissemination that can encourage more Catholic schools to consider adopting TWI within their curricular programs. It is clear that if this effort is successful, it should serve the interests of more and more Latino students and families, especially those of Spanish-dominant family backgrounds, as well as the interests of English-dominant families who have their children enrolled in TWI schools. The promise and potential of TWI is apparent, especially if efforts such as TWIN-CS help to overcome identified challenges in the effective implementation, operation, and sustainability of such programs.

It is important to consider that TWI programs must not only be understood as programs that can build intercultural communities in schools. It can also be the case that TWI programs in schools can build a much deeper appreciation of how distinct Catholic faith traditions celebrate religious holidays, saints’ days, and the Eucharist. TWI schools can leverage the common bond of commitment to the practice of the Catholic faith as a way of overcoming the social, economic, linguistic, and cultural divisions that remain barriers to the achievement of social justice for many segments of Catholics in the US. Stated differently, TWI seems particularly appropriate to develop a deep understanding of the common bonds of faith and devotion that can bring Catholics together to transform their understanding of their linked fate and common destiny as one community, as the nation continues to experience significant demographic shifts and related growth in multilingualism and multiculturalism. A pedagogically successful, academically rich, intercultural program of education policy and practice may be the most long-lasting way that Catholics can meet the expectations of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to build more communities of intercultural competence grounded in a unifying living of the Gospel. It is hard to imagine a better gift that leaders of Catholic schools can leave to later generations of Catholic faithful.

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