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CONFRONTING SOCIOCULTURAL DILEMMAS OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP IN HIGH DIVERSITY SCHOOL DISTRICTS:

Nurturing Sustainable “Community-Inclusive” Teaching and Learning Cultures through Designing and Implementing Creative School-Home Partnership Programs

Joseph G. Claudet, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Educational Leadership
Department of Educational Psychology, Leadership, and Counseling
Texas Tech University
Box 41071 / College of Education
Lubbock, Texas 79409-1071 USA
Orcid iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7318-5542>

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ABSTRACT

The difficult and seemingly intractable sociocultural instructional leadership dilemmas that can often arise as a result of the learning performance deficiencies of the increasingly large numbers of immigrant/emergent bilingual (EB) learners and other culturally and linguistically diverse student subgroups enrolled in many diverse K-12 school districts in the United States continues to be a major challenge facing teaching and learning improvement school leaders. The metropolitan high school case study profiled in this article showcases how one high school principal and his instructional improvement team colleagues leveraged the power of design-based school improvement analytic thinking and intervention program development strategies to develop and implement a targeted “community-inclusive instructional improvement intervention program” on their campus to help teachers and related instructional staff learn how to: 1) revitalize their interdisciplinary unit planning and school-home partnership building efforts; and 2) connect in meaningful ways with the parents and families of the school’s large populations of immigrant/EB and other culturally and linguistically diverse students. The multi-week intervention program implemented by the principal and his intervention team provided teachers and instructional leaders with training on how to: 1) utilize culturally relevant teaching strategies to jumpstart teacher teams’ biliteracy-centered instructional unit planning and student-learning assessment efforts; 2) properly integrate culturally sensitive rapport-building techniques into educators’ overall parental communication and family outreach and support practices; and 3) design and implement creative, robust, and long-term-sustainable “community-inclusive” school-home teaching and learning partnership programs and school-community collaborative initiatives with multiple school learning stakeholders to effectively address the academic and social learning support needs of the district’s culturally and linguistically diverse students and their parents and families. The article includes a literature-informed discussion of how campus-based

instructional leaders can utilize design-based thinking and design research methodologies in tandem with a multi-leveled systems approach to innovative school-home-community partnership building to expand education stakeholders' involvement in instructional monitoring and decision making in ways that can effectively address the unique academic and social learning support needs of the district's diverse learners.

KEYWORDS: educational design research; high diversity school districts; school-home partnership programs; school community involvement

INTRODUCTION

The critical importance of school-home partnerships for supporting the positive academic and social development of students has been extensively researched and documented (Crosnoe, 2009; DeCastro & Catsambis, 2009; DePlanty et al., 2007; Hill, 2015; Hill & Chao, 2009; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Jeynes, 2007, 2012; Jodl et al., 2001; Wang & Eccles, 2012). Moreover, these kinds of school-home partnerships that enable educators to connect with parents and families in their home environments about the learning progress of their elementary and secondary school-age children are especially important for schools and school districts that are serving large populations of culturally and linguistically diverse learners (Bouffard, 2009; Epstein et al., 2008; Fan et al., 2012; Hill, 2009; 2015; Hill & Chao, 2009; Hill & Torres, 2010; Lareau, 2003; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Ngobeni, 2024; Sanders, 2013; Sheldon & Sanders, 2016; Theoharis, 2009; Theoharis & Brooks, 2012).

Educators working in K-12 school districts within a growing number of states and regions across the United States are having to navigate difficult challenges associated with providing culturally relevant instruction to the increasingly large numbers of culturally and linguistically diverse students populating their classrooms. While developing culturally relevant and responsive instructional lessons and units for diverse learners is certainly a significant challenge for teachers in elementary grades, teachers at the secondary level (i.e., middle/junior high and high school) are often saddled with the additional burden of trying to design and deliver relevant, instructionally responsive lessons and interdisciplinary units to culturally and linguistically diverse students who have not progressed sufficiently in their biliteracy academic development to be able to keep pace with their native English-speaking peers in secondary classrooms. Many of these culturally and linguistically diverse learners have participated in English as a Second Language (ESL), Bilingual Education (BE), or Emergent Bilingual (EB) programs in the elementary grades but have "plateaued" in their biliteracy academic learning by the time they reach the middle grades. Teachers in middle and high school classrooms then must contend with the added pedagogical challenges of working in their grade-level planning teams to design and implement instructional units in the core content areas to meet the academic preparation needs of their native English-speaking students while also having to engage in compensatory planning efforts to try to also address (often ineffectively) the learning support needs of the culturally diverse/emergent bilingual students who have fallen behind in their overall academic learning.

In the United States, the state of Texas remains one of the leading bellwether border states (along with other states including: California, Arizona, and New Mexico) in terms of the overall percentage of emergent bilingual students that are enrolled in the state's public school education system. According to the most recently available Texas Education Agency Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) data, of the just over 5.5 million students are enrolled in Texas public schools a staggering 24 percent of these students are emergent bilingual (EB) learners. Moreover, Texas serves just under one in four of the entire nation's EB student population. Of the 120-plus native languages that are spoken by EB students in Texas public schools, Spanish is by far the largest subgroup with 85.8 percent of EB students speaking Spanish as their native home language. For many of the Spanish population-serving public school districts within Texas, emergent bilingual students comprise 31 to 40 percent or even more of the district's overall student population. A sizeable percentage of these emergent bilingual students (i.e., 13.95%) also qualify for and receive Special Education Services supported by state agency funding. This overall percentage of emergent bilingual (EB) students in comparison with English language (EL) students is continuing to grow at an increasing rate each year. (Texas Education Agency, Emergent Bilingual Students in Texas Fact Sheet #1 – Statistics. Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) Data 2024-25, November 2025) The state of Texas receives Title III bilingual education monetary allotments through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to fund emergent bilingual programs and provide instructional materials, equipment, and staff development support to teachers—all of which are intended to support the educational development needs of EB students, but these Title III EB programs and support materials and services nevertheless do little to mitigate the intensive biliteracy instructional planning and learning support challenges that secondary teachers are confronted with when these already struggling EB students reach the upper middle and high school grades in the US K-12 education system. (Texas Education Agency, Emergent Bilingual Students in Texas Fact Sheet #4 – Funding, Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) Data 2024-25, November 2025) The Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) organization based in Texas has issued a number of policy recommendations to the Texas state legislature to help ensure that emergent bilingual students served by the state's public education system can obtain an equitable and excellent education. These IDRA policy recommendations include: 1) authorizing Texas Education Agency support to assist school districts with bilingual program monitoring, technical assistance, and education training for effectively teaching emergent bilingual students as outlined in Texas House Bill 2164; 2) expanding and improving dual language pathways for high school students to graduate with academic achievement in bilingualism and biliteracy, also called the Seal of Biliteracy; 3) increasing the number of quality certified bilingual education teachers through preparation program support, strengthened teacher retention strategies, and higher teacher pay; and 4) ensuring students and families who speak languages other than English have access to quality public education without barriers regardless of citizenship (IDRA, 2025 Policy Digest for Texas, October 8, 2025). However, these IDRA policy recommendations and the Title III legislatively appropriated funding that has been allocated each year through the Texas Education Agency to public school districts to support the academic learning advancement of EB students—although well-intended in

terms of recognizing and intentionally seeking to address the state EB population's learning support needs—have repeatedly fallen short in terms of helping to mitigate the seemingly intractable challenges that secondary school teachers must confront on a weekly basis in attempting to instructionally plan for and support the large numbers of emergent bilingual learners in their classrooms who continually perform on state-mandated core content learning assessments significantly below their native English-speaking peers.

The emergent bilingual student population situation in Texas and the *instructional planning and support services dilemma* it presents to educators and school community stakeholders underscores the urgent need for education leaders working in public school districts across the state to focus their energies on designing and implementing multiple kinds of creative *school-home partnership programs* and *school-family-community support initiatives* to forge robust connections between/among educators and the parents and families of culturally and linguistically diverse learners. Importantly, these kinds of creative “school-home-community partnership programs and initiatives” can go a long way towards helping to address the unique biliteracy academic and social learning development needs of EB students and other culturally and linguistically diverse learners through: 1) providing opportunities for educators to connect in responsive and meaningful ways with diverse students and their families; and 2) creating campus-specific and school district-wide collaborative educational leadership Parent / Teacher Organizations (PTOs) within which culturally and economically diverse parents/families and community stakeholders can become involved and participate actively alongside teachers and administrators in instructional monitoring and decision making practices that directly impact their children's learning.

PURPOSE

School leaders working in high-diversity metropolitan school districts are increasingly confronted with intractable sociocultural dilemmas of instructional improvement in their school communities fueled by the persistent and continually widening low academic performance gaps of large populations of diverse students—including large subgroups of immigrant/emergent bilingual students and other culturally and linguistically diverse students. The metropolitan high school case study profiled in this article showcases how one high school principal and his instructional improvement team colleagues leveraged the power of *design-based school improvement analytic thinking* and *intervention program development strategies* to develop and implement a targeted “*community-inclusive* instructional improvement intervention program” on their campus to revitalize grade-level teachers' biliteracy-centered interdisciplinary unit planning and school-home partnership building efforts to connect in meaningful ways with the parents and families of the school's large populations of immigrant/emergent bilingual and other culturally and linguistically diverse students. The case study highlights how the campus-based intervention team was able to successfully design and operationalize a five-week, multi-leveled intervention program for grade-level teams of core content teachers and associated campus- and district-level instructional leaders. The intervention program provided participating educators with targeted knowledge and skills acquisition training on how to: 1) utilize culturally relevant teaching strategies to jumpstart their

biliteracy-centered instructional unit planning and student-learning benchmark assessment development efforts; 2) properly integrate culturally sensitive rapport-building techniques into individual grade-level teacher team's overall parental communication and family outreach and support practices to better address the learning development needs of their academically at-risk and culturally diverse students; and 3) design and implement creative, robust, and long-term-sustainable "community-inclusive" school-home teaching and learning partnership programs and school-community instructional improvement involvement initiatives with multiple school stakeholders to effectively address the academic and social learning support needs of the district's culturally and linguistically diverse students and their parents and families.

RESEARCH METHODS

Design-based school improvement research methods described in the *education improvement science literature* (McKenney & Reeves, 2012; Mintrop, 2016; Plomp, 2010; Plomp & Nieveen, 2010; van den Akker, 1999; van den Akker et al., 1999; van den Akker et al., 2006a, 2006b) were utilized in the development and execution of the campus-based instructional improvement applied research activities completed and reported in this article. The author, serving in the role of an instructional improvement consultant to high school administrative and instructional leaders working in a large metropolitan school district in south central Texas in the United States, guided campus-based school leaders in the application of *design-based school/home/community involvement and instructional improvement research methods* to investigate and address the high school's persistent academic learning performance gap problems associated with the campus's large population of culturally and linguistically diverse students. The metropolitan high school's improvement leaders—working together as an *investigative team*—engaged together in several key design-based school improvement research activities to probe and address their campus's intractable instructional improvement challenges. These activities included: 1) analyzing multi-year *student-learning performance data* associated with the high school's various student subgroups in conjunction with parallel analysis of extensive *observational and perspectivist data* collected on teachers' interactive grade-level team instructional planning and school-home communication efforts; 2) reviewing relevant *school improvement literatures* containing actionable strategies that can support teachers' biliteracy-centered interdisciplinary instructional planning and classroom teaching practices; and 3) developing and implementing a *design-based targeted intervention program* focused on providing iterative sets of "knowledge and skills acquisition" sessions and "immersive learning" opportunities to grade-level teams of teachers and instructional improvement leaders. The specific steps utilized in this *design-based approach* to enacting turnaround instructional improvement to effectively support the academic development of emergent bilingual and other diverse learners in this high-diversity metropolitan secondary school setting are detailed in the case study presented below. Pseudonyms for the school and school district and instructional leaders involved in the design-based instructional improvement efforts completed at this metropolitan high school are used throughout the case summary presentation.

METROPOLITAN HIGH SCHOOL CASE STUDY

Confronting Sociocultural Dilemmas Involved in Designing and Implementing ‘Community-Inclusive’ Instructional Support Programs for Diverse Learners

Background

Emilio Ortega Escobar has always emphasized community relations and partnership building with multiple education stakeholders throughout the broader community as foundational anchors of his leadership work as a middle school principal. Having acquired from his early Hispanic home cultural upbringing a strong sense of the centrality of “family and community connections” and the importance of displaying an “active commitment to generosity, sharing, and mutuality” in working collaboratively with others in being solid supporters and stewards of both the members of his own immediate family as well as the members of his larger extended “cultural community” family, Escobar has internalized these *communal stewardship values* as central cornerstones of his school leadership thinking. Especially proud of his rich Hispanic heritage, Emilio Escobar has maintained deep respect for the value of relational community-building and the importance of community relationships and these values have always served as central cornerstones informing and guiding his school leadership thinking. In the five years that he has been serving as the principal of the sole middle school in his mid-size school district in a border community in the Rio Grande Valley in southwest Texas, Emilio Escobar has always felt strongly that he was called to “do something about the situations of the people he is serving” and that he has a responsibility to contribute meaningfully to making people’s lives better. In this regard, Emilio Escobar’s reputation as an enthusiastic, hard-working, and effective instructional improvement-centered school leader with a tireless commitment to collaborative service and community stewardship in support of all communal learning stakeholders (i.e., certainly the school’s students and their parents/families, but also members of the broader community interested in expanding their own education) spread rapidly—both within his own border school district as well as throughout the larger southwest Texas region.

As a result of his successful leadership record and his solid reputation as an innovative and transformative school reformer and community relations-centered instructional support program designer and implementer, it was no surprise to his colleagues when he was appointed as the new principal of León S. Montero East Central High School, the largest of four high schools in Guajardo-Ibarra Metropolitan School District. Serving the residents of a diverse community within a sprawling urban metropolis in south central Texas, León S. Montero East Central High School boasts an overall student population of over 4,200 students, with the demographic makeup of this population consisting of 76 percent Hispanic, 12 percent African American, 11 percent Anglo, and 1 percent other. Notably, a large percentage of this high school’s Hispanic students are designated by the school district and the state as dual-language English Language Learners (ELLs) and Emergent Bilinguals (EBs). During his initial conversations with Dr. Eduardo Luis Matamoros, the district’s superintendent, and other members of the district’s administrative leadership cabinet, principal Escobar learned that educators at Montero East Central High School have been struggling in recent years in trying to deal with the

growing disparities between Hispanic and non-Hispanic students on the state's academic performance assessments, with Hispanic students at this campus registering especially poorly on Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR) learning effectiveness measurement indicators targeting overall academic performance in core subject areas and overall College and Career Readiness. The high school's large percentage of Hispanic students, in comparison with non-Hispanic students, notably score significantly lower on state-mandated performance accountability measures in the critical areas of English reading and writing performance and mathematical applied thinking, with the Hispanic student group as a whole continually scoring far below the district's mean scores for all other student demographic groups on the state's signature Texas Success Initiative (TSI) assessments of student learning progress in the core areas of English Language Arts, Reading, and Mathematics. One of the key reasons for the dismal performance of the Hispanic students in comparison with other demographic groups is the large percentage (roughly 65%) of Hispanic students attending Montero East Central High School who are classified as *dual-language learners*. Although many of these Hispanic "dual language" students went through the district's elementary and middle schools' English as a Second Language (ESL) programs, these Hispanic dual-language-learning students—referred to by the district and the state as emergent bilingual (EB) learners (i.e., students whose native home language is Spanish and who are learning English as their second language), these Hispanic EB students have routinely struggled in their academic education year after year throughout their elementary-to-secondary school career to acquire basic social communication proficiency in American English and to comprehend and internalize general academic concepts (in both their native Spanish and in English) across the core content areas. Most alarmingly, these Hispanic EB students have experienced much slower progression in their English language reading and writing skills development from one grade level to the next in comparison with their native English-speaking peers. As a result, a majority of these Hispanic emergent bilingual students typically hit a "learning block" bottleneck in their overall academic learning progress during middle school in terms of their ability to understand lesson content, and by the time they reach high school their ability (and desire) to engage meaningfully in classroom learning with their native English-speaking peers has substantively declined.

As principal Escobar continued to collect more detailed information about the learning deficiencies of the emergent bilingual Hispanic student population at Montero East Central High School, he could readily relate to the "multiple learning challenges" these Hispanic students were facing. Indeed, Escobar had accumulated extensive leadership experiences at his former middle school through devoting a considerable amount of time and effort to working collaboratively with educators and community partners to design and implement a variety of *school-home partnership programs* to address the unique instructional support needs of Hispanic dual language learners. Most crucially, principal Escobar was well aware as a result of his first-hand leadership experiences at his former middle school of the need to work intentionally and collaboratively with colleagues to nurture "fully inclusive community cultures" for students, parents and families, and other community stakeholders and of the overriding importance of engaging in proactive *school-home partnership building* as an intentional broad "community-centered relational approach" to facilitating and supporting emergent

bilingual Hispanic students' successful academic learning. Escobar was especially attuned to the advantages of *school-home partnerships* as an effective means for: 1) building open communication pathways with parents and family members to keep them apprised of their child's academic learning progress and to discuss potential learning improvement support needs; and 2) nurturing positive and robust "community-inclusive" teaching and learning campus organizational cultures that value multiple education community stakeholders' active participation in school-wide learning activities and that enable the cultivation and development of viable, long-lasting *social capital mentoring networks* that can support students' learning success both during their school years and beyond. Specifically, principal Escobar was cognizant of the benefits of adopting a *multi-leveled approach* to developing effective "community stakeholder-responsive" instructional delivery and learning support environments in high diversity campuses (at both the elementary and secondary level) that rely on implementing a number of highly interrelated "deeper learning" principles and "engaged learning" strategies. These principles and strategies include: 1) nurturing/facilitating multiple education stakeholders' collaboration and involvement in instructional decision making; 2) supporting immersive project-based inquiry to support dual-language students' real world-connected learning; 3) networking beyond traditional classroom walls that includes the design and implementation of creative school-home partnership programs and initiatives; 4) customizing academic experiences to meet the learning styles and needs of individual emergent bilingual students; and 5) identifying and tapping into the "mentoring and student support capacities" of business/civic leaders and other adult community members to help build robust *social capital networks* that can provide expanded school and career learning opportunities for culturally diverse, dual language-learning students. From his own educational experiences, principal Escobar knew that young people—particularly young school-age individuals from culturally diverse backgrounds who have been helped in positive ways during their elementary and secondary school years to develop and expand their "social capital networks"—are much better prepared and have a more positive "life-long learning mindset" following their graduation from high school to enter and succeed academically in community colleges and four-year universities in pursuit of positive and rewarding professional careers.

The Challenge of Creating a 'Community-Inclusive' Teaching, Leading, and Learning Culture at Montero East Central High School

Following his formal appointment to the position of principal of León S. Montero East Central High School, which was unanimously approved by the Guajardo-Ibarra Metropolitan District's School Board in mid-June 2025, and with his accumulated knowledge and experiences as an innovative instructional improvement leader and relational community builder to guide him, principal Escobar decided to spend time during the summer months of June and July prior to the official start of the 2025-2026 school year (in August 2025) to engage in a series of informal conversations with Montero East Central High School teachers. He initiated these conversations as a means to both introduce himself to Montero ECHS teachers as the campus's new principal and to give teachers an opportunity to share with him their perspectives on what they felt were the school's (and their own) most pressing current instructional challenges. Principal Escobar was pleased that quite a large number of Montero ECHS

teachers accepted his invitation to participate in these one-on-one informal conversations. As these conversations progressed during June and July and as teachers began to openly share their perspectives on the challenges they were facing in their classrooms, principal Escobar was able to begin piecing together a much fuller picture of the current state of both the “within-school” and broader “school community” sociocultural landscape affecting the campus’s overall teaching, leading, and learning relational culture. And the broader picture of the school’s instructional culture that was taking shape in principal Escobar’s mind based on these teachers’ informally shared perspectives began to concern him. While Montero ECHS teachers were certainly cordial in welcoming Escobar to the campus, these same teachers were not shy in voicing their frustrations with what they openly described as the school’s “deteriorating” teaching/learning environment within which many of the students sitting in their classrooms displayed little motivation for learning and engaged in persistent disruptive behaviors that prevented teachers from teaching lessons and staying on track in delivering the curriculum.

Accustomed to working with teachers at his former middle school who were perennially enthusiastic about their ongoing home communications with parents and family members and who relished opportunities to participate in neighborhood instructional support visits to students’ homes, principal Escobar was surprised at the range of negative perceptions and levels of frustration he received from multiple ECHS teachers who participated in these initial one-on-one informal interviews. Indeed, several teachers did not mince words in articulating their strongly held beliefs about what they perceived to be the “dire state” of the campus’s overall school-community relational culture and how this dysfunctional culture was due not to teachers’ own substantial outreach efforts but to the general lack of interest of parents in their children’s learning and parents and family members’ dismal attendance at school events and activities. As one veteran eleventh grade math teacher explained to principal Escobar: *I have been employed as a secondary teacher in this district for twenty seven years and have been teaching math at this campus for the past fifteen years. For the past twelve years the percentage of Hispanic students from economically disadvantaged families comprising the overall population of students at León S. Montero East Central High School has continued to increase. These students now constitute the majority by far of students who are sitting in my math classroom each year. I have been teaching a long time and I believe that I’m genuinely committed to working with and supporting the academic development of all students who want to learn. But this, in fact, is where the problem is. I now have substantial numbers of Hispanic students in my algebra classes who are ‘emergent bilingual students’—their native language is Mexican Spanish and many of these students are still struggling to attain competence in speaking and writing in English using standard ‘American English’ academic vocabulary. Moreover, frequently during class time, when I am presenting and explaining new math concepts, several of these emergent bilingual Hispanic students choose not to pay attention to the lesson but laugh and talk among themselves in Spanish so loudly that they create commotion and interrupt my entire lesson. Not being fluent in Spanish myself, most often I don’t even know what they are saying to each other—for all I know they could be telling jokes to each other and even making derisive comments about me. But, in any case, the Hispanic students’ disruptive behaviors are negatively impacting the classroom’s overall learning climate and disrupting learning*

opportunities for other native English-speaking students in the class who are trying to learn the new material. I've tried sending these disruptive students to the principal's office in the past for behavior management remediation, but the previous principal never really addressed this 'persistent disruptive behavior' problem on our campus; he just reprimanded these students and sent them back to my classroom. And in the past three years this ongoing problem has only gotten worse. After trying all the attention redirection strategies, I know of to turn around these students' low engagement behaviors, I've essentially concluded that many of these Hispanic students simply lack both the capacity and the motivation to learn. My own belief is that many of these students' parents and older family members—because of their cultural backgrounds and the challenging economic conditions in which they live and work—simply do not have any real understanding of or appreciation for the value of acquiring an education. Many of these Hispanic students' mothers and fathers both have to work multiple low-wage jobs just to provide the basics for their families, and these parents are fully expecting that their children will 'follow in their parents' footsteps' and will eventually find work in multiple low-paying, blue-collar service industry jobs as well. The behavior management situation involving these persistently disruptive EB Hispanic students in our core academic classes has become so acute that I, and many of the other core content teachers I routinely talk with, simply focus our instructional efforts now on teaching the native English-speaking students who 'want to learn'. We simply do not have the time or the personnel support to expend the considerable additional effort that would be required to try to manage and teach these Hispanic EBs along with our other native English-speaking students! This math teacher's impassioned perspectives echoed to a large extent the views of several other teachers principal Escobar interviewed.

In one notable interview with another core content teacher that especially caught principal Escobar's attention, a science teacher who has been teaching biology and physics at Montero East Central High School for eighteen years went to some length in describing to Escobar how he and several of his grade-level colleagues had spent considerable time and effort over the past three years in trying to establish "school-to-home communication pathways" to connect with Hispanic students' parents. The science teacher indicated that they engaged in these efforts to try to create meaningful opportunities for parents and family members to become actively involved in school instructional and social activities but lamented how their collective efforts had yielded dismal results: *I am a veteran science teacher here at Montero ECHS and have been serving as the chair of the Science Department for the past seven years. Many of our Hispanic students perform significantly below the district's average scores across all campuses on state-mandated accountability tests in the core subject areas—particularly in science and math—and I can tell you that my teacher colleagues and I in the science department are keenly aware that our high school has been flagged repeatedly over the past three years as one of the secondary campuses in the district that has been identified as being in urgent need of targeted instructional turnaround. It's not like we haven't tried to address this problem. The other core content department chairs and I have worked tirelessly to encourage teachers to incorporate multiple kinds of classroom engagement strategies into their instructional planning and to utilize an array of basic communication practices such as email, instructional support apps, and phone calls to*

try to connect with parents and provide them with information regarding their child's academic situation. Teachers in several of our grade-level teams have tried in good faith to engage with parents using these communication tools but have become frustrated in their outreach efforts due to what they describe as a lack of responsiveness from parents. Grade-level teachers bemoan these Hispanic parents' apparent minimal interest in speaking with them about their child's academic progress and in becoming involved in any of the school's instructional awareness programs and family-inclusive activities. Although we have several teachers on campus that are bilingual and fluent in Spanish—notably our bilingual instructional support staff and Spanish heritage language teachers, the majority of our core content teachers who are tasked with instructing students in the state-tested subject areas lack the linguistic and socio-interactive confidence to be able to engage with parents and families of our most academically challenged students in culturally responsive and relationally effective ways. As a result, many of our teachers at some point simply give up on these home outreach communication strategies and focus their efforts on utilizing their limited planning and classroom instructional time to teach their native English-speaking students—the students whom teachers feel are 'most capable of learning'. Many of us believe that at the high school level we're doing all that we can be realistically expected to do instructionally for our struggling Hispanic students. A large percentage of our emergent bilingual Hispanic students have gone through the district's bilingual education programs in elementary and middle school but still come to us deficient in their bilingual learning skills and unable to grasp and internalize key academic concepts across the content areas. The overall frustration level among the majority of Montero grade-level teachers regarding the perceived insurmountable instructional challenges involved in trying to teach our low-performing Hispanic EB students has been boiling over for some time now, and previous campus principals who've been assigned to this school have failed to provide us with any practical resources or creative ideas that could actually help us address this persistent school-wide dilemma.

The perspectives voiced by these two veteran core content area teachers were echoed by several other teachers who articulated similar views during their preliminary interviews with the new principal. Although he had been given advance notice by the superintendent that there would be some learning improvement and community-building challenges he would have to face as the incoming new principal of León S. Montero East Central High School, principal Escobar was nevertheless taken aback by the degree of frustration and the intensity of the entrenched negative attitudes he encountered during his initial interviews with the campus's teachers. After carefully reviewing the personal notes that he had compiled from his collective interview meetings, principal Escobar spent time thinking about how to address the issues highlighted by these teachers. After some reflection, principal Escobar realized that although the campus's recent history of Hispanic students' declining performance levels in the area of state-mandated core content learning accountability test scores certainly constituted a real problem that needed addressing, this "student-learning performance" situation was only the surface-level symptom of a much deeper, more deep-seated and intractable "community-wide dysfunctional relational culture" problem. Based on this line of thinking and following his own natural "community-building" leadership instincts, principal Escobar made the decision to form an *Inclusive Community Building*

(ICB) *Investigative Team* on the Montero East Central High School campus at the outset of the 2025-2026 school year. Escobar envisioned that this school-wide ICB investigate team would focus their efforts on: 1) collecting and analyzing relevant data about the instructional improvement needs of students across all grade levels; 2) probing any “underlying root causes” potentially contributing to teachers’ deficit thinking attitudes regarding the overall dysfunctional state of the campus’s teaching and learning culture; and 3) leveraging the results of their collective analyses to creatively design new school-home partnership programs to nurture a new, transformative, and *community-inclusive* teaching, leading, and learning culture at Montero East Central High School.

The ICB team principal Escobar organized consisted of a representative array of instructional leaders across all areas of the school organization and included the high school’s four assistant principals, the department chairs of each core content area (English/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies), the campus’s five guidance counselors, faculty leaders of each grade-level professional learning community (PLC) instructional planning group, along with various Spanish heritage language teachers and related instructional support staff serving the campus’s ninth through twelfth grades. To investigate the “student-learning performance problem” dimension of the school’s overall challenges, Escobar and his team collected and compiled a variety of relevant student-learning performance data over the past five years, focusing specifically on cumulative differentiated performance data enabling the team to analyze the learning performance trends of the campus’s significantly large population of low-socioeconomic status and emergent bilingual Hispanic students. The multi-year *student-learning performance data* the team collected and analyzed included: 1) available student-learning benchmark data in all four core content areas (English/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies) derived from formative assessments of students’ learning progress conducted across multiple nine-week cycles during each academic year; 2) student performance scores on all core content area End of Course Exams required by the state during each academic year reviewed; and 3) relevant Hispanic emergent bilingual students’ yearly English language learning progress scores reflected on TELPAS assessments. The team also collected some *observational and perspectivist data* associated with teachers’ interactive work practices through attending teachers’ instructional planning meetings and informally interviewing teachers about how they felt about their overall instructional planning efforts. To probe the deeper “community-wide dysfunctional relational culture” problem that was also impacting the school community, principal Escobar and his ICB team colleagues conducted a multi-level series of individual and focus group interviews with various stakeholders and stakeholder groups across the school community. Montero East Central High School stakeholders interviewed included: teachers from various grade-level instructional planning teams; multiple parents and family members who were willing to talk with team members about their interactive experiences with campus educators; area business and civic leaders who have a “workforce development interest” in the high school and district’s vital contributions to the community; as well as informal conversations with current students across ninth through twelfth grades. Through conducting these multi-level interviews, principal Escobar and his ICB investigative colleagues hoped to obtain important *perspectivist data* from individuals and groups across the entire school community that could provide: 1) critical insights

into possible multiple “stakeholder beliefs and attitudes” that might be serving as root causal driving forces contributing to the dysfunctional teaching and learning relational culture negatively impacting the campus; and 2) clues that could inform the potential design of some new creative programs and/or initiatives that could jumpstart positive *community-inclusive culture building* at Montero East Central High School.

Adopting a Design-Based Approach to School Community Partnership Building at Montero East Central High School

Principal Escobar and his ICB investigative team’s collective analyses of Montero East Central High School’s multilevel student learning performance and school community stakeholder interview data enabled the team to generate a number of data-informed insights regarding the current state of their high school’s overall “community-wide teaching and learning culture”. These data-informed insights can be summarized as follows: 1) teachers display general competence in employing basic communication tools and practices in their attempts to communicate regularly with parents (e.g., using email, classroom apps, phone calls) but demonstrate considerably lower willingness to invest the time and effort that is necessary to build genuinely robust home-school communicative networks with parents and families and to engage in sustained meaningful collaboration with parents and community members; 2) teachers are quick to provide excuses such as lack of familiarity/resonance with students’ home cultures, time scarcity, and students’ and parents’ digital inequities as significant obstacles preventing teachers from building effective school-to-home learning support partnerships; 3) teachers routinely lament their failures in building long-term positive relationships with families, although they consistently note that they are intentional about wanting to build these school-home relationships; and 4) parents repeatedly noted during interviews that they very rarely received any communications from teachers and that they were hesitant to approach teachers about their child’s learning progress—particularly non-Hispanic teachers whom the parents felt would not be able to understand or be supportive of their child[s] home situation. These data-informed revelations enabled principal Escobar and his team to conclude that teachers’ inability to build meaningful teaching and learning support relationships with their students’ parents and families was not the result of the communication strategies they were employing but rather stemmed from a deeper problem involving teacher’s overall pedagogical mindsets and the inter-relational approach they were utilizing to nurture a supportive school-home nexus. While many of the school’s teachers were quick to articulate what they believed were their conscientious efforts to foster open communicative pathways between their classrooms and students’ home environments, analyses of Montero East Central High School’s community stakeholder interview data made it clear that the vast majority of teachers at Montero East Central High School simply did not understand that their ineffectiveness in cultivating positive school-to-home relationships stemmed from their unwillingness to take the time to learn about their students’ home cultures and family traditions and to work to professionally develop their own culturally responsive and multilingual communication and teaching strategies in ways that could genuinely enable and support students’ learning progress. Moreover, most alarmingly, teachers’ lack of willingness to invest in their own professional learning on how to address the instructional support needs of culturally

diverse students and their families was anchored to a large degree in teachers' deeply held beliefs regarding what these teachers perceived to be the "low motivation and learning performance potentials" of their (in many cases, economically disadvantaged) Hispanic students. Based on their classroom experiences with these Hispanic students, teachers have developed the engrained belief that many of their Hispanic students simply lacked the necessary desire and motivation to learn—to a large extent driven by parents' own lack of understanding of the value of acquiring an education and, thus, failing to encourage their children to take school seriously.

These collective data-informed revelations regarding the current state of their school community's overall teaching and learning culture served as the necessary catalyst for principal Escobar and his team to come to the realization that they must reconsider how they should view effective organizational leadership for instructional improvement on their campus. Most importantly, these revelations made it clear to principal Escobar and his team colleagues that they must reconceptualize and recalibrate their *overall change agent leadership thinking* regarding how to go about nurturing and sustaining meaningful "school-to-home teaching and learning partnerships" that can genuinely support students' learning success. Principal Escobar and his team now realized that they—acting together intentionally as a *school community instructional improvement team* (i.e., consisting of Montero East Central High School's collective campus leaders (namely:, principal, assistant principals, guidance counselors, bilingual education specialists, etc.)—need to direct their change agent leadership efforts in very practical, actionable ways toward: 1) changing teachers' highly entrenched, deficit-thinking attitudes and beliefs about multicultural, multilingual parents and children's home environments; and 2) changing how teachers feel about the considerable amount of extra effort and commitment that is involved in fostering the kinds of school-to-home connections that need to be nurtured and sustained in order to jumpstart genuine efforts to minimize/close the learning achievement gaps exhibited by minoritized, underserved student populations. In operational terms, principal Escobar and his team's new, school organizational data analysis-informed change agent leadership thinking can be summarized as follows: before school leaders can begin to actually develop teachers' abilities in engaging in/fostering positive community collaboration and actually involving parents in shared curriculum decision-making, school leaders are going to have to first investigate and identify exactly what are teachers' deeply held, engrained attitudes and beliefs about low socioeconomic, multicultural/multilingual children, parents, and families and their home learning environments and probe what might be the *underlying root causes* of these entrenched teacher beliefs and attitudes. School leaders will need to: 1) fully understand the underlying root causes explaining why teachers have developed such entrenched, deficit-thinking beliefs and attitudes; and then 2) work systematically to develop teachers' motivation and commitment to designing and implementing the kinds of creative programs and initiatives that can result in positive school-to-home learning connections that are so desperately needed at this school.

It is important to note that many experienced teachers in elementary and secondary school settings serving diverse student/family populations make good faith efforts to work as industriously as they

can over time to build meaningful school-to-home connections with parents and family members to provide positive learning opportunities and experiences for their students. However, many teachers also become discouraged at some point when they begin to see how their good faith efforts often fall short because of multiple mediating factors, such as: parents in low socioeconomic situations not being able to attend and/or participate in school functions or learning activities with their children due to having to work multiple jobs; persistent digital disparities in the home environment; language barriers, etc. This growing teacher discouragement can quickly devolve into an “entrenched deficit-thinking mindset” on the part of teachers who develop the ingrained belief (based on their own experiences) that it’s simply “not worth the considerable amount of effort” it takes to try to build/nurture robust school-home connections for such minimal learning improvement gains. Recognizing that this kind of entrenched deficit-thinking mindset was indeed driving the day-to-day behaviors being exhibited by a majority of teachers at Montero ECHS, principal Escobar and his ICB investigative team now came to the full realization that before you can “change teachers’ *behaviors*” in regard to working to implement creative school-home partnerships, you first have to “change teachers’ *mindsets*” about what they believe is possible.

Literature Review Activities. With these macro- and micro-level data-analytic insights shedding light on the underlying root causes contributing to the dysfunctional school-to-home relational culture existing on the campus and potentially exacerbating the persistent learning deficiencies associated with the campus’s large population of Hispanic emergent bilingual students, principal Escobar and his investigative team embarked on a review of multiple relevant literatures focused on leadership for instructional improvement in high diversity school settings. Escobar and his colleagues believed that these literatures could potentially provide them with current research-supported knowledge and practical, actionable strategies for designing and implementing robust and sustainable school-to-home partnership programs to help close learning achievement gaps and support the learning effectiveness of Montero East Central High School’s economically, culturally, and linguistically diverse students. Principal Escobar and his team focused their review efforts on the following relevant literatures: 1) teacher deficit thinking (Dudley-Marling, 2015; Dweck, 2016; Ende, 2016; Ford et al., 2002; Garcia & Guerra, 2004; Goddard et al., 2015; Reeves et al., 2023; Valencia, 2010, 2015, 2020; Weiner, 2006); 2) authentic data teaming that actively includes parents and other community stakeholders to advance *school community-wide* data-driven decision making and instructional capacity-building (Bernhardt, 2013; Blanc et al., 2010; Boudett et al., 2010; Bouwmans et al., 2017; Bowers et al., 2014; Dufour & Fullan, 2013; Dufour et al., 2004; Dufour et al., 2016; Kennedy & Jones, 2015; Krečić & Grmek 2008; Lachat & Smith, 2005; Lieberman et al., 2014; Love et al., 2008; Love, 2009; Mandinach, 2012; Mandinach & Honey, 2008; Mandinach & Jackson, 2012; Martinez & McGrath, 2014; Marzano et al., 2016; Murphy, 2016; Stringer, 2013; Supovitz & Klein, 2003; Venables, 2011, 2014; White, 2011); 3) school-to-home communications and school community partnership-building (Bouffard, 2009; Epstein et al., 2008; Fan et al., 2012; Hill, 2009; 2015; Hill & Chao, 2009; Hill & Torres, 2010; Lareau, 2003; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Ngoben, 2024; Sanders, 2013; Sheldon & Sanders, 2016; Theoharis, 2009; Theoharis & Brooks, 2012); 4) closing the achievement gap for minoritized students (Blankstein

& Noguera, 2016; Byrd, 2020; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Darling-Hammond & Oakes, 2019; Dufour et al., 2010; Griner & Stewart, 2012; Kamm, 2018; Noguera, 2013; Noguera et al., 2020; Padilla et al., 2020; Reeves, 2020, 2020a; Slavin et al., 2013; Sun et al., 2020); 5) culturally inclusive and responsive school leadership (Gay, 2002, 2018; Khalifa, 2021; Khalifa et al., 2016; Payne, 2009, 2013; Samuels, 2014; Tomlinson, 2014); 6) bilingualism and second language acquisition instructional integration strategies in the secondary curriculum (Cummins, 1979, 1981, 2000; de Jong & Harper, 2005; MacSwan, 2017; Phillips Galloway et al., 2020; Sparrow et al., 2014); and 7) writing development and assessment strategies for multilingual learners to support emergent bilingual and culturally diverse students' successful academic learning across multiple content areas and to close achievement gaps (Cummins, 2021; Cummins & Early, 2011; Echevarria & Vogt, 2010; Echevarria et al., 2017; Graham & Herbert, 2010; Griner & Stewart, 2012; Hill, 2024; Khalifa et al., 2016; Little & Kirwin, 2019; Theoharis & Brooks, 2012).

Problem Reframing. Principal Escobar and his instructional improvement investigative team's collective analyses of available multi-year student learning performance records and teacher and parental interview data in conjunction with their review of relevant instructional improvement best practice literatures provided them with the analytic perspectives needed to "reframe" their investigative thinking regarding what were the plausible *data-supported underlying root causes* of their campus's persistent student academic learning deficiencies and dysfunctional school-home relational culture. The insights principal Escobar and his team gleaned from their review of current best practices contained in relevant literatures highlighted and underscored several "inhibiting factors" affecting school-home partnership building efforts in highly diverse schools, including: 1) the limited understanding prevalent among many teachers working in diverse school settings regarding the poor home learning and parental support environments of low socioeconomic marginalized students; 2) many teachers' widespread lack of knowledge and acceptance of research-supported "best practice instructional strategies" for responding effectively to the academic development and learning support needs of bilingual/biliterate and other culturally diverse learners; and 3) teachers' (and administrators') unfamiliarity with the kinds of effective school-to-home partnership-building programs and initiatives that can be implemented properly to make substantive gains in narrowing the achievement gaps for minoritized students. These inhibiting factors provided confirmatory literature support for many of the negative comments about the dysfunctional state of Montero East Central High School's current school-home-community relational culture principal Escobar and his colleagues received from teachers and parents during their community stakeholder interviews. Principal Escobar and his instructional improvement leadership colleagues now understood that they would have to reconceptualize their school's student-learning deficiency problem and "reframe" their problem of practice thinking. In order for campus leadership to be able to effectively address the surface-level "Hispanic student-learning performance deficiency" problem on their campus, principal Escobar and his instructional improvement team would have to refocus their change-agent leadership thinking to address directly the underlying *root causes* of this student-learning problem. The investigative team now understood that the underlying root causes driving their campus's Hispanic student-learning

performance problems centered to a large extent on *professional practice issues*. These issues involved: 1) Montero ECHS teachers' own deficit pedagogical thinking regarding their ingrained and generally critically unexamined perceptions of the learning motivation levels and academic capabilities of their Hispanic students; and 2) teachers' resultant ineffective instructional planning behaviors and their lackadaisical attempts at building robust school-to-home communication pathways that can positively support students and parents.

As a result of these collective insights, principal Escobar and his instructional improvement team were able to generate the following new data analysis-informed **reframed (low inference) Problem of Professional Practice rationale statement** articulating the underlying root causal problem of professional practice for Montero ECHS educators: *Montero East Central High School core content teachers and other instructional leadership staff have developed entrenched deficit thinking attitudes and 'negative pedagogical mindsets' regarding the perceived motivation levels and learning potentials of our campus's large populations of economically disadvantaged and culturally diverse students. These ingrained mindsets are derailing teachers' and instructional leaders' efforts to create open, two-way communication pathways with parents and family members and nurture and sustain effective school-to-home partnership programs. To counteract these perceptual biases and negative pedagogical mindsets, grade-level teams of core content teachers and associated instructional leaders are in need of targeted knowledge and skills acquisition training on: 1) how to utilize culturally relevant teaching strategies in their instructional unit planning and student-learning benchmark assessment development efforts; along with 2) ongoing coaching/collegial mentoring support from the campus's Dual Language Coordinator and grade-level PLC instructional planning leaders on how to properly integrate culturally sensitive communication techniques into their overall parental communication and family outreach and support practices to better address the learning development needs of their academically at-risk and culturally diverse students.* Following from this reframed Problem of Professional Practice rationale statement, principal Escobar and his investigative team then formulated the following **refined Theory of Action (If/Then) operational statement**: If grade-level teacher teams are provided with sufficient PLC instructional planning time guided by knowledgeable and experienced coaching mentors focused on helping teachers learn how to properly analyze student learning performance data to identify student-specific learning deficiencies, gain proficiency in integrating culturally responsive teaching strategies into their classroom instruction, and explore creative strategies for involving parents and family members in students' overall academic learning, then: 1) teachers will be better equipped to *plan and deliver fully aligned and culturally responsive interdisciplinary instructional units that cut across the core content areas in ways that meet state and district grade-level learning performance expectations*; and 2) *teachers and administrators will be better positioned to be able to work together to design and implement creative, robust, and long-term sustainable "community-inclusive" school-home teaching and learning partnership programs for students, parent/families, and other school learning stakeholders.* As a result, the high school's large populations of at-risk students and their families will begin to feel a part of a vibrant "fully-inclusive"

school community-wide relational culture that is focused intentionally on supporting all students in achieving solid, demonstrable interdisciplinary-connected learning across the content areas.

Based on the above analytic logic and further informed by school-home communication, instructional improvement, and student-learning support strategies gleaned from review of relevant literatures, principal Escobar and his instructional improvement team colleagues were able to construct the following **Montero East Central High School Change Drivers Diagram** (see Figure 1) as a conceptual schematic to guide their “intervention program design planning” to address Montero East Central High School educators’ identified problem of professional practice.

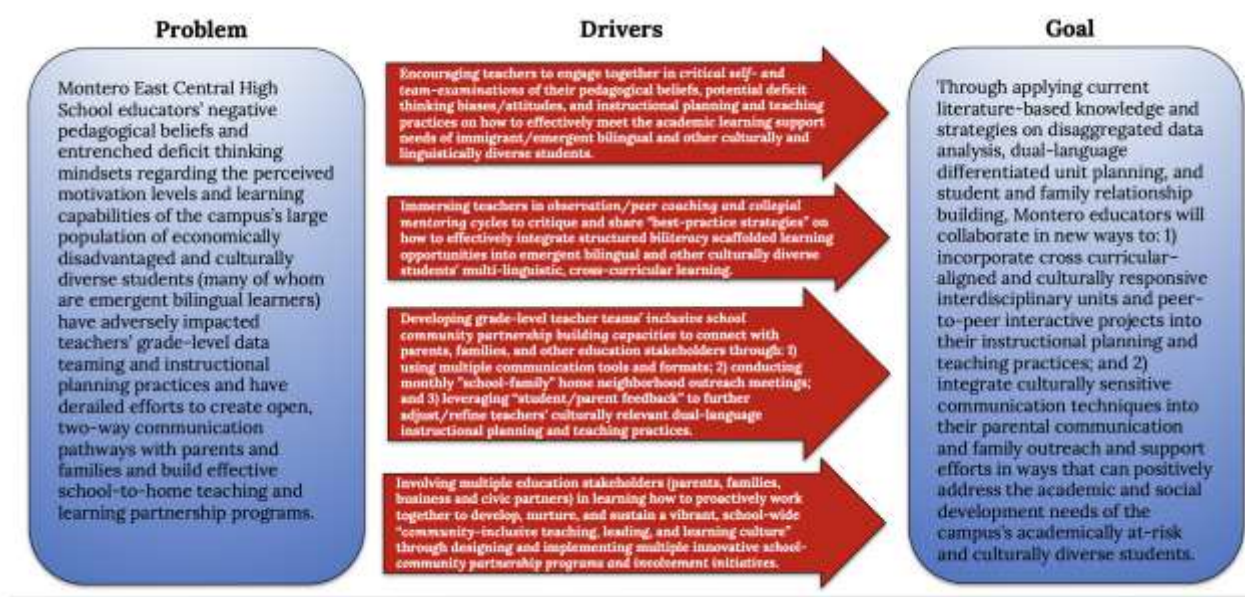


Figure 1 Montero ECHS Change Drivers Diagram

The Montero East Central High School Change Drivers Diagram included four *change drivers* that the ICB team utilized as sets of “operational action strategies” to help teachers: 1) critically examine their own pedagogical beliefs and potential deficit thinking attitudes and biases regarding students’ learning abilities and motivation levels; and 2) internalize new approaches to *biliteracy-centered* multi-content area instructional planning and teaching. The change drivers also focused on developing teachers’ inclusive school community partnership-building capacities and on involving multiple education stakeholders in the school community (i.e., parents, families, business and civic partners, etc.) in learning how to collaborate together to develop a coherent vision of a schoolwide *community-inclusive teaching, leading, and learning culture* and to nurture and sustain this vibrant culture through designing and implementing multiple innovative “school-community partnership programs”.

The first and second change drivers focused on assisting teachers across ninth through twelfth grade levels in: 1) engaging together in critical self- and team-examinations of their own pedagogical beliefs

and potential deficit thinking attitudes and biases they might be harboring that could be affecting (explicitly or unintentionally) their overall instructional planning and classroom teaching practices; and in 2) providing teachers with structured immersive learning experiences through multiple observation/peer coaching and collegial mentoring cycles to help teachers internalize and apply instructional design techniques for integrating structured “biliteracy scaffolded learning opportunities” into emergent bilingual and other culturally diverse students’ multi-lingual, cross-curricular learning. ICB team members and grade-level team leaders involved in implementing these change drivers worked intentionally to assist teams of grade-level core content teachers in learning how to utilize practical strategies contained in current bilingual development literature to integrate “biliteracy writing development” components and peer-to-peer learning activities into their interdisciplinary instructional units to expand opportunities for cross-curricular content learning for emergent bilingual and other culturally diverse students. These instructional strategies included helping teachers learn how to engage together as “data-informed instructional planning teams” in intensive data analyses of students’ learning performance assessments and then utilize the results of these data analyses to inform the team’s *biliteracy-integrated* interdisciplinary team planning in ways that can effectively support emergent bilingual and other culturally diverse students’ dual language learning.

The third change driver centered on energizing educators’ inclusive school community partnership capacity-building efforts to assist grade-level teams of teachers in learning how to connect in culturally responsive and meaningful ways with parents, families, and other community stakeholders through utilizing a variety of communicative tools and relationship-building resources and strategies. These resources and strategies included: 1) using multiple kinds of communication tools and formats (such as phone conversations, readily accessible and easy-to-use lesson sharing/monitoring apps, student academic progress tracking programs, etc.); 2) designing and conducting monthly school-family “neighborhood outreach” meetings to connect with multiple students and families in their home environments at convenience times to parents and family members; and 3) utilizing results of periodic “student/parent feedback surveys” to make adjustments and refinements to teacher teams’ dual-language instructional unit planning to ensure classroom lessons and peer-to-peer interactive project activities are genuinely culturally relevant and engaging for diverse, multi-lingual learners.

Finally, the fourth change driver focused on involving multiple Montero East Central High School education stakeholders (i.e., parents, families, business/civic partners, community agency representatives, etc.) in learning how to collaborate intentionally to: 1) brainstorm and develop a positive vision of a vibrant *community-inclusive teaching, leading, and learning culture* for the high school campus and the district; and then 2) operationally apply that vision through designing and implementing multiple innovative “school-home partnership programs” and “community involvement initiatives” that can benefit all school community learning stakeholders.

Intervention Program: Design, Development, and Implementation

Following completion of their multi-leveled analyses of the campus's challenges and associated follow-up analysis steps (i.e., literature-supported reframing of the professional learning improvement problem; followed by development of the Montero East Central High School Change Drivers Diagram), principal Escobar and his ICB team colleagues proceeded to move forward to design a detailed *intervention program implementation plan* to address teachers' identified problem of professional practice. Using the data analyses-informed and literature-supported Change Drivers Diagram as a "conceptual roadmap" for how to enact meaningful "community-inclusive" instructional improvement on their campus, principal Escobar and his ICB colleagues constructed their detailed ***Community-Inclusive Instructional Improvement Intervention Program "Implementation Plan"*** for Montero East Central High School (see Table 1).

Because of the inherently multi-leveled nature of the overall "*community-inclusive* instructional improvement culture-building" organizational problem confronting the school's leaders, principal Escobar and his ICB colleagues used a Multiple Systems Approach (i.e., Micro System, Meso System, and Macro System) to organize and operationalize the various strategies they included in their Implementation Plan. The intervention program's professional learning design included knowledge and skills acquisition modules for teachers on *culturally responsive pedagogy* and the effective design and delivery of *dual language interdisciplinary instructional units* along with opportunities for teacher involvement in *hands-on instructional unit development projects*. A *peer-to-peer classroom application and coaching* professional learning component was also incorporated into the implementation plan design in which grade-level teachers could participate in "multiple iterative coaching and collegial mentoring cycles" where teams of teachers could directly apply their newly acquired "culturally responsive" and "biliteracy-centered" instructional insights and teaching practices in their day-to-day classroom teaching and receive real-time observational feedback on their applied teaching efforts from peer mentors. In addition to these "instructional improvement-centered" professional learning components to facilitate the refinement of teachers' instructional planning and classroom teaching practices, the implementation plan also included knowledge and skills acquisition modules on *school/home/community partnership building for* educators and school leaders working within multiple levels of the overall school district organization. These module components focused specifically on expanding teachers' and instructional leaders' "collaborative teaming capacities" in the areas of *inclusive school-home-community culture building* and designing and implementing creative programs and initiatives aimed at *including a diverse array of community stakeholders in campus- and district-level instructional oversight and decision making*. The operational strategies included in this multi-leveled, multiple components approach are presented in Montero East Central High School's ***Community-Inclusive Instructional Improvement Intervention Program "Implementation Plan"*** (see Table 1).

Table 1 Montero East Central High School *Community-Inclusive* Instructional Improvement Intervention Program “Implementation Plan”

WEEK	FORMAT	CONTENT / ACTIVITY
1	Meetings of all selected participants	Multiple “Multicultural Learning” and “School-Home Partnership Building” Knowledge and Skill Development Sessions for grade-level teacher teams Content knowledge and skills acquisition modules: - Overview of foundational concepts in the recent literature on multilingual pedagogy: bilingualism, multilingualism, social versus academic biliteracy - Understanding the cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds and “academic biliteracy” learning development and support needs of emergent bilingual (EB) students - Overview of school-community relationship building concepts and outreach/engagement strategies in the school community literature for nurturing and sustaining effective culturally responsive and instructionally supportive school-home connections/relationships with culturally diverse students and families - Critically examining educators’ potential <i>deficit thinking mindsets and practices</i> regarding student bilingualism and biliteracy: how unintended biases and preconceptions can influence educators’ perceptions of EB students’ motivation levels and “academic biliteracy” learning capabilities - Reviewing key pedagogical concepts and instructional practices in the multilingual learning literature, including research on <i>linguistic interdependence</i> and <i>cross-language transference</i> (i.e., empirical evidence demonstrating how certain aspects of dual language learning, processing, and usage are significantly and positively correlated and that strong language skills development—including robust writing development—

		in students’ “native language” facilitates language skills development in the second “acquisition language”) (Cummins, 1979, 1981, 2021) ▪ Expanding teachers’ understandings and instructional planning skills in: 1) conceptualizing and developing fully aligned interdisciplinary-immersive “dual language instructional units” across the content areas; 2) designing and integrating <i>biliteracy-centered</i> dual language writing development projects/activities across the disciplines to support multicultural students’ applied learning; and 3) incorporating genre-based writing development as a major focus of instruction into their grade-level PLC team planning to create scaffolded genre-based lessons across languages (i.e., Spanish and English) ▪ Developing grade-level teacher team planning capacities for incorporating a variety of content-aligned writing development materials and strategies [such as: <i>creative writing scaffolding supports</i> (visuals, movements, stories, and peer-to-peer interactions) and teacher-initiated dual language <i>writing modeling strategies</i> into interdisciplinary units and classroom-based peer-to-peer learning projects/activities (Zwiers, 2024), and integrating data-driven dual language writing assessments, rubrics, and related learning-monitoring resources into teachers’ overall classroom instructional and assessment practices to support/enhance emergent bilingual and other culturally diverse students’ biliteracy interdisciplinary learning development in both English and Spanish (Cummins, 2021; Cummins & Early, 2011; Little & Kirwin, 2019; Theoharis & Brooks, 2012)] ▪ Assisting teacher teams in learning how to integrate <i>intentional co-teaching</i> for multilingual learners into their grade-level instructional planning efforts—i.e., core content area teachers partnering with multilingual learning professionals (e.g., Spanish heritage language teachers) to engage in collaborative instructional planning, teaching, and assessment efforts to effectively address the overall biliteracy learning support needs of multilingual learners (Porter, 2024)
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		Critical questions to drive teacher team discussions: ▪ What are the advantages of <i>bilingual writing development-intensive interdisciplinary instructional teaming</i> for enhancing emergent bilingual and English-speaking students’ classroom-based, interactive peer learning? ▪ What are the advantages of <i>bilingual writing development-intensive interdisciplinary teaming</i> for enhancing teachers’ continuous professional learning? ▪ How can core content teachers and other educators (e.g., Spanish heritage language teachers, multilingual instructional support staff, grade-level instructional coaches) engage together in targeted “dual language writing development-focused” instructional planning to design and implement creative <i>biliteracy instructional units and assessments</i> that are solidly anchored in robust writing development in both English and Spanish to support emergent bilingual students’ successful “biliteracy” interdisciplinary learning?
2	Focus Group Meetings of All Participants organized into multiple “team level” groupings	Multiple “Inclusive Community Building” Knowledge and Skill Development Sessions for various teacher team and instructional leadership groups Creating and supporting “Community Partnership Capacity-Building” opportunities on multiple system levels: MICRO SYSTEM:

		Teacher Team “Outreach & Community Engagement” Capacity Building – through developing/delivering teacher training programs and guidelines on cultural awareness / sensitivity and school-home connectivity to assist grade-level teacher teams in learning how to better communicate with and support culturally and linguistically diverse students, parents, and families. Capacity-building GOALS: ➤ expand teachers’ knowledge and understanding of student/family home economic and social conditions and cultural backgrounds and mores; ➤ develop teachers’ multicultural competencies in instructionally planning for and supporting the instructional and socio-interactive support needs of culturally and linguistically diverse learners (students and family members); ➤ build increased levels of relational trust between parents/families and teachers; ➤ transform/strengthen parents and family members’ beliefs and understandings regarding the multiple vital roles they can play in actively contributing to and supporting their children’s education; ➤ develop teachers’ commitment to family engagement as a core relational strategy for improving/advancing effective teaching and learning Campus Leadership Team Capacity Building – expanding/deepening school leaders’ (i.e., grade-level faculty team leaders, department chairs, guidance counselors, grade-level and campus administrators) understanding of the critical importance of nurturing and sustaining “<i>community-inclusive</i> teaching, leading, and learning cultures” within/across individual grade levels and throughout the school organization through focusing on developing school leaders’ “community stewardship” mindset that emphasizes
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		intentional school partnership capacity-building via the following actionable practices: ➤ encouraging multicultural stakeholder participation and building consensus; ➤ creating a vibrant community of multicultural leaders; ➤ developing/implementing a collaborative, shared vision of multiculturally anchored communal learning; ➤ employing culturally sensitive school-community communication strategies; ➤ weaving together a multi-stakeholder, multi-generational fabric comprised of positive “school-home-community inclusive” partnerships and social capital support networks. MESO SYSTEM: <i>Whole School Team “School Community Partnership” Capacity Building</i> – significantly increasing community stakeholder active, ongoing involvement in school community instructional improvement through: ➤ designing and conducting <i>Neighborhood Outreach meetings</i> – grade-level teams of teachers and campus administrators scheduling regular monthly school-family “neighborhood outreach” instructional support meetings to connect with multiple students and families in their home environments at convenient times for parents and family members to discuss their child’s learning progress; ➤ creating school-based <i>Family Engagement Initiatives and Activities</i> – both after-school and on weekends; ➤ forming individual grade-level <i>Parental Advisory Committees</i> – comprised of diverse groups of parents (with varied multicultural backgrounds) of students in each grade level;
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		➤ inviting identified parents to participate regularly (on a monthly or bi-monthly basis) as “parental advisors” in individual grade-level faculty team instructional planning meetings; ➤ inviting parents and community members (e.g., business/civic leaders, advocacy agency representatives; education stakeholder volunteers) to serve on a school-wide <i>Community Partners Instructional Improvement Advocacy Board</i> – that would serve as a collaborative leadership arena for “community-wide relational culture building” and a proactive catalyst for nurturing cross-cultural communal networking and cooperation among multiple school community stakeholders (across ethnicities/cultures, socioeconomic status, education levels, etc.) in support of all students’ learning success MACRO SYSTEM: <i>School District Team “District Community Partnership” Capacity Building</i> – substantively expanding and sustaining active participation/involvement of a varied array of local and regional community entities and stakeholders in school district community instructional improvement through: ➤ developing an inventory of local and regional district community partners (e.g., business/civic partners; community service agencies; economic assistance and family support networks; family health clinics; cultural advancement organizations); ➤ developing a district-wide <i>Community Partners Learning Success Advisory Board</i> – that will function as a collaborative body of multiple district community partners who are tasked with creating a “shared vision of learning success” for the district’s diverse students and developing/implementing multiple actionable strategies for creating/expanding a variety of social capital mentoring and support networks for multicultural students and their families;
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		➤ establishing school district-wide <i>Applied Learning Partnership Agreements</i> with a variety of businesses and agencies (local/regional businesses, civic organizations, community support agencies, etc.) to provide “real-world internship experiences” for the school district’s culturally and linguistically diverse students – enabling students to obtain hands-on, professionally supervised “career-related” workplace applied learning and skill development experiences; ➤ creating a <i>School District Center for Community Engagement</i> – staffed by district personnel trained in multicultural communication and instructional design who are tasked with developing/implementing a variety of multi-stakeholder engagement programs and relationship-building activities [e.g., English language skills development courses; family budgeting workshops/seminars; multicultural social clubs; community-based interactive activities (such as: cultural arts fairs, community food festivals, recreational sporting events) and the like] to provide social interactive and instruction-specific life-long learning opportunities for community members; ➤ promoting and celebrating the school district’s “community-inclusive partnership building programs and initiatives” via multiple district and local/regional community communication dissemination outlets (school district’s internet website, online communication apps, local newspapers, radio/television district program showcasing, etc.) to enhance district visibility and to attract potential “district-community partnership” support donors
2 (cont’d)	Meetings of teacher team participants	Sessions on <i>authentic data teaming</i> practices: ▪ Understanding the difference between “PLC lite” and authentic data teaming (Dufour & Reeves, 2016) ▪ Modeling by assistant principals and instructional coaches on how core content area teachers and Spanish heritage language teachers can collaborate as grade-level

		<i>bilingual, interdisciplinary instructional teams</i> in analyzing EB and other students' disaggregated benchmark and formative assessment data to investigate and identify underlying root causes of students' learning deficiencies ▪ Utilizing root-causal data analysis to pinpoint <i>inhibiting factors</i> impeding emergent bilingual students' academic biliteracy development (Love et al., 2008; Love, 2009) ▪ Leveraging the results of disaggregated root-causal data analyses to inform and guide <i>collaborative data conversations</i> about bilingual, cross-curricular instructional unit planning (Love et al., 2008; Love, 2009) ▪ Core content teachers, Spanish heritage language teachers, and other bilingual education–certified teachers in each grade level participate in an <i>immersive biliteracy team-learning project</i> (with direct modeling and feedback support provided by instructional coach facilitators) on how to engage together in “authentic data teaming” (i.e., disaggregated data analyses followed by focused data conversations) to design, plan, and implement a complete “bilingual, interdisciplinary instructional unit” in their classrooms ▪ Involving participating teachers in in-depth conversations on the “multiple benefits” to both educators and students of engaging in <i>highly immersive</i> interactive learning experiences, including: 1) deepens active learning engagement; 2) expands individual and group learning capacities; 3) builds relational bonds across learners; 4) incorporates opportunities for peer-to-peer coaching into the overall learning process; and 5) promotes long-term communal learning success
3 through 5	Classroom observation/peer coaching and	▪ Teachers conduct multiple classroom observations of fellow teachers' efforts in incorporating biliteracy writing development across the core content areas into their daily classroom teaching practices in ways that promote emergent bilingual (native Spanish–speaking)

	collegial mentoring cycles Teachers and instructional leaders' collaborative engagement with school and district community diverse education stakeholders to implement partnership programs and community involvement initiatives	and native English-speaking students' interactive, interdisciplinary peer learning. - Core content teachers, Spanish heritage language teachers, and other bilingual education-certified teachers are paired into "co-partner teams" to engage in multiple classroom observation/peer coaching and collegial mentoring cycles to examine teachers' effectiveness in applying their newly acquired content knowledge and differentiated instructional strategies to their classroom biliteracy teaching practices. - Co-partner teacher teams also observe students to identify successful instructional strategies and peer-to-peer interactive activities that foster students' active engagement in biliteracy deeper learning. - Teachers and campus- and district-level instructional leaders engage collaboratively with parents/families, business and civic leaders, and other community agency partners to finalize the design and implementation of the micro, meso, and macro system-level school-home partnership programs and school-community involvement initiatives.
3 through 5 (cont'd)	Individual interview meetings with co-partner teacher teams Multiple interviews	- Instructional leaders conduct multiple informal interviews with co-partner teams of core content teachers, Spanish heritage language teachers, and other bilingual education-certified teachers in each grade level to encourage teachers to share their perspectives and insights gleaned from their participation in the multi-week (weeks three through five) iterative observation/coaching and collegial mentoring cycles. - Instructional leaders conduct multiple informal interviews with school and district community

	with school and district community stakeholders	stakeholders (i.e., parents/families, business/civic leaders, and other diverse community agency personnel) to: 1) solicit feedback on the various micro, meso, and macro systems “community partnership–building efforts” initiated during the intervention program; and to 2) obtain stakeholders’ input regarding the perceived long-term effectiveness of the school-home partnership programs and community involvement initiatives implemented in expanding stakeholders’ meaningful involvement in school and district instructional monitoring and decision making.
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Principal Escobar and his ICB colleagues, along with the campus’s six full-time instructional coaches, served as session organizers/facilitators for the various “knowledge and skills development” sessions and “immersive team learning” activities that comprised the Montero East Central High School Instructional Improvement Intervention Program (see Table 1). Campus educators participating in the intervention program included: 1) ninth through twelfth grade *content specialists* (i.e., core content teachers with teaching assignments in the various state-tested core content areas: English/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies); 2) *multilingual learning specialists* (i.e., Spanish heritage language teachers and other bilingual education–certified teachers); and 3) *grade-level instructional coaches*. A total of thirty-six ninth through twelfth grade core content area teachers (nine teachers from each grade level), fifteen multilingual learning teachers (eight Spanish heritage language teachers and seven other bilingual education–certified teachers), and twelve instructional coaches (three coaches from each grade level) participated in the intervention program.

The five-week intervention program was implemented during February and March 2026. Intervention plan facilitators collected extensive Professional Learning Community (PLC) observational and informal interview data from teacher participants as teams of teachers navigated through the various professional learning components of the multi-week intervention program. Intervention program implementation data analyses focused on examining the impact the various iterative knowledge and skills acquisition, hands-on instructional unit project planning, and classroom-based application and peer mentoring activities had on helping teachers: 1) *critically examine/reconceptualize* their own pedagogical thinking (i.e., assist teachers in critically evaluating their current beliefs and attitudes regarding the perceived academic abilities and learning motivation levels of their emergent bilingual and other culturally diverse students); 2) *transform* their overall instructional planning and classroom teaching practices through embracing a “*dual language–intensive* interdisciplinary approach” to supporting emergent bilingual students’ biliteracy learning; and 3) *expand and develop* their community outreach and engagement capacity–building skills in being able to better communicate with and support the instructional and

social development needs and school community involvement activities of the school's culturally and linguistically diverse students and to work to actively involve students' parents in instructional decision making.

To address the multi-leveled nature of the “*community-inclusive instructional improvement culture-building*” organizational problem confronting the school's leaders, principal Escobar and his ICB colleagues utilized a “Multiple Systems Approach” (i.e., Micro System, Meso System, and Macro System) to organize and operationalize the various “intervention design strategies” included in their Implementation Plan. This multiple systems approach to addressing sociocultural dilemmas associated with building/nurturing the *community-inclusive* instructional improvement involvement capacities of multiple education stakeholders in high diversity school districts is depicted in Figure 2.

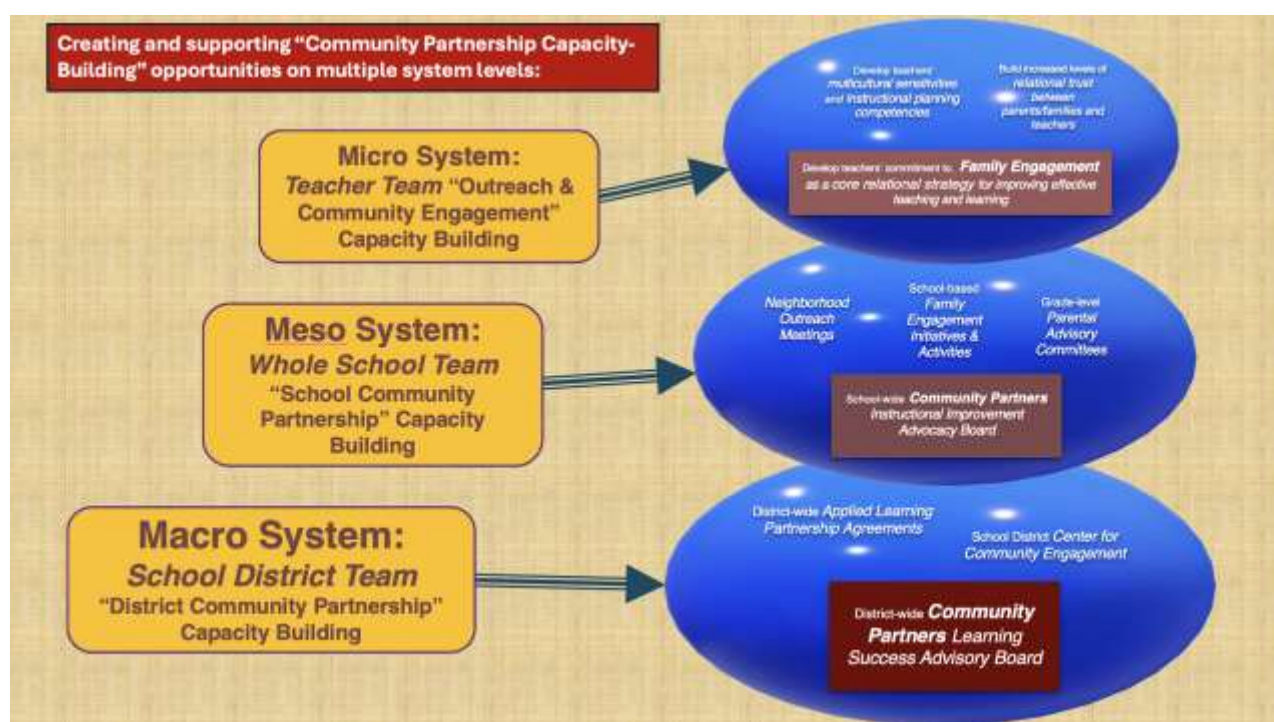


Figure 2 Multi-leveled Systems Approach to Addressing Sociocultural Dilemmas of Instructional Leadership in High Diversity School Districts

Figure 2 depicts the multiple “organizational system levels” within which school and district educators and instructional leadership personnel worked to design and support “Community Partnership Capacity-Building” opportunities for Guajardo-Ibarra metropolitan school district community learning stakeholders. At the “Micro System” level, campus teachers and instructional leaders engaged together in two kinds of focused capacity-building activities. Groups of teachers within individual grade levels were guided by intervention program facilitators on how to work collaboratively to develop their own *Teacher Team “Outreach & Community Engagement” capacities* through developing and delivering teacher training programs and guidelines to support teachers’ own cultural awareness of their diverse

students' instructional support needs and to expand teachers' knowledge and skills on how to communicate effectively with and support culturally and linguistically diverse students, parents, and families. Specific goals associated with this Teacher Team "Outreach & Community Engagement" capacity-building effort included: 1) expanding teachers' knowledge and understanding of student/family home economic and social conditions and cultural backgrounds and mores; 2) developing teachers' multicultural competencies in instructionally planning for and supporting the instructional and socio-interactive support needs of culturally and linguistically diverse learners (students and family members); 3) building increased levels of relational trust between parents/families and teachers; 4) transforming/strengthening parents' and family members' beliefs and understandings regarding the multiple vital roles they can play in actively contributing to and supporting their children's education; and 5) developing teachers' commitment to family engagement as a core relational strategy for improving/advancing effective teaching and learning. School leaders focused on instructional improvement (i.e., grade-level faculty team leaders, department chairs, guidance counselors, grade-level and campus administrators) also worked together within this Micro System level to develop their own *Campus Leadership Team capacities*. Campus-based leaders at Montero ECHS focused their campus leadership team capacity-building efforts at this Micro System level on developing and expanding their skills in being able to nurture and sustain "*community-inclusive teaching, leading, and learning cultures*" within and across individual grade levels and throughout the school organization. This was accomplished during the intervention program by helping school leaders internalize a distinct "*community stewardship-centered*" *mindset* that emphasizes engaging in intentional school partnership capacity-building work through implementing carefully articulated actionable practices. These practices include: 1) encouraging multicultural stakeholder participation and building consensus; 2) creating a vibrant community of multicultural leaders; 3) developing and implementing a collaborative, shared vision of "multiculturally anchored" communal learning; 4) employing culturally sensitive school-community communication strategies; and 5) weaving together a multi-stakeholder, multi-generational fabric comprised of positive "school-home-community inclusive" partnerships and social capital support networks.

Intervention program facilitators worked intensively with an array of school community leaders at the "Meso System" level [i.e., grade-level interdisciplinary team leaders (both core content area and Hispanic heritage language teacher leaders), instructional coaches, guidance counselors, assistant principals, and the principal]. These Meso System level sessions focused on building the *Whole-School Team's "school community partnership" capacities*. Intervention program facilitators worked within these training modules to empower school education leaders and community partners to take active ownership in their collaborative roles as "team-centered school community improvement partners" and to significantly expand community stakeholders' (parents, family members, business/civic leaders, etc.) active, ongoing involvement in school community instructional improvement. During these Meso System level partnership development sessions participants were coached on how to design and implement a variety of "school community partnership" programs and activities. These Whole-School Team community partnership-building endeavors included: 1)

designing and conducting *Neighborhood Outreach meetings* – in which grade-level teams of teachers and campus administrators schedule regular monthly school-family “neighborhood outreach” instructional support meetings to connect with multiple students and families in their home environments at convenient times for parents and family members to discuss their child’s learning progress; 2) creating school-based *Family Engagement Initiatives and Activities* – both after-school and on weekends; 3) forming individual grade-level *Parental Advisory Committees* – comprised of diverse groups of parents (with varied multicultural backgrounds) of students in each grade level; 4) inviting identified parents to participate regularly (on a monthly or bi-monthly basis) as “parental advisors” in individual grade-level faculty team instructional planning meetings; and 5) inviting parents and community members (e.g., business/civic leaders, advocacy agency representatives) to serve on a school-wide *Community Partners Instructional Improvement Advocacy Board*—a board that would serve as a collaborative leadership arena for “community-wide *relational culture building*” and as a proactive catalyst for nurturing cross-cultural communal networking and cooperation among school community stakeholders (across ethnicities/cultures, socioeconomic status, education levels, etc.) in support of all students’ learning success.

Finally, at the “Macro System” level intervention program facilitators focused their community partnership-building efforts on coaching school improvement leaders working both within the individual campus environment and at the district central office [i.e., campus-based instructional leaders (grade-level interdisciplinary team leaders, instructional coaches, guidance counselors, assistant principals, and the principal) along with multiple administrative leaders in the district central office (curriculum directors, program specialists, and the assistant superintendent for secondary schools) to develop the “*District Community Partnership*” *Capacities* of the School District Team. These “School District Team” development sessions focused on: 1) building team members’ collective understandings of their important roles in the “District Community Partnership” collaborative teaming process; and on 2) substantively expanding district team members’ active involvement in school district community-wide instructional improvement. Within these training sessions, intervention program facilitators coached participants on how to work collaboratively as a district team on a number of “district community partnership-building” initiatives, including: 1) developing an inventory of local and regional district community partners (e.g., business/civic partners; community service agencies; economic assistance and family support networks; family health clinics; cultural advancement organizations); 2) forming a district-wide *Community Partners Learning Success Advisory Board* that will function as a collaborative body of multiple district community partners who are tasked with creating a “shared vision” of how to develop and implement multiple actionable strategies for creating/expanding a variety of social capital mentoring and support networks for multicultural students and their families; 3) establishing school district-wide *Applied Learning Partnership Agreements* with a variety of businesses and agencies (local/regional businesses, civic organizations, community support agencies, etc.) to provide “real-world internship experiences” for the school district’s culturally and linguistically diverse students – enabling students to obtain hands-on, professionally supervised “career-related” workplace applied learning and skill development

experiences; 4) creating a *School District Center for Community Engagement* staffed by district personnel trained in multicultural communication and instructional design who are tasked with developing/implementing a variety of multi-stakeholder engagement programs and relationship-building activities [e.g., English language skills development courses; family budgeting workshops/seminars; multicultural social clubs; community-based interactive activities (such as: cultural arts fairs, community food festivals, recreational sporting events) and the like] to provide social interactive and instruction-specific life-long learning opportunities for community members; and 5) promoting and celebrating the school district's "community-inclusive partnership building programs and initiatives" via multiple district and local/regional community "communication dissemination" outlets (the school district's internet website, online communication apps, local newspapers, radio/television district program showcasing, etc.) to enhance district visibility and to attract potential "district-community partnership" support donors.

Montero East Central High School 'Community-Inclusive' Instructional Improvement Intervention Program Results and Findings

The ICB investigative team collected and analyzed multiple process and impact data to gauge the effects of the intervention program professional development sessions on educator participants. Intervention program *process data* consisted of: 1) teachers' reactions and feedback to the various "knowledge and skills development" professional development (PD) sessions recorded on session exit tickets; 2) facilitators' notes taken during informal individual and group interviews with educator participants to solicit teachers' own perspectives regarding any changes that occurred in their pedagogical thinking and school-home partnership-building attitudes as they participated in the various PD sessions and immersive learning activities; and 3) ICB team members' observations of teachers' weekly grade-level instructional teaming meetings and interactions to determine how teachers were engaging together in integrating their newly acquired knowledge and skills learning into their overall biliteracy and school-home communications instructional planning practices. Multiple *impact data* were also collected and analyzed to gauge the overall impact of the intervention program on the high school's teaching, leading, and learning culture. Intervention implementation *impact data* included: 1) responses of all participating educators (i.e., grade-level teachers, Spanish heritage language teachers, instructional support staff, and campus and district instructional leaders) to pre- and post-evaluative Qualtrics surveys administered prior to the start of and following the completion of the intervention program; and 2) facilitator notes taken during informal "debriefing sessions" with intervention participants regarding their collective "applied learning experiences" throughout the intervention program conducted during the final two weeks of the intervention program. Principal Escobar and the ICB design team's collective analyses of these various process and impact data provided some positive evidence supporting the overall effectiveness of the multi-week intervention program in addressing Montero East Central High School's identified "multi-leveled" root-causal Problem of Professional Practice for teachers and instructional leaders [i.e., *Montero East Central High School core content teachers and other instructional leadership staff have developed entrenched deficit thinking attitudes and 'negative pedagogical mindsets' regarding the perceived motivation levels and learning potentials of our campus's large populations of economically*

disadvantaged and culturally diverse students. These ingrained mindsets are derailing teachers' and instructional leaders' efforts to create open, two-way communication pathways with parents and family members and nurture and sustain effective school-to-home partnership programs. To counteract these perceptual biases and negative pedagogical mindsets, grade-level teams of core content teachers and associated instructional leaders are in need of targeted knowledge and skills acquisition training on: 1) how to utilize culturally relevant teaching strategies in their instructional unit planning and student-learning benchmark assessment development efforts; along with 2) ongoing coaching/collegial mentoring support from the campus's Dual Language Coordinator and grade-level PLC instructional planning leaders on how to properly integrate culturally sensitive communication techniques into their overall parental communication and family outreach and support practices to better address the academic development needs of their academically at-risk and culturally diverse students.].

The intervention design team's collective analyses of the sets of process and impact data collected during the intervention program's multi-week implementation generated some discernible **Design-Based School Improvement Results and Findings** associated with the Montero East Central High School Instructional Improvement Intervention Program. Several **design research results** emerged highlighting some clear benefits to the multiple educators and instructional leaders who participated in the intervention program. A **first result** that emerged from the Montero ECHS intervention program implementation was that teachers' involvement in the "multicultural learning" and "school-home partnership-building" knowledge and skill development sessions for grade-level teacher teams resulted in teachers becoming consciously aware of and acknowledging their previously unrecognized *deficit thinking mindsets* regarding the motivation levels and learning capabilities of the linguistically and culturally diverse students in their classrooms. A **second result** that emanated from teachers' involvement in the authentic data teaming "dual language, interdisciplinary instructional unit development" *immersive learning* project activities during Week Two of the PD intervention program was that core content and Spanish heritage language teachers developed a renewed commitment to reinventing their overall instructional teaching and assessment practices to support emergent bilingual and other culturally diverse students' biliteracy interdisciplinary learning development in both English and Spanish through actively integrating *intentional collaborative co-teaching for multilingual learners* into their grade-level biliteracy, interdisciplinary instructional planning efforts. A **third result** of the intervention program implementation was that all participants involved (i.e., teachers and instructional leaders) developed new understandings and acquired expanded skills in learning how to work collaboratively with multiple school community stakeholders to design and implement a variety of culturally sensitive and community-inclusive "school-home support programs" and "school-community partnership initiatives" to expand opportunities for parents, family members, and business/civic leaders to become actively involved in instructional oversight and decision making.

The above Montero East Central High School intervention program results enabled Montero ECHS education leaders to identify some broad-based **design research findings** associated with the design and

implementation of targeted instructional improvement intervention programs in high diversity secondary school settings. A **first finding** emanating from the Montero East Central High School case study results was that change agent leaders working in high diversity school districts tasked with addressing persistent, below-standard student academic performance and low parent/family/community involvement in instructional monitoring and decision making on their campuses can successfully implement innovative “school-home support programs” and “school-community partnerships” through embracing and internalizing a multiculturally responsive and inclusivity-centered *community stewardship mentality* to inform and turbo-charge their change agent “learning improvement” practices. This kind of “community stewardship mentality” anchors change agent leaders based on individual campuses and in school district central offices in foundational principles of *multicultural awareness* and *community-centered service* that can serve to encourage participation, nurture consensus, and incentivize active involvement by multiple diverse stakeholders in “community partnership–focused” instructional improvement programs and initiatives. A **second finding** emerging from the Montero East Central High School case study results was that school organization leaders confronting sociopolitical dilemmas of instructional leadership in high diversity school districts can benefit from adopting a *design-based interventionist approach* to expanding school-community partnerships and enacting transformative, “community-inclusive” cultural change. Engaging collaboratively in processes of design-based school improvement, including multileveled data collection and analyses and focused, literature-informed intervention program development and implementation, can enable teams of education leaders—like the principal and his ICB colleagues in the Montero East Central High School case study—to substantively increase the knowledge and skills repertoire of teachers and related instructional staff through expanding and deepening their understandings and relational practices regarding how to effectively address the academic learning and socio-interactive support needs of linguistically and culturally diverse students, parents/families, and community members.

DISCUSSION

This section provides a literature-informed discussion of the new *biliteracy-centered* interdisciplinary learning opportunities for emergent bilingual students and other culturally and linguistically diverse learners and the innovative *community-inclusive* school-home partnership programs and school-community involvement initiatives that resulted from the application of the multileveled data-analytic procedures and design-based school improvement interventionist methods utilized by the change agent leaders in the Montero East Central High School case study profiled above. The section is divided into two sub-sections discussing how campus-based and district-level instructional improvement leaders can collaborate together with a diverse array of community partners to design and implement culturally responsive and community-inclusive partnership programs through: 1) embracing a *multi-leveled systems approach* to addressing sociocultural dilemmas of instructional leadership in high diversity school districts; and 2) *leveraging design-based thinking* and *design research methodologies* to find creative solutions to intractable problems of instructional improvement practice in highly diverse educational contexts.

Embracing a Multi-leveled Systems Approach to Addressing Sociocultural Dilemmas of Instructional Leadership in High Diversity School Districts

The persistent, continually widening learning performance gaps exhibited in recent years by the large contingent of emergent bilingual learners and other culturally and linguistically diverse student subgroups comprising the overall student population of Montero East Central High School in conjunction with the minimal involvement of parents/families and other community stakeholders in the school's instructional improvement efforts compelled principal Escobar to take actionable steps to address what had become an intractable dilemma situation for the overall school community. One of the most glaring *organizational systems-related* "root causes" of this dilemma situation on this high school campus has been due, to a considerable extent, to the failure of the district's English as a Second Language (ESL), Biliteracy Education (BE), and other dual-language learning programs to develop Hispanic emergent bilingual students' academic content learning proficiency in both their native language (Spanish) and in their second acquisition language (English) to a sufficient degree to enable these EB students to be able to continue to progress at a steady pace alongside their native English-speaking peers in their yearly academic development. As a result, as these EB students navigate through the middle school grades—and certainly by the time they reach high school—their overall ability to comprehend and internalize foundational academic concepts and principles across the core content areas (i.e., math, science, social studies, and language arts) become substantively diminished and the district's EB student subgroup *learning performance gap problem* becomes more and more acute with each successive year. Core content area teachers and their instructional specialist colleagues working in individual grade-level teams at the high school are then straddled with what to them appears to be the almost insurmountable challenge of having to contend with trying to design and deliver "remedial instructional support" to the EB students in their classrooms while also being assessed by campus and district supervisors on their ability to adequately prepare the school's native English-speaking students to be able to pass the state's learning performance exams in the core content areas. Teachers' lack of success over time in being able to provide remedial support to their EB learners and other culturally and linguistically diverse students along with teachers' limited success in initiating positive school-home communication links and establishing meaningful instructional support connections with the parents of these diverse learners have led Montero ECHS teachers to develop some demonstrably negative attitudes and entrenched deficit pedagogical thinking mindsets about what these teachers perceive as the "low engagement levels" and "limited learning capabilities" of their emergent bilingual/culturally diverse students.

To properly address their campus's "instructional improvement" and overall "community-inclusive instructional improvement culture-building" challenges, principal Escobar and his school leadership colleagues adopted a design-based approach to organizational problem solving through engaging together in a systematic review of instructional practices at the school that included detailed analyses of the campus's student performance data in conjunction with multiple sets of teacher interviews and informal observations of grade-level teacher team planning activities. Principal Escobar and his team's collective investigative work resulted in the development and implementation of the Montero East Central High School's ***Community-Inclusive Instructional Improvement Intervention Program***

“Implementation Plan”. A notable feature of the Montero ECHS intervention program implementation plan was the decision by Escobar and his leadership team to employ a *Multiple Systems Approach* (i.e., Micro System, Meso System, and Macro System) to facilitate organizing and operationalizing the various “professional learning sessions” and “school-home-community partnership–building strategies” they included in their Implementation Plan. Through utilizing this *multiple systems approach* to intervention program design, principal Escobar and his colleagues were able to directly involve multiple sets of educators and school community stakeholders within and across multiple levels of the campus and school district organization (i.e., grade-level core content area teachers, Hispanic heritage language teachers, instructional support staff, campus instructional leaders, school district curriculum and instructional program supervisory personnel, and most importantly: parents, family members, and business and civic leaders in the school district community) in participating together intentionally and collaboratively in the various “instructional improvement–focused learning sessions” and “school/home/community partnership–building activities” incorporated into the overall intervention program design. This multiple systems–driven intervention program design enabled Escobar and his colleagues to be successful in providing Montero ECHS teachers with focused opportunities to acquire critical new knowledge and skills on *culturally responsive pedagogy* and to internalize effective strategies on how to design and deliver *dual language interdisciplinary instructional units* to their students through involving them in “immersive, hands-on” and “biliteracy-centered” *interdisciplinary real-world applied learning projects*. In addition to these “instructional improvement–centered” professional learning components focused on helping teachers refine their own instructional planning and classroom teaching practices, the intervention program’s implementation plan also included knowledge and skills acquisition modules on *school/home/community partnership building* for educators and school leaders working within and across multiple levels of the overall school district organization. Importantly, these module components focused specifically on expanding teachers’ and instructional leaders’ collaborative teaming capacities in the areas of *inclusive school-home-community culture building* and designing and implementing creative programs and initiatives aimed at *including a diverse array of community stakeholders in campus- and district-level instructional oversight and decision making*. In retrospect, the ultimate success of the Montero East Central High School Intervention Program was found to be due to the effectiveness of Montero ECHS leaders in working proactively and intentionally with multiple sets of parents, families, and business/civic and social services agencies within the overall school district community to convince these education stakeholders of the positive dividends that could accrue to themselves and the district’s diverse students through investing time and effort in actively participating with Montero East Central High School and Guajardo-Ibarra Metropolitan School District instructional improvement leaders in co-designing and collaboratively implementing multiple innovative “school-home partnership programs” and “school-community involvement initiatives” to provide comprehensive instructional learning support to the district’s diverse learners.

The Montero East Central High School’s *Community-Inclusive* Instructional Improvement Intervention Program collective design and implementation efforts highlight the usefulness of leveraging the power of *social capital networking* to create and expand academic and social career mentoring and

advancement opportunities for youth from diverse cultures and linguistic heritages. Young people residing in the United States who have multiple diverse cultural heritages and who are growing up in culturally and linguistically diverse—and, in many cases, economically disadvantaged—home environments often do not have access to the same kinds of information, advice, and mentoring assistance from caring adults that their native English-speaking peers enjoy. Thus, it becomes critically important for school and school district leaders to design partnership programs and collaborative initiatives with regional businesses and civic organizations to identify adults who can serve in the role of *career development mentors* to culturally and linguistically diverse “at-risk” youth. In their discussion of the challenges involved in providing meaningful “deeper learning” experiences to young people with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Monica Martinez and Dennis McGrath emphasize the critical importance of engaging community stakeholders in the active and purposeful career development and mentoring guidance of “at risk” youth. As Martinez and McGrath explain: “Whether in private elite institutions, four-year public universities, or community colleges, we have seen countless students—particularly students from predominantly low-income high schools—come to college uninterested in taking advantage of a place designed to develop the type of curiosity, self-direction, and critical thinking that will preserve and extend their own learning. We have encountered time and time again students who are complacent, who go through the motions—individually and in lockstep—consistently submitting mediocre work. ... [these students] often walk through the door severely unprepared to reach their academic and professional goals. Equally problematic for these students are the *less quantifiable contributors to success, such as social advantages and resources that open up untold opportunities* [emphasis added].” (Martinez & McGrath, 2014, pp. 182-183) One practical strategy Martinez and McGrath advocate for that school district leaders can engage in to circumvent and address the array of social disadvantages and limited educational and career-learning resource supports that diverse “at-risk” youth must contend with is to invest proactively in building *social capital networks* for diverse learners. These kinds of networks can go a long way toward developing at-risk students’ “social learning capital” through providing these young people with real-world career development mentors. These real-world mentors ideally should be successful adults with the same or similar cultural backgrounds as these youth—such as college-level and professional athletes, business entrepreneurs, radio and television personalities, etc.—who can serve as “learning guides” to these at-risk youth and inspire these students to develop their innate life-long academic and career learning potentials.

Leveraging Design-based Thinking and Design Research Methodologies to Find Creative Solutions to Intractable Problems of Instructional Improvement Practice in Highly Diverse Educational Contexts

The collective design-based instructional improvement work conducted by principal Escobar and his Inclusive Community Building (ICB) Investigative Team on the Montero East Central High School campus reported in this article provides some positive evidence supporting the usefulness of employing *design-based improvement thinking and educational design research methodologies* as practical means for addressing and solving complex problems of instructional improvement practice in real-world school contexts. The detailed *Community-Inclusive Instructional Improvement Intervention Program*

“Implementation Plan” designed by Escobar and his Montero East Central High School ICB colleagues certainly demonstrated the desirability of utilizing data-intensive investigative analyses in conjunction with multi-leveled interventionist program development efforts as practical means for confronting the kinds of entrenched “sociocultural dilemmas of instructional improvement” fueling the intractable organizational leadership problems besetting school administrators, educators, and community-based education stakeholders on this high-diversity secondary campus and, importantly, developing real-world, practical solutions to these problems of practice. In writing about the practical applicability of design-based research methodologies in educational contexts, Tjeerd Plomp emphasizes the solutions-driven characteristics of design research thinking for solving complex problems in unique school-based teaching, leading, and learning settings. In highlighting its focus on identifying practical solutions to problems of practice in educational settings, Plomp describes design research as follows: “Design research is the systematic study of designing, developing, and evaluating educational interventions (such as programs, teaching-learning strategies and materials, products and systems) as solutions for complex problems in educational practice, which also aims at advancing our knowledge about the characteristics of these interventions and the processes of designing and developing them. By its nature, design research is relevant for educational practice (and therefore also for educational policy) *as it aims to develop research-based solutions for complex problems in educational practice* [emphasis added]. The starting points for design research are educational problems for which no or only a few validated principles (‘how to do’ guidelines or heuristics) are available to structure and support the design and development activities. Informed by prior research and review of relevant literature, researchers in collaboration with practitioner’s design and develop workable and effective interventions by carefully studying successive versions (or prototypes) of interventions in their target contexts, and in doing so, they reflect on their research processes with the purpose to produce design principles.” (Plomp, 2010, p. 13)

The results and findings of the Montero East Central High School Case Study reported in this article, in particular, highlight the importance of *involving education practitioners actively* in team-centered investigative probing of the “underlying root causes” of entrenched problems of practice and in collaboratively designing and implementing “data analysis–informed” targeted interventions as a critical prerequisite for ensuring the ultimate success of design-based school improvement efforts. This active inclusion and involvement of a large cross-section of campus practitioners and school community stakeholders in the Montero East Central High School’s targeted intervention program development and implementation efforts was found to be a defining feature of the collective design-based instructional improvement work that was completed at this high school and in this high-diversity school district. This collaborative intervention effort was able to propel educators, instructional leaders, and school/home/community partners operating in this high-diversity secondary school context *to work intentionally together in new ways* to create a variety of culturally responsive and meaningful “school-home partnership programs” and “community involvement initiatives” that could: 1) foster a genuinely *inclusionary teaching, leading, and learning culture* on this high school campus and throughout the school district; and that could 2) positively support the academic learning advancement of the district’s diverse students. The central importance of actively involving practitioners in design-based school

improvement initiatives is also underscored by researchers working in the field of educational improvement science. In addition to focusing directly on developing and implementing research-based solutions to complex problems in educational contexts, researchers in the field of improvement science have identified a number of “salient characteristics” that can be seen to define educational design research—including the importance of *involving practitioners directly* in design research intervention development and implementation processes. In their view, education-based design research is: 1) *Interventionist*: the research aims at designing an intervention in a real world setting; 2) *Iterative*: the research incorporates cycles of analysis, design and development, evaluation, and revision; 3) *Involvement of practitioners*: active participation of practitioners in the various stages and activities of the research; 4) *Process oriented*: the focus is on understanding and improving interventions (a black box model of input – output measurement is avoided); 5) *Utility oriented*: the merit of a design is measured, in part, by its practicality for users in real contexts; and 6) *Theory oriented*: the design is (at least partly) based on a conceptual framework and upon theoretical propositions, whilst the systematic evaluation of consecutive prototypes of the intervention contribute to theory building.” (van den Akker et al., 2006a, p. 5)

Importantly, researchers working in the field of education-based improvement science emphasize that authentic design research thinking and execution is shaped by three overriding tenets: 1) design research is *rigorous* – for design research to be able to result in valid and reliable design principles, the research has to meet rigorous standards and apply the guiding principles for scientific research; 2) design research is *relevant* – design research aims to be relevant for educational practice (and policy). A necessary condition for this is that the researchers must have a good working knowledge of the target setting and be informed by research and development activities taking place in natural settings (or test beds); and 3) design research is *collaborative* – for design research to be relevant for educational practice, the design and development activities must be conducted *in collaboration with* [emphasis added] and not just for professionals from education practice. (McKenney et al., 2006, p. 77) The Montero East Central High School Case Study presented and discussed in this article and the successful efforts of the Montero ECHS educators and community partners in confronting and addressing the sociocultural challenges to instructional improvement present in their school community context may provide inspiration to education leaders working to address similar entrenched problems of improvement practice in other high-diversity school contexts. Instructional improvement leaders dealing with a variety of problem situations involving providing for the unique learning support needs of diverse student populations may be able to gain insights from the design techniques and practical action strategies employed by the Montero ECHS educators to find innovative ways to apply design-based methods to create and nurture authentic *culturally responsive and community-inclusive teaching, leading, and learning cultures* in their own school community contexts—“collaborative cultures” within which multiple school district education stakeholders can work together intentionally to provide effective instructional support programs and community involvement initiatives to serve their diverse learners.

CONCLUSION

The case study reported and discussed in this article showcased the difficult challenges school leaders working in high-diversity metropolitan school districts must contend with as they attempt to address the persistent and continually widening low academic performance gaps of large percentages of culturally and linguistically diverse students populating their elementary, middle/junior high, and high school classrooms. The case study examined in this article highlighted, in particular, the unique instructional support and communication difficulties teachers working in grade-level planning teams in one large high school situated in a high-diversity metropolitan school district had to contend with as they worked to establish meaningful school-home connections with the parents and families of their culturally and linguistically diverse students. Because of multiple mediating factors affecting the school's instructional climate and culture—such as: language barriers; parents' extensive job/work commitments due to economic hardships; parents' lack of understanding of the value of education and how it can open up new career opportunities for their children; along with parents' and family members' general hesitation in becoming involved in school activities due to their perceptions of what they feel are educators' negative attitudes toward and/or lack of acceptance of and responsiveness to their family's diverse cultural backgrounds—educators and instructional leaders working in these high-diversity secondary school settings can often find themselves in the position of having to grapple with seemingly intractable “sociocultural dilemmas of instructional improvement” as they attempt to respond to the unique instructional and community involvement support needs of their culturally and linguistically diverse students and their parents/families.

To proactively address the particular “sociocultural instructional improvement dilemma challenges” in the high school case study examined in this article, the principal and his instructional improvement team colleagues leveraged the power of *design-based school improvement analytic thinking* in conjunction with *innovative intervention program design strategies* to develop and implement a targeted “community-inclusive instructional improvement intervention program” on their campus. This intervention program focused specifically on: 1) revitalizing grade-level teachers' biliteracy-centered interdisciplinary unit planning and teaching practices; and 2) jumpstarting innovative *school-home partnership-building* efforts and creating/nurturing multiple stakeholder-inclusive *school community involvement initiatives* to connect in meaningful, culturally responsive ways with the parents and families of the school's large populations of immigrant/emergent bilingual and other culturally and linguistically diverse students and to collaboratively engage with multiple local and regional businesses/civic organizations and social service agencies. The results and findings of the Montero East Central High School Case Study reported in this article provide some positive evidence that change agent leaders working in high-diversity schools and school districts tasked with addressing the persistent, below-standard academic performance of culturally and linguistically diverse student groups and associated low parent/family/community involvement in instructional monitoring and decision making on their campuses and within their districts can successfully implement innovative “school-home partnership programs” and “school community involvement initiatives” through adopting a multi-culturally responsive and inclusivity-centered *community stewardship mentality* to inform and turbocharge their

change agent “learning improvement” practices. Educators and instructional improvement leaders working in similar high-diversity schools and school districts in other states and regions may find the design-based school improvement methods and inclusive community–building strategies employed in the present case study potentially adaptable and applicable in their school district settings as they seek to nurture “multi-culturally responsive and community-inclusive” *instructional support cultures* in their own districts to effectively serve the unique instructional improvement and community involvement support needs of the diverse students, parents/families, and other education stakeholders living and working in their school district communities.

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