

Background. In August 2013, 108 new bilingual teachers in Austin Independent School District (AISD) attended the New Bilingual Teacher Institute (NBTI). Staff in the Department of Research and Evaluation administered a follow-up online survey to these new teachers in March 2014. The purpose of the survey was to have them reflect on how well NBTI prepared them and its usefulness. This survey also asked novice teachers about their professional development experiences, and support and resources received in their first year of teaching. This report summarizes the findings of the survey items.

Respondents. A total of 56 teachers (response rate of 52%; $N = 108$) from 35 elementary schools participated in the survey. All participants were full-time teachers. The majority (75%) of the participants were dual language teachers, and 14% ($n = 8$) taught in a late-exit bilingual education classroom.

NBTI training experiences. Overall, the survey respondents gave high ratings on the usefulness of NBTI sessions. The majority believed the NBTI training provided “good” or “excellent” preparation for them to use various instructional methods (82%), to set up a dual language classroom based on the Gómez & Gómez (1999) model (85%), to provide targeted language instruction (78%), and to use curriculum documents to plan instruction (77%) (Table 1).

Table 1. Percentages of Respondents Who Rated “Good Preparation” or “Excellent Preparation”

How well NBTI Training prepared you to do the following	%	<i>n</i>
Set up a dual language classroom based on the Gómez and Gómez model	85%	41
Use or incorporate a variety of instructional methods	82%	41
Provide targeted language instruction to advance students’ language proficiency	78%	39
Use curriculum documents to plan instruction	77%	38

Source. New Bilingual Training Institute Follow-Up Survey Spring 2014

Most of the respondents also reported positive ratings on the usefulness of NBTI training sessions (Table 2), especially in sessions or topics such as “top 10 required elements of a dual language classroom environment” (93%) and “depth and complexity in the bilingual classroom” (91%).

Bilingual Education in AISD

The Department of English Language Learners (ELLs) in AISD provides support to schools to ensure that ELLs acquire English proficiency and the cognitive and academic skills required to meet or exceed grade level standards, while building capacity in their native languages. The department is implementing the dual language model in elementary schools and the English as second language (ESL) model in secondary schools and some elementary grade levels.

Major Findings

- ✓ More than 75% of the survey respondents believed that NBTI training offered good to excellent preparation
- ✓ More than 75% of the survey respondents believed that NBTI training sessions were useful or very useful
- ✓ The majority of respondents reported having a mentor and a coach in the past year
- ✓ The majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they had received sufficient resources or support
- ✓ More than 75% respondents said they would return next year to teach at the same school in the same grade level and subject

Table 2. Percentages of Respondents Who Rated Training Sessions as “Useful” or “Very Useful”

Please rate the usefulness of the following NBTI training sessions:	%	<i>n</i>
Top 10 required elements of a dual language classroom environment	93%	41
Depth and complexity in the bilingual classroom	91%	41
Sheltered instruction	89%	42
Discern between the need for a linguistic accommodation rather than special education services	86%	38
English language proficiency standards	85%	39
Nuts and bolts of compliance and assessment	82%	36
Bilingual special education student	77%	33

Source. New Bilingual Training Institute Follow-Up Survey Spring 2014

Responding to an open-ended question, teachers (*n* = 32) mentioned the following areas for which NBTI training could have prepared them better as bilingual/dual language teachers:

- Peer observation (*n* = 3; e.g., “observation of other pre-K classrooms that are using the dual language program, while the class is in session”)
- Hands-on information and materials (*n* = 2)
- Classroom setting (*n* = 2; e.g., “the elements of the classroom setting” and “requirements, schedules”)
- Bilingual special education (*n* = 2)
- Introduce math or science concepts to Spanish-speaking students (*n* = 2)

To another open-ended question, teachers (*n* = 32) reported that they had implemented at least one thing that they learned from the NBTI training. Of these, the top five things they implemented were as follows:

- Classroom environment or classroom setting (*n* = 5)
- Word walls (*n* = 5)
- Gómez and Gómez model, including classroom preparation (*n* = 3)
- Vocabulary cards, glossaries, and labels (*n* = 3)
- Student-generated alphabets (*n* = 3)

When asked about what time of year they would have preferred for the NBTI training, more than half (*n* = 29) preferred August. A quarter (*n* = 12) would rather have had the training earlier, in June or July, and 13% (*n* = 6) chose September as their preferred time for this training.

Professional development activities. Because staff in the Department of ELLs were interested in learning more about training sessions that novice teachers attended this year, the NBTI survey asked teachers whether they attended the professional development sessions that department provided and how useful they thought these session were. Half of the respondents (*n* = 23) reported that they participated in professional development activities at least monthly. When asked to rate the usefulness of the professional development sessions they attended, the majority rated most of the training sessions as “useful” or “very useful.” All respondents rated the following sessions as “useful” or “very useful”: Introduction to Biliteracy and Bridging, Dual Language Training Institute, and Sheltered Instruction in the Classroom (Table 3). However, a large number of respondents (ranging from 22 to 32) reported that they did not attend some of the professional development sessions. Seven respondents indicated that they did not attend any of the sessions. Respondents also indicated that they would like to receive additional professional development activities and support in the following areas: bilingual learning centers/research centers, language acquisition, and sheltered instruction.

Table 3. Percentages of Respondents Who Rated Professional Development Sessions as “Useful” or “Very Useful”

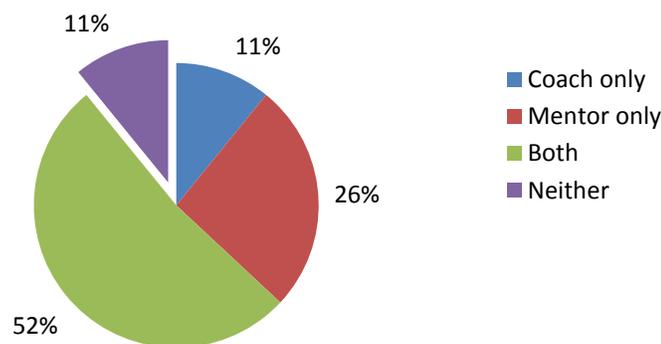
	Useful or very useful *	Did not attend
Dual Language Training Institute	100% (n = 30)	29% (n = 12)
Dual Language Support Session: Introduction to Biliteracy & Bridging Sheltered Instruction in the Classroom	100% (n = 18)	55% (n = 22)
Dual Language Webinar Series	100% (n = 12)	69% (n = 27)
Dual Language Support Session: The Bridge-Strategies for Contrastive Analysis of Program Language	93% (n = 14)	63% (n = 26)
5-day Academy	91% (n = 10)	73% (n = 29)
Reading A-Z (Reading A-Z, RAZ-Kids, and Vocabulary A-Z)	91% (n = 10)	73% (n = 29)
3-day English as a Second Language Academy	89% (n = 8)	78% (n = 31)
Language Proficient Assessment System (LPAS) Lab-Refresher Training for New and Experienced Language Proficient Assessment Committee (LPAC) Chairs	89% (n = 8)	77% (n = 30)
LPAS Open Lab for LPAC Chairs	88% (n = 7)	80% (n = 32)
Dual Language Support Session: Sparkito and Comprendo Lesson Plan Workshop	88% (n = 15)	59% (n = 24)
Linguistic Instructional Accommodations Guide (LIAG) Training	67% (n = 8)	69% (n = 27)

Source. New Bilingual Teacher Institute Follow-Up Survey Spring 2014

* Percentages of useful or very useful are based only on the respondents who attended each training session.

Mentoring and coaching. Teachers were asked whether they were mentored by an experienced teacher or coached by an instructional coach or specialist from their school in the first year of teaching. The majority of the respondents reported that they were mentored by an experienced teacher or coached by an instructional coach or specialist from their campuses this past year (Figure 1). However, more than 10% of the respondents (n = 5) reported that they did not have a mentor or a coach in the first year of their teaching.

Figure 1. Percentages of Respondents Who Reported Having a Mentor or a Coach This Year

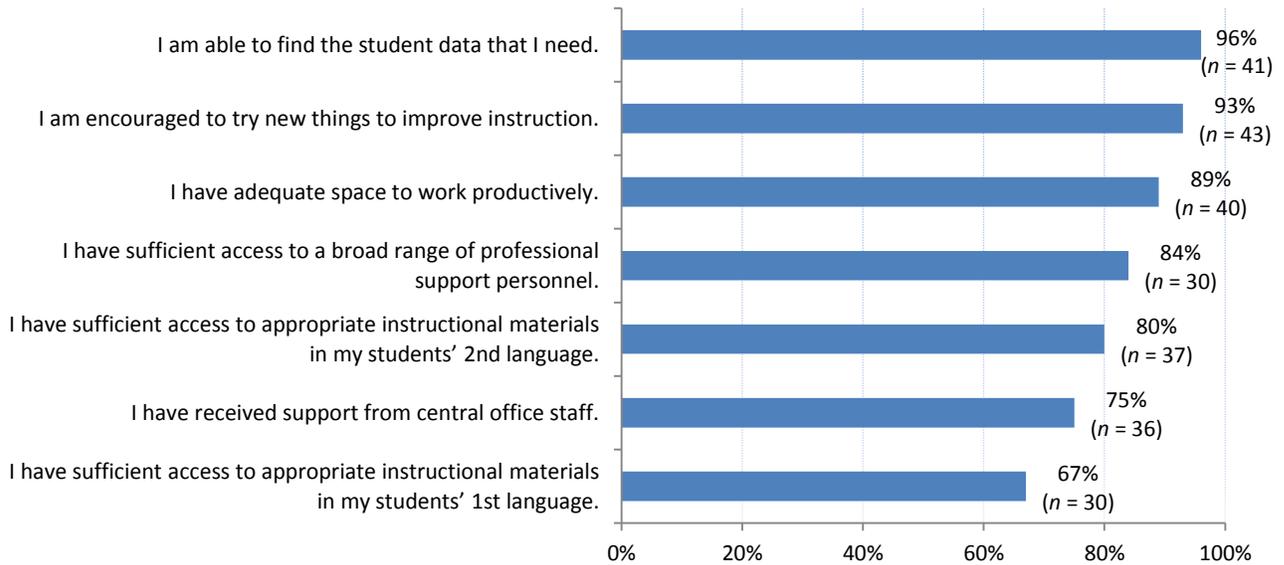


Source. New Bilingual Teacher Institute Follow-Up Survey 2014

Resources and support. For the purpose of finding out whether the new teachers had received sufficient resources and support in the past year, the survey asked participants to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with statements about students’ data access, work space, materials, and professional support. The

majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were able to find the student data they needed (96%), were encouraged to try new things to improve instruction (93%), and had adequate space to work productively (89%). Relatively fewer respondents believed that they had sufficient access to appropriate instructional materials in their students’ first language (67%) (Figure 2).

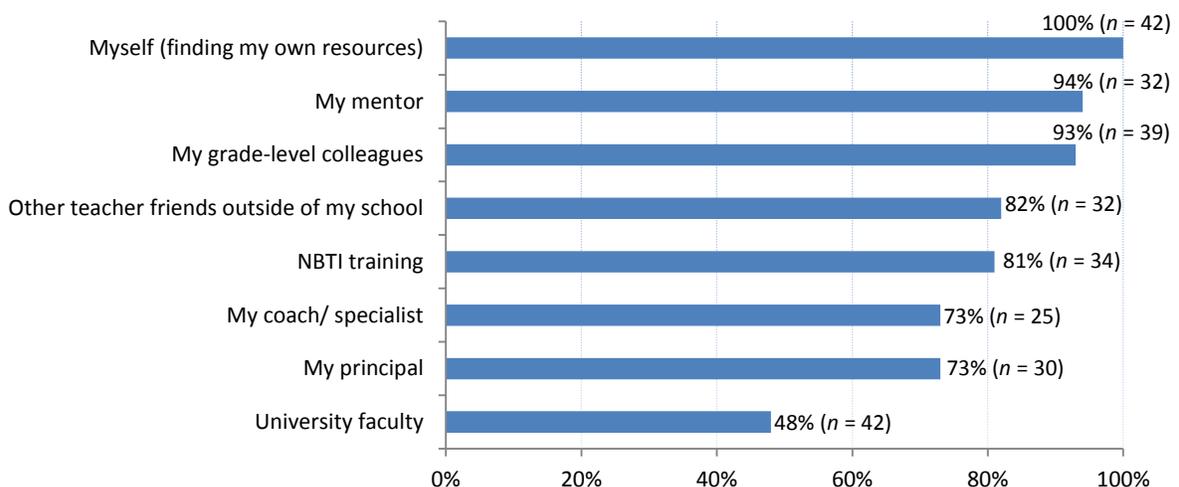
Figure 2. Percentages of Respondents Who “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” With Statements About Resources and Support



Source. New Bilingual Teacher Institute Follow-Up Survey Spring 2014

Participants were also asked to rate the degree of influence of several factors in improving their teaching skills in the past year. All respondents believed that they themselves or their own resources had been influential or very influential. They also thought that their mentors and colleagues were influential. Eighty-one percent of the respondents rated NBTI training as “influential” or “very influential” (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Percentages of Respondents Who Rated Factors in Improving Their Teaching Skills as “Influential” or “Very Influential”



Source. New Bilingual Teacher Institute Follow-Up Survey Spring 2014

The survey results indicated that 84% of the respondents ($n = 37$) would return next year to teach at the same school in the same grade level and subject. Only a few participants were not sure about their plan for next year or intended to leave their current school. When asked for suggestions about additional support they would like to receive to make their first year of teaching easier, several teachers mentioned having more resources, more support in technology, more parent support, support from seasoned teachers, and a Gómez and Gómez model specialist. For example, one teacher stated, “I think it would be really helpful to have a Gomez & Gomez dual language specialist on my campus who could guide us as to how to implement the model more accurately.” Another teacher mentioned “additional training to use the eCST¹ documentation and to navigate the district website.”

Reference.

Gómez, L., & Gómez, R. (1999). Dual language enrichment education. Edinburg, TX: Dual Language Training Institute.

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¹ eCST is the district’s electronic Child Study Team data system.