An Assets- and Equity-Based Approach to Multilingualism, Multiliteracy, and Multiculturalism: Harnessing the Development of a District-Wide Strategy to Foster Learning, Shift Mindsets, and Seed System-Level Change

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An Assets- and Equity-Based Approach to Multilingualism, Multiliteracy, and Multiculturalism:

Harnessing the Development of a District-Wide Strategy To Foster Learning, Shift Mindsets, and Seed System-Level Change

Doctor of Education Leadership (Ed.L.D.)
Capstone

Submitted by
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To the Harvard Graduate School of Education
in partial fulfillment of the graduation requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education Leadership.

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Dedication

For my family, my earliest and most influential teachers, ever-supportive cheerleaders and all-around amazing people.

And for all of the staff, students, families, and community members who make Chelsea Public Schools the richly diverse and wonderfully dynamic learning community that it is. It was an honor and a privilege to spend this year in your midst.
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Abstract

In the United States and globally, there is growing recognition of the extensive cognitive, emotional, social, and economic benefits of multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism. At the same time, a double standard persists in the way that society—and many education systems—view language development: monolingual English speakers who learn a second language are typically seen as high achievers, lauded for developing a valuable 21st-Century skill. However, students who are in the midst of learning English as a second language (while simultaneously studying core academic content in English, in most cases) are often viewed through a deficit-clouded lens—labeled as “Limited English Proficient,” over-classified as learning-disabled, and/or insufficiently challenged by educators who may mistake still-emerging English capacity for a lack of overall academic ability. Meanwhile, many school systems do not capitalize on students’ linguistic and cultural heritage to support learning and academic achievement, which not only contributes to language loss among children, but also represents a significant missed opportunity to increase student engagement; build a positive sense of social, cultural, and academic identity; and improve learning outcomes.

This strategic project aimed to challenge this deficit-minded orientation by infusing a school system with an assets- and equity-based perspective on students’ linguistic and cultural heritage. Over the course of nine months, I worked with a dynamic and dedicated team of educators in Chelsea Public Schools to develop a district-wide strategy for cultivating, valuing, and formally recognizing multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism. Chelsea is a vibrant gateway city just north of Boston, Massachusetts that has long served as the first home to recently arrived immigrants from around the world. Today, approximately 85% of students in the district are Hispanic and over 25% are classified as English Language Learners.

In this capstone, I describe and reflect on our effort to develop and win support for a strategy grounded in research, best practice, and local context; to lay the foundation for its successful implementation; and to harness this process to begin establishing the mindsets, structures, and educational approaches that would contribute to a strong assets-oriented culture throughout the system and ultimately, we hoped, improvements in student outcomes.
Introduction

Language is the blood of the soul into which thoughts run and out of which they grow.

-Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr.

Language is imbued with power. The power to enable understanding and self-expression. The power to facilitate relationships. The power to shape and convey cultural identity. The power to communicate belonging—or exclusion. The power to influence, to undermine, and to dominate. In the context of U.S. education systems, especially in the current era of high-stakes tests and tough accountability measures, language has the power to drive or impede academic achievement, as well as to aid in the engagement or marginalization of families and communities. And, in the increasingly globalized world of the 21st Century, language—particularly the command of two or more languages—has the power to open up new avenues to employment, economic success, and collaborative problem-solving around complex transnational challenges, from conflict to climate change.

How can an education system harness this awesome power of language to promote equity of opportunity and achievement for all students? How can a school district tap into a families’ rich linguistic and cultural heritage as an asset, rather than neglecting it or treating it as an obstacle to be overcome? And how can schools promote multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism as a way to engage and embolden students, close nagging learning and performance gaps, and nurture increased understanding and partnership between educators, students, families, and the surrounding community? These meaty questions lay at the heart of the project described below, in

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1 Throughout this capstone, I use the term multilingualism to refer to the ability to understand and speak two or more languages, multiliteracy to describe the ability to read and write in two or more languages, and
which I worked with a team of educators in Chelsea Public Schools (CPS)—a dynamic and diverse urban district just north of Boston, Massachusetts—to develop a comprehensive strategy for cultivating and valuing multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism throughout the school system.

**Chelsea Public Schools**

Chelsea is a historic gateway city, serving as the first home to people coming from around the world, including Jewish, Irish, and Italian immigrants who arrived more than a century ago and, in recent decades, people from Puerto Rico, Southeast Asia, the Balkans, and parts of Africa. Today, the majority of new community members hail from Central America, sometimes fleeing conflict and gang violence. The rich diversity that characterizes the city is reflected in the roughly 6,500 students that attend Chelsea Public Schools. Approximately 85% of the district’s students self-identify as Hispanic (of varying national origins), 6% are African American, 7% are White, and 2% are of other races and ethnicities (MA DESE, 2016c). Almost 80% of Chelsea’s students speak a first language other than English (families in the district speak 35 different languages, but most speak Spanish), 27% are categorized as English Learners (MA DESE 2016c; CPS internal data). Roughly 20% are immigrants, with about 50% of whom arrived in the United States within the past 2 years (and 2/3 within the past 3 years) (CPS internal data). A full 70% of students are categorized by the state as “high needs” and more than half as low-income (MA DESE, 2016a). CPS, identified as a Level 3 district by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, is engaged in a continuous and dogged fight to improve schools, raise standardized test scores, and close

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*multiculturalism* to describe awareness and understanding of different cultures as well as the ability to empathize and engage successfully with people from more than one culture.
opportunity and achievement gaps. This is a particularly significant undertaking in light of the many social, political, and economic challenges facing students and families, as well as the fiscal constraints that limit the district’s ability to fully fund all that it would like to do.

Superintendent Mary Bourque has been at the helm of CPS since 2011. Dr. Bourque has dedicated her career to improving urban education, viewing her work through the lens of social justice. Her determination to ensure that every child has the opportunity to learn and excel is reflected in the district’s mission: “To welcome and educate ALL students and families” (Chelsea Public Schools, 2016, p.1). Dr. Bourque is insistent that CPS will not only educate all students, but that it will also honor their differences, as reflected in one of the district’s core values: “the diversity of our school community (race, ethnicity, ability and socioeconomic status) is a source of strength and a resource for the education of all learners” (Chelsea Public Schools, 2016, p. 1). For Dr. Bourque, it is especially critical that CPS demonstrate that it values students’ language heritage as an asset, as evidenced by the district’s strategic vision (2016 – 2021), which includes commitments to introduce a biliteracy credential at the high school and to expand Spanish-English “Dual Language Immersion” programming from the elementary to the middle school level (Chelsea Public Schools, 2016; M. Bourque, personal communication, July 22, 2016).

My Strategic Project

When I arrived for work in Chelsea City Hall in the summer of 2016, Dr. Bourque asked me to lead several projects, including the two language-related initiatives identified

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2 Level 1 is the highest possible ranking and level 5 is the lowest, indicating a failing district and one that is subject to state takeover.
in the newly-adopted strategic vision. To orient myself before fully diving into these assignments, I set off on a learning tour, conducting a series of initial interviews to grow my understanding of CPS and the work that was already being done in the realm of language learning and multilingualism, in particular. These conversations led me to the conclusion that, while the strategic initiatives identified in the new vision were important and exciting to many people, the district did not yet seem to have a unified sense of purpose or a common plan that drove its existing and anticipated multilingualism and multiliteracy activities. So I proposed to Dr. Bourque that we expand my strategic project to encompass the development of a comprehensive district-wide strategy that could serve as a blueprint for this work. As the project evolved, we added “multiculturalism” as the third key element of the strategy that we were building, recognizing that it was as important as promoting multilingualism and multiliteracy, but often neglected or unnamed.

I was energized by the idea of working on this project. Prior to entering the Ed.L.D. program, I had spent twenty years leading projects and organizations in the international humanitarian aid and development sector, primarily in communities affected by conflict and poverty. This included a number of initiatives that focused on youth development, civic engagement, and global citizenship. My years of international experience had convinced me of the value of multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism, but in no way did I consider myself an expert on these subjects. And I was a novice when it came to the programs, laws, and debates related to the education of English Language Learners, who I suspected would be central to Chelsea’s strategy, given that they made up roughly a quarter of the district’s student population. And so, in
July of 2016, I suddenly found myself staring up at a very steep learning curve, which not only stood between me and the completion of a strategy, but also having enough knowledge and credibility to garner support for this project along the way.

As I took a deep dive into the research, issues, and debates surrounding multilingualism and multiliteracy, I found myself frequently bumping up against an apparent double standard related to young people’s language development. Whereas monolingual English students are encouraged to learn a foreign language and celebrated for their excellence when they succeed, students whose first language is something other than English may be branded “Limited English Proficient” and pushed to quickly attain academic fluency in this new language while, more often than not, their home language is largely neglected. In other words, when monolingual English speakers learn a second language, they are viewed as having an excellent asset that will serve them well in the future, whereas English Learners are often seen through a deficit-oriented lens, labeled for what they cannot do in English, rather than being recognized for what is, in fact, emerging bilingualism and an impressive ability to navigate challenging academic content in a language they are still learning (Beykont, 2002; Brisk, 2006).

Promoting multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism as valuable assets for all students, no matter what their linguistic heritage or cultural background—and no matter what their standardized test scores, early literacy skills, or special education status—would be central to the work that we undertook in developing Chelsea’s strategy. The question was, how could we design a process that would help move us in this direction, and how could we ensure that the resulting strategy not only laid the foundation for this kind of systemic change, but also won the support of key leaders and stakeholders
throughout the district and had a high likelihood of actually being implemented?

Furthermore, how might we begin to nurture the kind of mindsets and culture we wanted to see during the strategy development process, itself?

**The Capstone**

This capstone documents the project that I designed and led—together with several experienced and committed colleagues from across CPS—over the course of approximately nine months. It also serves as a summary of, and reflection on, my learning journey as I navigated new content and an unfamiliar professional context. The project had six major components: (1) problem definition, (2) learning, (3) consultation, (4) strategy development, (5) securing approval and support, and (6) implementation planning. I will describe these elements in more detail in the Project Description below, followed by a summary of the project’s results and an analysis of why it unfolded in the way it did. I will also explore the implications of this analysis for my own development as a leader, for Chelsea Public Schools, and for the education sector, more broadly.

Before turning to this in-depth discussion of the project, I will undertake an examination of some of the key pieces of research and best practice that informed my approach to the strategy development process in the section titled “Research and Knowledge for Action.”

In discussing the project, I draw on several frameworks and theories that guided my thinking as I designed the process and which serve as anchors for my analysis and reflection. In particular, I rely heavily on the Public Education Leadership Project’s (PELP) Problem-Solving Approach to Designing and Implementing a Strategy to Improve Performance, which helps school districts examine and create a plan to address a critical problem of practice; Mark Moore’s “Strategic Triangle,” which provides a useful
frame for creating a successful “public value proposition,” such as the project we undertook in Chelsea; and Ron Heifetz’s Adaptive Leadership Theory, which offers guidance on how to engage people in processes that require shifts in mindset, behavior, and/or culture (Childress & Marietta, 2010; Heifetz and Linsky, 2002; Moore, 1995).

In reflecting on the project’s results, I conclude that creating a strategy to promote multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism is valuable as a means for bringing coherence to a school system’s efforts related to language and culture. But merely creating a strategy is not sufficient; it does not guarantee that a system will change or that positive outcomes will result for students. In particular, the development of a strategy does not ensure that a school system will adopt an approach to language and culture that is assets- and equity-based—such an orientation is achieved only through an intentional effort to ground the process in the values of the school system and its educators. Furthermore, I argue that the strategy development effort should not only be focused on producing a strong deliverable. The process, itself, presents an exciting opportunity to unearth underlying issues and cultural challenges in the school system that may be impeding the shift to treating language and culture as assets. This effort can also be harnessed to support learning at multiple levels and to spark shifts in the mindset, culture, and practice of the system and people within it.

Ultimately, to be embraced and positioned for success over the long term, the strategy that is produced must directly address the core business of the district (teaching and learning), with the aim of helping schools to improve student outcomes, close achievement gaps, and respond to the very real accountability pressures that weigh on them; otherwise, the strategy is likely to be seen as a “nice-to-have” that never rises to the
level of a priority or, if it is put into play, is unlikely to be implemented with fidelity. Key stakeholders and decision-makers must be brought along throughout the strategy development process (not just once it has been created), not only to ensure that the final product is approved, but also to increase the likelihood that there is sufficient ownership throughout the district to sustain and expand upon changes in the system that were initiated during the strategy development process.

Finally, I conclude that learning was a key ingredient in both the strategy development process and in the product that resulted. A focus on learning enabled me to develop the technical knowledge and credibility I needed to lead the project, and it allowed others in the district to support the creation of the strategy and accompanying implementation plans. Supporting people’s learning was also central to initiating the technical and adaptive change that would be required to move the district to a truly assets-based approach to multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism. And learning was critical to helping people understand the value that would be created by the proposed strategy and to garnering sufficient support to move it forward.

**Review of Knowledge for Action**

The Review of Knowledge for Action provides an overview of some of the most critical elements of research and best practice that informed this project. I begin with an examination of the importance of taking a learning stance as a leader, particularly as a leader of strategy development—and a synopsis of some of the findings from my initial research process that were particularly relevant to the creation of Chelsea’s strategy. Next, I provide a brief look at some of the other key theories and frameworks that informed my thinking about how to organize the strategy development process, from
problem identification to developing and winning support for a compelling value proposition to laying the foundation for cultural change within the system.

Learning

At the end of my first semester in the Ed.L.D. program, I was asked to reflect on the many case studies that we had read about leaders in the education, business, and non-profit sectors and form my own theory of entrepreneurial leadership. This exercise helped me to zero in on my belief in the importance of the leader serving as “Learner in Chief” (Warren, 2014). In other words, of the leaders I have studied through course work and in my own professional experience, the most effective are those that are constantly in learning mode—seeking to understand the people around them, the context in which they operate, the content of the work they do, the nature of the organizations they lead. Particularly important, they continuously reflect on and transform themselves and adapt to their environment, while always remaining firmly tethered to their core values. But these leaders not only model learning; they also nurture the growth of people around them, encouraging a culture of learning within their organizations and effectively sharing learning with others.

The notion of “leadership for learning” is the subject of growing research and discussion in the education sector, although the meaning of this term varies depending on who is using it (Knapp, Honig, Plecki, Portin, & Copland, 2014). Knapp et al. offer up a helpful concept that they call “learning-focused leadership,” which is aimed at students, adults throughout the system, and the system as a whole:

Our frame assumes that, at its root, “learning” is both a result, demonstrable as knowledge gained or performance mastered, and process, knowable in the ways
people participate with others in learning situations. It is something that leaders aspire to support, and it is also something leaders do on a regular basis, within themselves, out of sight; with others collectively; and explicitly and publicly in their leadership roles. Finally, we assume that learning is both individual and collective, attained and demonstrated in groups and even in organizations. (p. 13)

This learning orientation is not just important in leading the ongoing work of a school system, but also in guiding the development of strategy. Curtis and City (2009) argue that one of the things that differentiates effective strategy development from more traditional strategic planning (and, they emphasize, a plan that is actually likely to be brought to life rather than being consigned to a shelf) is that the process sparks innovation by drawing on research and best practice, identifying new ways to speed up improvement within the system.

If I was going to be effective in helping CPS develop a strategy around multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism, then—and if I was going to lead others in learning about related concepts and ultimately help the system, itself, learn—I would first have to establish my own foundation of understanding about the context, issues, and lessons learned from research and best practice that should inform our strategy development. The following is a brief overview of some of the key issues and ideas I uncovered in that process.

**The Cross-Currents of Language, Race, Culture, and Politics in Education.**

In 2014, U.S. public schools passed an important milestone, marking the first time in the country’s history when the majority of public school students were children of color; within the next thirty years, the population of the country as a whole is expected to follow
suit (Carr, 2016). In the two decades leading up to that historic point in 2014, the number of Hispanic children in public schools doubled and now accounts for more than a quarter of all students (Carr; US ED/ NCES 2016). This increased diversity is evident not only in the race and ethnicity of students, but also in their language backgrounds: nationally, approximately one in five students now speaks a language other than English at home, with Spanish being the most common (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2016). Roughly 4.5 million students (more than 9%) in U.S. public schools are classified as English Language Learners (ELLs); Spanish is the first language of more than 70% of these students (Soto, Hooker, and Batalova, 2015).

The growing diversity of students in U.S. schools—and of the country as a whole—could be a source of strength and possibility. An accumulation of research supports the notion that socially diverse groups are more creative, innovative, and better at solving complex problems than homogenous groups (Phillips, 2014). However, the 2016 presidential election shone a spotlight on the ways in which the country’s shifting demographics can be regarded by some people as a negative or threatening trend. This campaign cycle also blew the lid off a strong anti-immigrant sentiment that had been simmering just under the surface of regular public discourse and revealed particular fury about the presence of undocumented immigrants in the country, as well as the “sanctuary cities” that provide them refuge (of which Chelsea is one). Donald Trump successfully exploited this anger. In the process, he took aim not only at immigrants, but also at the rising prevalence of Spanish in the country and of politicians’ efforts to court Latino voters in their mother tongue. At one televised event, he scolded Republican opponent Jeb Bush for speaking Spanish on the campaign trail: “‘This is a country,’ Trump said
standing at the lectern next to Bush, ‘where we speak English, not Spanish.’ The crowd at the Ronald Reagan presidential library applauded” (Goldmacher, 2016, Paragraphs 1-2).

While some of the rhetoric that surfaced in the 2016 election cycle was especially caustic, the thorny politics surrounding immigration, language, and culture were hardly new. Nor was the sentiment expressed by Trump that English should be the language of the land. In recent years, an organized “English-only” movement has gained traction, at least in part as a reaction to the promotion of bilingual education approaches that became popular in the 1960s and 70s, as well as the 1975 adoption of an amendment to the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that required election officials to provide a bilingual ballot in certain situations (King, 1997). In 1981, Senator S.I. Hayakawa of California made a failed attempt to pass a constitutional amendment that would have made English the official language of the United States (King). While the amendment stalled, this initiative sparked a subsequent campaign that has resulted in the adoption of varying forms of English-only laws across the country (31 states had adopted such statutes as of 2014, with several more considering similar legislation in the years since) (Grovum, 2014).

As with so many other social and cultural issues in U.S. society, the struggle over language regularly plays out in public school systems. An especially contentious and persistent question is that of how to educate English Language Learners, and particularly whether it is better to fully immerse these students in English, to provide them with bilingual education opportunities where they continue to use their home language only to the extent necessary to acquire English, or to actively encourage them to cultivate literacy in their home language in parallel to their study of English.
Beginning in 1998, a well-orchestrated campaign initiated by Silicon Valley multi-millionaire and aspiring politician, Ron Unz, led to a series of overwhelming victories for the English immersion approach (Crawford, 2000; Mongeau, 2016; Smardon, 2011). Unz and his allies argued that bilingual education was failing English learners—impeding their growth in English, slowing their academic achievement, and exacerbating achievement gaps. He supported three successful ballot measures—California’s Proposition 227, Arizona’s Proposition 203, and Massachusetts’ Question 2, passed in 1998, 2000, and 2002, respectively—which mandated schools to educate English learners through “Sheltered English Immersion” or “SEI,” effectively doing away with bilingual education in most schools. The SEI requirement meant that instruction of ELLs had to be in English, with only minimal use of students’ native language allowed. The laws also stipulated that students were to be moved out of SEI classes and into mainstream classrooms as quickly as possible, normally within one year of starting SEI. Furthermore, these laws carried the threat of potential legal action against educators and schools that failed to conform, creating a chilling effect among many teachers and administrators who felt intimidated into toeing the line. However, parents were given the option of signing a waiver and opting their children out of SEI, or delaying their children’s integration into a mainstream English classroom. Some school districts and communities exploited this flexibility in the law to continue educating English learners in the ways they felt were best for their students (G. Grieci, personal communication, October 12, 2016; Mongeau, 2016). In Massachusetts, the law contains a specific provision that allows for the implementation of two-way bilingual immersion programs, which aim to combine a balanced number of dominant English speakers and
native speakers of a “partner” language (most often Spanish) in classes where academic content is taught alternately in each of the two languages (Finnegan, S., 2016; MA DESE, 2016b).

Recently, the pendulum has begun to swing away from the English-only approach, with voters undoing Proposition 227 in California in November 2016 through Proposition 58, a measure that allows schools and families to choose from a variety of pathways for ELLs (Ulloa, 2016). In Massachusetts, Question 2 is likely on its way to being dismantled by legislation currently under consideration in the state legislature (P. Hardy, personal communication, October 14, 2016 and February 1, 2017). In Arizona, Proposition 203 remains in effect after a federal appeals court upheld the state’s right to require students to study English at least four hours a day in a sheltered immersion setting (Ryman, 2013).

The Benefits of Multilingualism, Multiliteracy, and Multiculturalism. As political battles about language have played out in polling places, legislatures, and court rooms, research continues to mount that supports the value of learning two or more languages. While many researchers and educators used to assume that learning more than one language at once would confuse children and diminish their English skills, a 1960s study of French-speaking and bilingual French-English children in Canada by Peal and Lambert challenged this notion by demonstrating that bilingual children generally outperformed their peers on tests; a number of subsequent studies have continued to reinforce these findings (Adesope, Lavin, Thompson, & Ungerleider, 2010; Bialystok, Craik, & Luk, 2012).
In addition to evidence that encouraging first language development helps children learn English, there is also a growing body of research demonstrating that bilingualism has a wide range of cognitive benefits, including fostering creative thinking, problem-solving, and cognitive flexibility, among many others (Adesope, et al., 2010; MA DESE, 2016b). In a meta-analysis of 63 studies of bilingualism, Adesope et al. concluded that bilingualism generated a meaningful effect on the executive control of children, which is critical to their academic achievement and ultimately their success in life (Adesope, et al., 2010; Bialystok, Craik, and Luk, 2012).

The research also indicates that, the earlier children learn two languages, the better. Bialystok et al. (2012) found that babies that are exposed to two languages at home from infancy accrue immediate advantages over their peers who are exposed to only one language; infants are able to discriminate between their two languages and have enhanced control over their attention, leading to the ability to distinguish facial expressions more quickly than other babies. These cognitive advantages of bilingualism appear strongest for those people who attain greater proficiency in both languages and who use their two languages most often (Hamayan, Genessee, & Cloud, 2013).

Proficiency in two or more languages also offers social and emotional advantages. For language-minority children, maintaining one’s home language is a way to support positive identity development and continued connection to the family and culture of origin (Beykont, 2000; MA DESE, 2016b). At the same time, learning a second language opens a window into another culture, generating opportunities to develop cross-cultural understanding and empathy (Bamford & Mizokawa, 1989).
In this ever-more diverse society and increasingly interconnected world, the ability to communicate and work effectively with people across cultures is not just an asset, but an important life skill. There is growing recognition among businesspeople, political leaders, educators, and many parents that encouraging young people to become multilingual, multiliterate, and multiculturally competent is an important aspect of preparing them for success in the 21st Century. Gandara and Acevedo (2016) contend that language learning will be the key to business success in the 21st Century in the way that technology was critical in the 20th century, as evidenced by research indicating that employers in all sectors prefer to hire multilingual workers. The Partnership for a New American Economy (2016) reports that demand for bilingual workers in Massachusetts doubled over the five-year period from 2010 to 2015, with Chinese speakers most sought-after and Spanish speakers close behind. The U.S. Department of Education’s “Framework for Developing Cultural and Global Competencies to Advance Equity and Excellence from Early Learning to Careers,” which I was involved in developing in 2016, names proficiency in at least two languages as a key indicator of global and cultural competence.

The burgeoning “Seal of Biliteracy” movement is another illustration of the growing recognition of the value of multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism. The Seal incentivizes and celebrates students who have gained proficiency in two or more languages before graduating from high school. As of 2016, 22 states and the District of Columbia had adopted a seal, with legislation under consideration in four more states (including Massachusetts) and with many districts implementing a biliteracy credential of their own (Dual Language Schools, 2017).
While there are clear long-term benefits of multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism for all students, the advantages for students from immigrant families and English Learners are especially powerful. Gandara and Acevedo (2016) observe that several recent studies have found that the children of immigrants who achieve proficiency in both English and their home language demonstrate higher rates of college entrance and completion than their peers who do not become fully literate in their home language. Similarly, students who achieve literacy in both languages also have improved employment and economic opportunity, resulting in higher annual incomes.

Problem Definition and Analysis

In order to make the move from learning to strategy development, the process must be grounded in the work of the district, beginning with a close examination of the particular challenges and opportunities that are present in the system. The Public Education Leadership Project (PELP) at Harvard University has developed a comprehensive problem-solving approach to assist school districts in developing improvement strategies. According to PELP, as illustrated in Figure 1 below, the first and most important step in this process is to clearly articulate the problem to be solved and then, from there, to dig deeper into the challenge to identify its root causes (Childress & Marietta, 2010).
Having facilitated this approach for two urban districts at the PELP Summer Leadership Institute—and having worked on “live” cases for other school districts through the Ed.L.D. program—I have learned that defining the problem to be addressed is more complicated than one might anticipate. Leaders often assume that everyone on their team has a common understanding of the challenge at hand, but, once people are invited to articulate the problem as they see it, different perspectives and formulations tend to emerge. Another trend I have observed is that people are inclined to jump to a solution before clearly defining the problem, or even to embed their preferred solution in their problem statement. Childress and Marietta warn that the failure to fully grapple with the problem definition and analysis is likely to lead to a poorly constructed theory of action about how to move forward.
Curtis and City (2009) observe that the problem analysis phase of strategy development is important not just for the outcome, but for the process, itself: “The point is not just to arrive at an actionable place, but also to have conversations along the way that build understanding and shared ownership of the problem or opportunity, which in turn will make action more likely to happen with some success” (p. 80). My experience of facilitating the “root cause analysis” exercise at the PELP Summer Institute reinforced this idea—an open discussion of the challenges at hand helps to engage people in figuring out how to address them.

**Winning Support for a Strong Value Proposition**

Mark Moore’s (1995) Strategic Triangle provides a helpful way of ensuring that, in designing a strategy development effort, both the process and product contribute to the likelihood of the strategy being approved and implemented. Moore, an expert in public management and leadership, recognized that, while businesses had a clear definition of the value they were trying to create (in the form of profits for owners or shareholders), it was less obvious that public entities were able to articulate what value they were producing for their stakeholders. And so he developed a framework (Figure 2) to help guide the thinking and planning of organizations that were generating various forms of “public value” or

![Figure 2. The Strategic Triangle](image)

(Adapted from Moore and Khagram, 2004, p.3)
“public good.” Moore contends that, in order to achieve success, public sector leaders need to pay careful attention to all three elements of the Strategic Triangle:

(1) articulating a clear value proposition that demonstrates why the proposed initiative or plan is going to benefit the public and why it is worthy of investing limited resources;

(2) fully planning for all required operational capabilities needed to successfully implement the proposed initiative (e.g., staffing, management, space, technical capacity, funding, etc.); and

(3) establishing the legitimacy of the proposed plan and securing the support of key players in the “authorizing environment,” which could include political leaders, government managers, employees, voters, taxpayers, partner organizations, and others.

The Value Proposition for Chelsea. As described above, the benefits of multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism for students and society are well-documented. However, to make a compelling case that cultivating these attributes should take priority in a school district where there are countless competing demands is bound to require a particularly strong value proposition—all the more so in a context like Chelsea, which educates a student population in need of many different supports and which bears the weight of significant state and federal accountability pressures on a daily basis. To be most convincing with the district’s authorizers, then, the strategy would need to help advance on-going improvement efforts.

Curtis and City (2009) observe that school systems that succeed in improving on measures of student achievement are those that maintain a constant focus on the central business of learning and teaching. Therefore, they argue, strategies for improving schools should focus on this center, or the “instructional core,” which is constituted by teachers,
students, and content and, especially important, the interactions between the three. This emphasis on tying improvement strategies to the instructional core is consistent with the PELP Problem-Solving Approach, as well (Childress and Marietta, 2010).

So, how might Chelsea’s strategy for multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism address the instructional core and get at the heart of the district’s improvement efforts? There is a significant body of research that suggests that actively cultivating the first-language literacy of students whose mother tongue is not English improves their ability to learn English and that, at the same time, allowing them to access academic content in their first language enables them to advance their overall learning and growth, at the same time they are picking up English (MA DESE, 2016b; Valentino & Reardon, 2014; Collier and Thomas, 2014). There are numerous models of instruction that make at least some room for use of students’ first language. Especially promising, though, is the potential of Dual Language Immersion programming to improve student achievement and outcomes. The Massachusetts Association of Bilingual Educators (MABE) describes dual language programs as “a form of bilingual education in which students are taught literacy and content (academic subjects like math, science, English/language arts, reading, and social sciences) in two languages” (2017, para 1.)

Decades of research and best practice point to the profound advantages that accrue for students that participate in high-quality DLI programs (Collier & Thomas, 2014; Valentino & Reardon, 2014). However, two recent studies have generated a whole new level of excitement in the field due to the more rigorous nature of their research designs. First, a 2014 quasi-experimental study by Valentino and Reardon from the Stanford Graduate School of Education examined the long-term outcomes in both English
Language Arts (ELA) and math for English Learners educated through four different approaches at the elementary school level:

- **Transitional bilingual**, which uses students’ first language only as a bridge to help them in learning English, with the primary goal being to transition students to a mainstream classroom;

- **Developmental bilingual**, which provides intentional support to students to help them maintain their first language as they learn English;

- **Dual Language Immersion**, which places ELLs in the same room as dominant English speakers, with the goal being that both groups of students emerge fully proficient in both languages; and

- **English Immersion**, which puts ELLs in English-only classrooms with no use of their home language (although English as a Second Language support may be provided).

Valentino and Reardon’s findings indicate that, while there is a lag time for English learners in the early grades (i.e., their test scores on English-based ELA and math tests in the second grade are substantially lower than those of their peers who are educated using other approaches starting in Kindergarten), by the time they reach middle school, these same students score substantially higher in both ELA and math than their peers in other ELL programs. This suggests that, as long as students, parents, and schools commit to the Dual Language Immersion model throughout the elementary grades, students not only come away with the many advantages of bilingualism (or multilingualism), but may also have improved their overall level of academic performance.
A 2015 study of DLI programming in Portland Public Schools further reinforced the broad benefits of this approach, not only for English Learners, but also for dominant English speakers (Steele et al., 2015). Looking at seven cohorts of students who were randomly assigned to immersion programs at the pre-K or Kindergarten levels, the researchers found that, by grade five, these students outperformed their peers on the state’s standardized reading tests by the equivalent of seven months of learning; by the eighth grade, this advantage had increased to nine months of learning—essentially the equivalent of a school year’s worth of growth. The results with regard to math and science were less definitive, but there was, at the very least, no disadvantage in these subjects for students in immersion classes. Furthermore, the study observed that English Learners who took part in immersion programming were reclassified out of ELL status faster than their peers in the fifth and sixth grades, demonstrating the power of these programs to level the playing field for ELLs. These results offer up very exciting potential to districts such as Chelsea that are in need of ways to accelerate learning and growth for English Learners and other students.

**Addressing Operational Capacity Needs.** The experience of other school districts is instructive in anticipating the operational capacity needs that are relevant to the development of Chelsea’s strategy. Conversations with leaders of language immersion and ELL programming in several cities (New York City; Washington, DC; Oakland, California; Gwinnett County, Georgia; and Framingham, Massachusetts) particularly highlighted the challenge of recruiting and hiring sufficient numbers of bilingual teachers, especially those who are qualified to teach academic content in a second language (personal communications: Y. Vasquez Johnson, November 3, 2016; K.
Brito, October 7, 2016; K. Carter, September 22, 2016; J. Valentine, November 21, 2016; G. Grieci, October 12, 2016 and October 19, 2016). New York City has made use of extensive partnerships with universities and teacher training programs to help fill their pipeline (Y. Vasquez Johnson, personal communication, November 3, 2016). Gwinnett County encourages principals to hire with an eye to the future, trying to bring on board bilingual and dual language teachers whenever there is an opening (J. Valentine, personal communication, November 21, 2016). In addition to the imperative of carefully planning for staffing needs, these conversations with districts also illuminated the need for having robust professional development for staff, especially those teaching in dual language programs (often paid for with federal Title IIA or Title III funding); high-quality educational materials and assessments in the “target” language (the language other than English that is being cultivated); and strong support from specialists to ensure the success of children with disabilities and children with limited or no early literacy in their home language.

Building Legitimacy and Support. Moore’s (2005) Strategic Triangle focuses on the need to build up support for the value proposition among key “authorizers.” In the case of a school district, this would include the superintendent, district and school leaders, teachers and other staff, the school committee, the city manager, families of students, students, community organizations, voters, and taxpayers, among others. Given that very few people within the school system or community are likely to be up on the latest research with regard to multilingualism, multiliteracy, multiculturalism, language learning models, etc., an obvious first step in the process of building support for the value proposition is to increase people’s understanding of these issues through presentations,
meetings, workshops, distribution of materials, and other means. Furthermore, engaging them in the planning process along the way may help to generate enthusiasm and prevent resistance, while also gaining the benefit of a variety of stakeholder perspectives.

It is likely, though, that winning the support of some people may not be as simple as delivering the good news to them about the benefits of gaining proficiency in more than one language. What may be required is a deeper and more expansive shift in the mindset of individuals—and perhaps even a change in the culture of the system. Acclaimed leadership researcher and teacher Ron Heifetz (1994) contends that “the hardest and most valuable task of leadership may be advancing goals and designing strategy that promote adaptive work” (p. 23). Heifetz (1994) describes adaptive work as “the learning required to address conflicts in the values people hold, or to diminish the gap between the values people stand for and the reality they face. Adaptive work requires a change in values, beliefs, or behavior. The exposure and orchestration of conflict—internal contradictions—within individuals and constituencies provide the leverage for mobilizing people to learn new ways” (p. 22).

According to Heifetz, most big challenges require some combination of adaptive and technical solutions, with the latter being those that address the practical or operational issues in an organization (such as improving technical capacity or changing organizational structure); however, people tend to gravitate toward technical solutions and shy away from the adaptive work (R. Heifetz, personal communication, September 30, 2016; Heifetz & Linsky, 2002). Given the complexity and sensitivity of issues surrounding language (and related issues of race, culture and power), there are likely to
be significant adaptive challenges that need to be identified and addressed in order for a strategy related to multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism to be successful.
Theory of Action

Based on the research and best practice described above, as well as my own experience of leading teams and strategy development processes, I developed the following Theory of Action that guided the design and implementation of this project:

| If I serve as “Learner-in-Chief,” building a strong foundation for the strategy development process by educating myself and supporting the learning of others to create a common foundation of understanding regarding current research and best practice related to multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism; |
| If I incorporate time and space in the process for engaging people in a meaningful conversation about what the underlying problems and root causes are that we intend to address through the strategy; |
| If I ensure that the strategy we develop puts forward a compelling and achievable value proposition by supporting the core work and challenges of the district—particularly strengthening the instructional core and closing opportunity and achievement gaps; |
| If I help the district to build a strategy that maintains a steady focus on the principles of equity and inclusion and is rooted in the school system’s own values—particularly the value that “the diversity of our school community (race, ethnicity, ability, and socioeconomic status) is a source of strength and a resource for the education of all learners;” |
| If I support the district in addressing key technical issues (such as developing a Seal of Biliteracy, identifying staffing opportunities, and mapping out budget requirements) and lay out a plan for supporting adaptive change, particularly the shift to a culture that consistently demonstrates that it values students’ and families’ language and cultural heritage as assets; and |
| If I am intentional about cultivating understanding of and support for multilingualism and the strategy throughout the consultation and planning phases of the process, while anticipating and addressing potential points of resistance, |

THEN

We will succeed in producing a comprehensive, coherent, and compelling district-wide strategy that gains the support of the District Leadership Team, the approval of the Superintendent, and the endorsement of the School Committee.
The Strategic Project

Project Description

This project had six primary components: (1) problem definition, (2) learning, (3) consultation, (4) strategy development, (5) securing approval and support, and (6) implementation planning, all of which I will describe in more detail below. To some extent, these elements of the project represented successive phases of the process, although there was also significant overlap in the activities at each step along the way. For example, although I made a particularly big effort to advance my understanding of both the project’s content and context as rapidly as possible at the outset, my own learning and that of people across the district continued throughout the project (and hopefully will carry on long after I depart Chelsea). Similarly, although much of the implementation planning took place following the initial drafting of the strategy, we developed detailed plans for the creation of a Seal of Biliteracy in parallel to the larger strategy development process to ensure that the Seal could be piloted in 2016-17. The following timeline shows the overall arc of the process:

Figure 3. Project Timeline
I will provide a summary of each of the project components below, with a focus on key activities and especially critical junctures in the process.

**Problem Definition.** Upon my arrival in Chelsea in June 2016, Dr. Bourque asked me to lead several initiatives that had recently been established as priorities in the district’s new strategic vision. Chief among these was the creation of a credential that would recognize students who had achieved full proficiency in two languages by the time they graduated from Chelsea High School. Dr. Bourque explained that she saw this certification as a way to demonstrate that CPS values students’ linguistic heritage as an asset. She also asked me to take the lead on another initiative related to bilingualism and biliteracy: the expansion of Chelsea’s Dual Language Immersion programming from the elementary to the middle school level.

Before diving into these projects, I wanted to get a better sense of whether there were underlying problems that CPS was trying to solve by implementing these initiatives. I knew from my previous experience in the realm of global education that there were well-organized movements at the state and national levels to promote the concept of a “Seal of Biliteracy” for students, so I was confident that there would be precedents and technical resources to build upon as we developed a local Seal. And I knew that Dual Language Immersion programming was gaining traction as a successful education approach around the country, as well as being a prized program at Chelsea’s Kelly Elementary School. While I was personally very excited about both ideas, I was curious to find out if these initiatives were embraced across the school system and in the community—was there a collective sense of ownership, or were they still primarily the inspiration of Dr. Bourque at that point? Also, both the biliteracy credential and the DLI
expansion initiatives sounded like what Ron Heifetz (1994) would describe as technical solutions. In my early conversations with Dr. Bourque as I entered residency, she had mentioned that adopting the credential would require that some adaptive work be done. I wanted to know more about what she meant by this and how the technical and adaptive work might be related.

Exploring the Superintendent’s Perspective. On July 5, 2016, I interviewed Dr. Bourque with the aim of gaining a deeper understanding of her thinking. In that conversation, she described the biliteracy credential as a means of helping students take pride in their own language, culture, and history, as well as a way to send a message to families, the school system, the school committee, and the city council that CPS values students’ linguistic and cultural heritage. She talked in moving personal terms about how, as a lifelong Chelsea resident and product of Chelsea Public Schools, she could relate to the students the district served, even though she came from a very different cultural background: “I’m a first generation college goer. I grew up in a triple-decker [a typical multi-family home in the Boston area]. I know what it’s like to sit in a class in college and have no confidence in your abilities. So I guess it’s also about helping our students build that confidence in their abilities and have pride in where they came from” (M. Bourque, personal communication, July 5, 2016). When I inquired about whether she thought there was a problem with regard to perceptions of Chelsea’s students that needed to be addressed, she acknowledged that there had been times in the past where some people in the community didn’t seem to “see the beauty in the immigrant struggle” and that there might still be some people whose attitude was that “we should let them learn
English.” Dr. Bourque’s insights suggested that the adaptive work to be done likely lived at multiple levels and among different people within and around the system.

*Getting the Perspective of District and School Leaders.* After grounding myself in Dr. Bourque’s thinking, I set out to speak with several district and school leaders to get their sense of what challenges they thought we might address with these language-related initiatives. I kept these discussions relatively informal and free-flowing, using them not only to gain insight into the problems and opportunities at hand, but also to help me deepen my knowledge of the school system and surrounding context and to begin building relationships with people that I knew would be important to my work down the road, even if I was not sure just how yet. This series of conversations led me to three important conclusions:

1. There was a high degree of enthusiasm among the people I interviewed regarding the idea of promoting multilingualism and multiliteracy, around helping students to preserve and cultivate their home language skills (most often Spanish), and in finding ways to tap into students’ home language as an asset for their overall learning;

2. There were already exciting language-related programs underway in CPS, but there was not yet a strategy tying them or the proposed new initiatives together; and

3. People within the system had varied notions of what challenges needed to be addressed when it came to language and culture.

I heard people articulate four primary challenges, all of which could be categorized as adaptive issues:
(a) Several people believed that CPS could do more to encourage students to see the value in their Spanish language skills and to help them preserve and cultivate these skills; some people noted that many students who spoke Spanish at a young age progressively lost their ability to speak the language and, in most cases, never learned to read and write it;

(b) There was a perception among some that, in the words of one leader, “CPS is not always teaching to the population it serves” (namely a predominantly Hispanic student body, roughly a quarter English Learners); in other words, the system could do more to build on the language and cultural assets of students to advance their learning;

(c) Some leaders noted that they thought there were some people in the school system and some parents who feared that encouraging students to cultivate their Spanish skills would harm their English language development and perhaps their overall academic achievement; and

(d) Some people pointed to a broader concern about teachers over-simplifying and over-scaffolding lessons for their classes, perhaps due to a perception that they needed to make things easier for students who were new to the English language, new to the United States, and/or coming from very difficult circumstances (i.e., poverty and/or traumatic situations, such as families that had been separated or communities experiencing significant violence). This observation seemed to be in line with a caution that Dr. Bourque issued to staff during her back-to-school speech in August (M. Bourque, personal communication, August 29, 2016). She encouraged educators to be careful not to inadvertently lower their standards for
their students based on “misplaced compassion,” in other words, an inclination to want to make things easier for students out of a sense of caring and concern for the hardships that many students faced, an instinct that—however deeply grounded it might be in positive intention—would not ultimately help young people excel.

In addition to these issues, my early conversations across schools and departments also began to shine a light on a missed opportunity to coordinate between the programs that already existed in Chelsea to support students’ language development (particularly between the Caminos Spanish-English programs at the Kindergarten and elementary levels, as well as the world language programming at the high school level). Seemingly due to a combination of the huge demands on the leadership of each school and of the district, combined with various historic events that had led to the system evolving in a different direction, no mechanism existed for information-sharing or alignment between the schools on these issues at that stage.

Several people also pointed to a structural gap in the system that they were eager to see filled. Dual Language Immersion programming stopped at the end of elementary school, leaving students and families who wanted to continue on with this education approach no avenue for doing that. In fact, most of the students who completed the Caminos program at the Kelly School went on to attend a nearby charter school in the fifth grade (administrators had differing views on whether extending DLI into the middle school would actually succeed in retaining these families—previous attempts to expand the program to the middle school level had not succeeded in producing this result). No world or heritage language programming existed at any of the district’s three middle
schools, with the exception of a small after-school Spanish program at one middle school run by a partner organization, the impact of which was not fully clear. At the Kindergarten level, only 25 students benefitted from the Early Learning Center’s after-school Spanish enrichment program and the Kelly Elementary School had only 50 slots available each year for its DLI program. Both schools consistently had large waiting lists that reflected significant community demand for these programs, but limited turnover and the challenges of integrating students into an established DLI cohort meant that few children were ever admitted off these lists.

Based on these early findings, I came to believe that CPS would benefit from having a strategy that laid out a clear vision for how the various language-related initiatives would unfold, how they connected to one another, and how they could advance student learning by treating students’ linguistic and cultural heritage as an asset. Furthermore, there appeared to be an opportunity to specifically address the needs of English Learners. The strategy would also help Dr. Bourque and her leadership team in determining how to prioritize future investments in this area of work, given the district’s limited financial resources. And, equally important, the strategy—and the process of developing it, I believed—could become a vehicle for beginning to work on the mindset and cultural issues identified by school and district leaders as being in need of attention.

In a memo to Dr. Bourque on August 11, 2016, I made the case for expanding the scope of my project and put forward a suggested process. In a meeting on that same day, Dr. Bourque approved my proposed reformulation of the project. A subsequent Memorandum of Understanding (August 25, 2016) codified the project purpose: “to develop a comprehensive and coherent district-wide strategy for cultivating, valuing, and
formally recognizing bilingualism and biliteracy among students in Chelsea Public Schools.” I was pleased to have established this broader set of parameters for my strategic project, because I believed it was important for the district and would also be an excellent opportunity for me to lead a complex and interesting initiative. I was also conscious, though, that I was taking on a lot, given the time available and in knowing how busy other people were in the district.

In our weekly meeting on September 15th, Dr. Bourque and I made another important decision, agreeing to change the terminology we used to discuss the project; we opted for the terms multilingualism and multiliteracy over bilingualism and biliteracy. We believed that this broader formulation made clear that CPS encouraged students to learn as many languages as possible (not necessarily limiting themselves to just two) and demonstrated that CPS valued all languages (not just Spanish and English, the two dominant languages in the community). Especially critical, though, was Dr. Bourque’s concern that the word “bilingual” might have a negative impact on our efforts to win support for the strategy due to the lingering stigma and misunderstandings attached to the term “bilingual education” that had been created by the debate on and adoption of the state’s English-only law in 2002 (described above in the Review of Knowledge for Action). This was one of many moments throughout the project in which I relied on Dr. Bourque’s political savvy to help maximize the likelihood that the strategy would receive the kind of strong support we desired.

**Learning.** I knew from the outset of the project that I would need to do a significant amount of work to educate myself about multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism; about English Language Learners; and about different models of
language education, with particular attention to research and best practice on Dual Language Immersion. However, I also saw this project as an opportunity to test out a theory about entrepreneurial leadership that I had arrived at through my work in the Ed.L.D. program, namely, that a successful leader is one who serves as “Learner-in-Chief,” both modeling a continuous listening and learning approach and creating the conditions to facilitate other people’s learning, as well as that of the organization, as a whole. I regarded the strategy development process, itself, as an important opportunity to advance learning within CPS and, at the same time, saw that increased understanding as crucial to the ultimate success of the project, both by building the base of knowledge that would be necessary to create and implement a strong strategy and by generating a sense of ownership of, and support for, the plan that would be contained therein.

Personal Learning and Background Research. I spent significant time in July, August, and September reading research, speaking to academic specialists in the areas of multilingualism and dual language learning, and interviewing leaders of dual language programs in school districts in Massachusetts and around the country. This process was very much like learning a foreign language. With each passing week, I grew more confident in my knowledge, was increasingly able to ask meaningful questions about how work was being done in CPS, and had a growing vocabulary and understanding of key issues that would support my efforts to design and lead research and consultations within the district (the Review of Knowledge for Action provides highlights of my findings).

Supporting the Learning of Others. I believed that helping to build the knowledge of other people in CPS was important on multiple levels: it would help allies in the system be part of making the case for dual language learning and cultivating
multiculturalism; it would enable the people who were already working on related programming to improve and explain their work by bringing the latest research and best practice to bear; it would generate interest in the strategy, as well as informing the thinking of those people that were enlisted to help in designing it; and it would lay the foundation for adaptive work.

In my one-on-one conversations with people around the district, as well as in various presentations (discussed in more detail below), I shared key takeaways from my research effort as a way to ground discussion. Furthermore, I made a concerted effort to ensure that key people in CPS were connected to external professional networks, which I regarded as a way to increase the likelihood that the district would continue to tap into outside resources and carry on the exploration of research and best practice once I moved on from the district. Simultaneously, raising our profile outside the district might help build Chelsea’s credibility as a strong presence in the realm of multilingualism, which could potentially lead to increased support from funders, researchers, and/or technical service providers. The Assistant Superintendent agreed to use the district’s professional development budget to fund ten district and school administrators to become members in the Massachusetts Association of Bilingual Educators (MABE) and also paid for five of these leaders (including myself) to attend MABE’s Dual Language Leadership Network meeting on November 30th. In my mind, taking this group of key administrators to this event was not only important for networking and learning but was also a way to informally begin building a professional learning community within the district. Similarly, the district committed to send several educators to MABE’s annual meeting in
March—generating another opportunity for learning, networking, and internal team-building.

_In-District Research._ One of the earliest meetings during my learning journey proved to be particularly important. On August 9th, 2016, I met with Dr. Gigi Luk, an expert in multilingualism and brain development at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Not only did she give me a quick crash course on the basics of multilingualism that helped to jump-start my own learning, but she also expressed an interest in collaborating with me to support the work we were doing in Chelsea. This proved to be an especially fortuitous conversation, because I had planned to do a survey to learn about the attitudes of parents toward multilingualism and language learning, and yet I was questioning my capacity to carry out this kind of research on my own, particularly in the limited time available. By partnering with Dr. Luk and one of her doctoral students, Sarah Surrain, we were able to create a win-win situation that provided the Harvard research team with feedback that would enable them to improve their survey instrument, while at the same time delivering valuable data about parent attitudes to CPS.

Over the course of several weeks in October and November, and with the input of Dr. Bourque, Sarah Surrain and I revised Dr. Luk’s existing parent survey for use in Chelsea. Sarah then assisted me and several other CPS team members in implementing the survey with parents in three of the district’s four elementary schools in conjunction with evening parent-teacher conferences. A total of 75 parents responded online using school computers (the survey was available in both Spanish and English). In some cases, Sarah or Spanish-speaking staff members from CPS helped parents complete the survey, either because they were not confident enough with their written Spanish to complete it
themselves or because they were not comfortable in working with the format and/or the computer. Overall, the results indicated that it was important for parents that their children preserve their home language (Spanish for most), including that they learn to read and write in this language.

In addition to the survey, I also facilitated a conversation with participants in the Kelly Elementary School Site Council meeting on October 20, 2016, which was attended by approximately 45 parents, all but one of whom spoke Spanish as a first language. The overwhelming feedback from this group was that they wanted their children to cultivate their Spanish skills, including learning to read and write. However, a comment from one parent of Caminos dual language students also hinted at a potential concern that we would need to address as we considered future expansion plans for this program: that opening up Caminos to more students might threaten the program’s reputation for having a high level of academic rigor. This reinforced something that others in the district had already shared with me, which was that the Caminos program at The Kelly had a reputation for being a gifted and talented strand, somewhat isolated from the system around it but generally regarded as a source of community pride. I noted this comment with interest as another potential issue that we would have to confront down the road as we were considering making changes to the program.

In addition to gathering this data on parent perceptions, I also conducted a simple survey of faculty and staff throughout Chelsea Public Schools using Survey Monkey, with the help of the district’s data analyst. Out of the 870 people across the district that received the email, 198 completed the survey (73% of respondents were teachers or specialists and the remainder were district or school administrators, paraprofessionals, or
others). There were four key findings that were particularly interesting to me and which were important for our strategy development process:

(1) Approximately 34% of respondents described themselves as fluent in two or more languages, with roughly 75% of those people naming Spanish as their second language. This led me to wonder if there might be even more bilingual staff in the system than I was aware of and how these people might be utilizing their language skills in their jobs (if they were). While we did not have sufficient time within the scope of this project, conducting a more in-depth inventory of language and cultural capacities within the system could be a useful exercise in the future;

(2) Approximately 50% of respondents described themselves as somewhat or not very confident in their knowledge of their students’ cultural heritage (roughly 31% were confident and 10% were very confident). This suggested that there might be an important opportunity to support people within the system in increasing their cultural proficiency.

(3) Over 47% of respondents said it was a high priority for students whose first language is not English to learn to read and write in their home language. Almost 43% more named this as a moderate priority (while 10% labeled it a low priority or not a priority at all). Admittedly, this was not a scientific study—responses were purely voluntary and thus our sample was likely skewed in the direction of people that were likely to be interested in multilingualism. Nonetheless, it was interesting to see that such a large number of respondents regarded home language literacy as a priority. It
suggested that we might find a core of support for the strategy among educators beyond those centrally involved in developing it.

(4) While there was strong support for students becoming literate in their own language, there was also noteworthy concern that students who learn in Spanish (or another language) might fall behind in the development of their English skills. Nearly 15% described themselves as very concerned, approximately 24% concerned, and 27% somewhat concerned. Another 35% labeled themselves not at all concerned. These numbers indicated that it would be very important, both through the strategy process and in the work of the district going forward, that careful attention be paid to educating people about the potential benefits of students learning in two languages and to designing programs in such a way that helped ensure that students’ English development did not suffer, even as they cultivated Spanish or another language.

I shared the results of both the parent and educator surveys with the strategy Consultation Group (described below). Participants made reference to the results—particularly of the educator survey—multiple times during the group’s second meeting as we were discussing our strategic vision and objectives.

Consultation. A critical aspect of the strategy development process was to consult with people throughout the system to gain the benefit of their insights and experience and to ensure that the product reflected the realities of the district’s context. By engaging a number of other people in the process, I also hoped to build a sense of ownership in and support for the strategy as we went along, which I believed would improve the likelihood that our proposed plans would be implemented. Furthermore, by
bringing in key players (all of whom qualified as “authorizers,” in the parlance of Mark Moore’s public value theory) at an early stage, I hoped that we would be able to identify and do whatever possible to defuse possible resistance before it could grow or impede our efforts.

Steering Committee Formation. I believed that it was important to share leadership of the project with a Steering Committee for three reasons: (1) it would ensure that my thinking and the process were informed by people who knew the district far better than I did and that my ideas and assumptions were continuously being tested by others; (2) it would potentially increase the credibility of the project with some people in the district, because it would be associated with district insiders, rather than just being a side project run by a short-term resident; (3) by being involved in the project leadership, these people might be more invested in promoting the strategy along the way and seeing it through when I left—perhaps even playing a leadership role in the long-term implementation.

Based on consultations with Dr. Bourque and other district leaders, I invited three people to join the Steering Committee: the district’s ELL coordinator (previously a teacher in the system—a dominant English-speaker who is conversant in Spanish), the ELL coach for the district’s elementary schools and a twenty-year veteran of the district (who, herself, is a multilingual and multicultural immigrant from the Balkans); and the principal of the Kelly Elementary School, who is also in charge of the elementary Caminos DLI program (an immigrant from Mexico whose first language is Spanish and who is adept at using her bilingualism and biculturalism to engage the families of her students). Unfortunately, the principal did not feel that she had enough time to participate
in the Steering Committee, which meant that we lost an important opportunity to have both a school leader and a native Spanish-speaker in our group. However, given that we were likely to run into similar challenges with other people, and in the interests of keeping the process moving, I decided to move ahead with a three-person steering committee.

Our group met on four occasions between mid-September and mid-October (see Appendix A for the Steering Committee’s Scope of Work). We used these sessions to get to know one another and build a sense of team among us; share information and insights related to multilingualism, ELLs, dual language programming, and other related issues; gather input on work that I was doing between meetings; and discuss the strategy development process. However, these meetings always felt rushed and we were never able to get through all that we wanted to discuss, so I suggested that we hold an off-site retreat. The team agreed to gather at my house for a full day on October 28th.

*A Critical Meeting with Dr. Bourque.* On October 20th, a week before our Steering Committee retreat was due to take place, I had what proved to be a pivotal discussion with Dr. Bourque during our regular weekly meeting. News had materialized that the governor might need to institute mid-year budget cuts in response to lower-than-projected tax revenues. It was not yet clear what this might mean for CPS, if it happened, but the prospect of a potential decrease in funding was very concerning. Dr. Bourque emphasized the importance of making sure that I was careful not to raise expectations during the strategy process about what the district would do, and she requested that we structure the strategy in such a way that it provided her and the district leadership team with a menu of concepts from which they could choose as funding became available,
rather than writing something rigid that might be impractical to implement. Dr. Bourque also emphasized that it was most important that we deliver on creating a Seal of Biliteracy before the end of the school year.

When I returned to my desk after this meeting, I spent a few minutes reflecting on the discussion, initially feeling concerned that perhaps I was pushing the idea of a strategy when what Dr. Bourque really wanted was a Seal of Biliteracy. I wondered if maybe I had overshot with the expansion of the scope of the project or if perhaps I was at risk of losing Dr. Bourque’s support for the strategy development process.

The more I thought about this conversation in the coming hours and days, though, the more I came to regard it as breakthrough moment in my learning and in the evolution of the project. The meeting gave me a new level of understanding of the pressure Dr. Bourque faced on a daily basis as the superintendent of an urban school system and how nimble she had to be in order to respond to the continuous hurdles that popped up in front of her. I realized that this was not a moment to back away from the strategy; instead, I gained a new sense of determination to ensure that it was designed in such a way that it could (a) help CPS address its core work of improving teaching and learning; (b) identify as many opportunities as possible to create cost-neutral options for moving the work forward; and (c) make very clear that the strategy was presenting proposed options, but that the plan for implementation would ultimately depend on available resources and would be at the discretion of the superintendent. Having this meeting just prior to our Steering Committee retreat also prepared me to go into that session with clarity around expectations.
Steering Committee Retreat. On October 28th, we held an all-day, off-site retreat at my house, which proved to be an especially important moment in our work as a team (see Appendix B for the Agenda for this retreat). While we had had open discussions in our previous meetings, during this retreat we were able to achieve an even deeper level of sharing and reflection. Drawing on activities that I had used in past facilitation experiences, I designed the agenda to encourage people to talk openly about issues related to language and culture and the challenges we anticipated in developing the strategy.

I started out by framing the conversation in accordance with my discussion with Dr. Bourque the week before. I made clear that we needed to be realistic about our expectations—to be innovative and ambitious but also to understand that what ultimately got implemented would depend on funding and would be decided by Dr. Bourque. The team thanked me for providing this honest framing, noting that it helped ground the conversation we were about to have. Once this scene was set, we moved on to share our hopes and fears for the strategy, both the process of creating it and its longer-term implementation. This discussion surfaced a strong desire within the group to see the strategy lead to an expansion of the Dual Language Immersion program, not just in size, but in serving a more diverse group of learners (including newcomers, lower-level English Learners, students with limited literacy skills, and children with special education needs). The group also expressed hope that the strategy would lead to a shift in the way that people in the system see English Learners and think about their education—particularly that educators would recognize the value in using students’ first language to support their learning. The Steering Committee’s primary fears were that the strategy
would end up taking a back seat to other district priorities, given that there were so many significant demands on the system, and that the pressures of the state accountability apparatus might tamp down people’s desire to try out innovative approaches to working with English Learners and other students, for fear that student test scores might suffer as a result (for which teachers, schools, and the district would be held responsible).

I also engaged the Steering Committee in a problem analysis exercise, which I had learned through my work with the Public Education Leadership Project. First, we brainstormed a list of the challenges we observed in the district related to language and culture. Then we selected two of those issues and drilled down into them to identify their root causes. The two prioritized problems were:

- All students, particularly ELLs/newcomers, are not thriving under our current system; and
- As a district, we do not consistently draw on and cultivate our students/families’ linguistic/cultural heritage as an asset.

The goal of the retreat was not to try to solve problems or develop the strategy, but instead to surface the Steering Committee’s thinking and to plan for how we would engage a larger district-wide Consultation Group in the process. Prior to wrapping up for the day, we sketched out a possible agenda for the two upcoming meetings of the Consultation Group.

*Forming a District-Wide Consultation Group.* The purpose of the Consultation Group was to bring together key stakeholders from across the grade spans, from pre-K to adult education, and to ensure that the strategy would incorporate a variety of perspectives, reflect opportunities at each level of the system, and achieve a horizontal
and vertical alignment that supported a continuum of learning for students (see Appendices C and D for the Consultation Group Scope of Work and Member List). My hope at the outset was also that, by engaging people in defining the issues to be addressed and in developing the strategy, we would build the knowledge and capacity of people in the system, generate ownership of the product that resulted from the process, and begin to cultivate a professional learning community within the district that might be sustained after the strategy development process was over. Identifying members for this group took several weeks and evolved as I got to know people and came to better understand the work of the district. Both the Steering Committee and Dr. Bourque weighed in on the final participant list, which included 15 people (in addition to the Steering Committee members).

My original vision was that this set of people would serve as a working group that would play a central role in the development of the strategy. I hoped that we would be able to meet as many as four or five times over a period of weeks. However, the longer I was in CPS, the more I came to appreciate the profound challenge that scheduling poses in a school system. Bringing together so many exceedingly busy people—and particularly drawing teachers and school leaders away from their sites—is extremely difficult.

Bending to this reality, and based on the wise counsel of Dr. Bourque, we agreed to hold just two two-hour sessions. Furthermore, given the limits on time, the challenges of balancing the views of a large group, and my growing awareness that it could be counter-productive to create a false expectation that the whole group would have decision-making power over the final contents of the strategy, I changed the name from “Working Group” to “Consultation Group,” which more accurately reflected its advisory function.
Consultation Group Meetings. The two meetings took place a week apart, on November 29th and December 6th (see Appendices E and F for the agendas). We began the first meeting by establishing a common platform of knowledge within the group through a presentation of relevant research and a brief overview of existing language-related work in CPS, including the district’s approach to supporting ELLs. We then replicated the problem analysis exercise that had been done at the Steering Committee retreat. Because we did not have enough time to run the process from the beginning, I decided that we would use the two problem statements prioritized by the steering committee as a starting point and asked people to self-select into two groups, each discussing one of the problem statements (“All students, particularly ELLs/newcomers, are not thriving under our current system;” and “As a district, we do not consistently draw on and cultivate our students/families’ linguistic/cultural heritage as an asset.”) We encouraged people to voice disagreement if they did not think that these were issues or priorities. Both groups endorsed these statements as priority issues, and so we asked them to move forward with a root cause analysis. While both groups identified several underlying issues in the course of their conversations, everyone was very interested to see that they had arrived at a common primary root cause, which related to a perceived culture of low expectations of students. People, in turn, connected this issue to concerns around a lack of cultural proficiency and implicit bias in the system.

During the second meeting, we again began by attempting to ground ourselves in a shared foundation of knowledge, first by presenting the results of our in-district research (parent and educator surveys) and then by sharing a video about another district’s assets- and equity-oriented approach to Dual Language Immersion
programming. We went on to share a draft vision statement for the strategy document and invited people’s input. I was surprised at the group’s insistence that they wanted the vision stated in the boldest possible terms—they were adamant that the ultimate goal of CPS should be for all students to achieve proficiency in at least two languages. I wondered if this might be overreaching or if it would generate resistance from others in the district, but I was impressed by their determination to create an ambitious vision and felt it was important to defer to their decision on this. Based on the general consensus on the vision, we then moved people into two small groups to discuss people’s theory of action for how we would get to this long-term outcome and particular suggestions for priority activities. We shared out the group’s work and then explained that we would incorporate the results of this discussion into the draft strategy, which would be sent to them for input.

One-on-One Consultations. On an ongoing basis throughout the process, I continued to hold one-on-one sessions with individual people and school leadership teams. These conversations helped me build relationships, garner information to inform my work and the development of the strategy, cultivate support for the strategy as we went along (rather than waiting until the product was developed), and talk about detailed plans for implementation within different schools and programs, since this level of discussion was not feasible in the context of the larger Consultation Group meetings. Particularly important were my weekly meetings with Dr. Bourque, who provided context, feedback, and help in navigating the district, as well as an understanding of the broader political context. Ensuring that we remained on the same page throughout the process was also critical to ensuring that we did not produce a strategy that failed to align
with her larger vision for the district or that did not ultimately receive her stamp of approval.

**Strategy Development.** In early December, following the consultation meetings, I provided Dr. Bourque with a verbal update on these sessions and the concepts that we intended to include in the strategy. She was comfortable with where we were headed at that stage, so I moved forward with drafting the strategy document, taking into account not only the ideas of the Consultation Group, but also drawing on the many one-on-one conversations I had had and my broader knowledge of the district, relevant research, program design concepts, and strategic planning. I sent the draft strategy to the Steering Committee for their review and made a couple of small revisions based on their feedback. On December 21st, I sent the document on to Dr. Bourque, who had requested to look at it before we circulated it among Consultation Group members. She approved the strategy the next day, noting that she loved it and was just requesting just one small revision.

After making that change, I sent the document on to both Dr. Bourque’s cabinet and the Consultation Group on December 23rd. Of the 15 people that had participated in the Consultation Group sessions, 6 provided feedback. The responses from these people were overwhelmingly positive—for example, one veteran administrator stated, “I think that this is OUTSTANDING! Beyond good work...” Four of the six people provided a few concrete ideas about how to strengthen the document. Based on their feedback, I revised the strategy again.

**Securing Approval and Support.** As noted above, the effort to garner support for the strategy and the principles within it was on-going and was integrated into meetings with people around the district from the beginning, including through individual
discussions with principals, assistant principals, and district leaders and specialists (e.g., ELL and special education coordinators). A critical aspect of building people’s interest and support for what we were doing was to share relevant research findings on the value of multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism and dual language programming, as well as “talking up” the importance of taking an equity- and assets-based approach to the work, both to be consistent with the district’s values and to ensure that CPS was serving its students as effectively as possible. In addition to these general, on-going efforts to build buy-in, we also focused attention on cultivating support among 3 particular groups: the District Leadership Team (a group of approximately 45 people comprised of all principals, assistant principals, senior district leadership, and coordinators of academic and support functions), which would need to play a leadership role in integrating and advocating for the strategy at the school level, including with teachers and students; the School Committee, which would ultimately approve budgets and policies related to the strategy; and family members and the community, who would become key partners in implementing the strategy and in working with schools to ensure that students’ language and culture were incorporated as key assets in student’s learning.

*Initial Presentation to District Leadership Team.* In order to ensure that we did not catch district leaders off guard with what we were doing, and to lay the foundation for acceptance of the strategy in the long run, the Steering Committee did an initial presentation and discussion at the CPS monthly District Leadership Team meeting on November 2nd. This included a very brief overview of the research on the benefits of multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism, as well as a summary of the strategy development process.
After this short presentation, we asked people to talk in groups at their tables about the following three questions: What excites you about the multilingualism strategy? What concerns you? What questions do you have at this point? Each group wrote the takeaways from this discussion on a sheet that we collected. People listed many sources of excitement, such as the opportunity to frame students’ language heritage as an asset, honoring families’ culture, improving students’ literacy skills, and the potential of expanding the Caminos Dual Language Immersion program. Many of the concerns related to people’s wonderings about where resources would come from, whether CPS would find qualified people to staff the work, and how an already-busy district would take on added work. The group’s questions largely centered on the details of what would be done, who it would benefit, and how it would be integrated into existing work. All of this was feedback that we would keep in mind as we moved into the strategy development and drafting phases of the work.

*School Committee Presentations and Caminos Visit.* One of the most important groups of authorizers in any school district is the School Committee. While the strategy did not require this body’s formal approval, it was important to us that its members were aware of the process we were undertaking and that they understand the value of multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism for CPS and Chelsea students. And, while they did not have to approve the strategy, they would eventually have to approve budget items that included costs associated with implementing it. Furthermore, once we moved from the one-year pilot phase of the Seal of Biliteracy (described further below) to full adoption of this as a district-sanctioned program, Dr. Bourque would need to obtain the Committee’s approval of an associated policy statement.
On January 7th, I made a half-hour presentation to 7 out of the 9 members of the School Committee that were present at a Saturday morning retreat. I started out by putting forward what I pitched as “an amazing value proposition” for CPS: “IF CPS invests in promoting multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism, we can: improve student achievement scores, especially among English Language Learners; increase student engagement and potentially graduation rates; and provide our students with better long-term job prospects.” I went on to back up this claim with relevant research.

While I did not get into the details of the strategy at that point, I did give the Committee a brief introduction to our plans around the Seal of Biliteracy so that they would anticipate the pilot of this award in the spring. Dr. Bourque and I regarded the Seal as a tangible display of the district’s intent to value students’ language skills, which we hoped would generate pride and enthusiasm among School Committee members. At the end of this session, two committee members, both Hispanic, expressed their appreciation for this work and shared that they had been forced to learn exclusively in English as young people and had lost many of their Spanish skills as a result. One of these people had asked a question a few minutes before about the risk of bilingual education programming damaging students’ English language development. Her closing comment in support of our work gave me some optimism that perhaps we had begun to shift her thinking about dual language programming and an appropriate approach for English Learners.

At the conclusion of this presentation to the School Committee, I offered members the opportunity to visit the Caminos program at the Kelly School to see Dual
Language Immersion at work, first-hand. Of the nine committee members, two took part. Three more expressed interest but were unable to attend for scheduling reasons. After visiting multiple classrooms, the principal and I met with the two School Committee members and answered their questions about the program and dual language learning for a full thirty minutes (in fact, they were so enthusiastic and had so many good questions that we could have carried on for much longer, but we had to politely end the conversation to allow the principal to return to work). Both committee members exclaimed that Caminos was one of the most exciting things they had seen in CPS. They assured us that they would share their enthusiasm with their fellow Committee members and do what they could to support the program in the future.

An additional presentation was planned for the School Committee meeting on April 6, 2017, which would be open to the public and accessible via local cable access TV. At this point, we would present the strategy, including final plans for the Seal of Biliteracy pilot at the high school, and also take the opportunity to celebrate the 20th birthday of the Caminos program at the Kelly School. This presentation would be a further opportunity to educate, engage, and excite the School Committee, while also sharing the strategy, the Seal, and the success of Caminos with the public.

*Community Support and Engagement.* In my mind, the ideal strategy development process would have directly involved students, families, community partners, School Committee members, and other community leaders. However, I did not propose such an approach, because I realized soon after I began the project that there was already a lot of work to do to engage CPS team members, and it would be challenging enough to coordinate just this internal effort in the time available. However, we did try to
incorporate community voice into the process through the research done at the beginning of the project, and we addressed the need for family and community engagement in the strategy, itself. Prior to leaving residency, I intended to put together a plan and some materials that CPS could use with families and community members to help people understand multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism and to generate feedback on and support for the strategy, but it was not practical to do this within the strategy development phase of the project. With ELC and Kelly School staff, we also spent time in February beginning to think about how we might better engage families of children involved in the Caminos program, in particular.

*Superintendent’s Approval.* Dr. Bourque’s was the only formal approval required on the strategy, although we were clearly seeking the support of other stakeholders. She approved the draft on December 22nd. She would receive the final, slightly edited version for review and approval after the District Leadership Team was given an opportunity to provide final input at its March 1st meeting.

*District Leadership Team Strategy Review and Discussion.* On March 1st, half of the monthly two-hour District Leadership Team meeting was dedicated to discussing the draft strategy. While I had not originally planned for this in-person presentation of the strategy to the DLT, I had learned during the course of the project that people in the district did not tend to give very much feedback via email or written documents. In fact, I noticed that the Chief Academic Officer always made sure to build time into meetings that she organized to gather feedback, because she had come to understand that people would not fill out the forms she sent around afterward. We had had a similar experience in trying to get feedback on the Consultation Group meetings. People were just too busy
and had too many demands pulling them in different directions once they got back to their respective schools and offices. On the other hand, when people came together from across the district to meet, my experience was that they engaged fully in thoughtful conversation. I consulted with the Steering Committee and the Chief Academic Officer (who led the DLT meetings); all agreed that discussing the strategy in-person with the DLT was a good idea.

The ELL coordinator and I led the session. I started off with a presentation on key research findings, a summary of our process, and a reminder of how the strategy related to the district’s values and strategic vision. I then provided an overview of the strategy document, although all members of the DLT had received it three weeks prior to the meeting and had been asked to review it in advance of our discussion. An ally had pulled me aside on my way into the meeting and given me a heads-up that she had heard a couple of people saying that the strategy sounded great, but they didn’t understand why we would be doing this when the district was facing such a difficult budget year. And so I was particularly careful to address these questions during the presentation, noting the ways in which we were working within current budget parameters, emphasizing that the strategy was designed in such a way as to allow the district leadership to set priorities based on available resources, and reinforcing the importance of the strategy being integrated into the day-to-day work of the district, as opposed to being seen as a special initiative.

Following this ten-minute presentation, we asked people to talk in pre-assigned groups (created to bring together people from across the pre-K to adult learning vertical span) about three questions: “What do you like about the strategy? What concerns do you
have at this stage? And what lingering questions do you have?” People’s responses to the question of what they liked to a large extent centered on the fact that the strategy helped the district align with its core values and move towards an assets-based approach to language and culture; their concerns and questions had to do mostly with budget and capacity. Prior to moving on to the next activity, I took the time to address a particular sense of skepticism expressed by one person that doing things in a “budget-neutral way is often code for taking money from one thing and giving it to another.” I explained in detail that the budget-neutral expansion of the Caminos program was not code, but in fact meant that we had only decided to proceed with this plan once we found a way to do it using existing staff positions. My response appeared to be met with some relief, although this admittedly did not necessarily put a complete end to people’s concerns around budget.

Next, we asked the groups to reflect on how this strategy could connect to their day-to-day work. We again posed three questions: “How does the strategy connect to our core work of teaching and learning/ school improvement? How can we communicate the strategy to others throughout the school system? What can we do to keep the strategy alive and ensure its success?” Our purpose in framing the second half of the discussion in this way was to reinforce the notion that the strategy should not be seen as a side project but instead should be seen as central to the district’s core work. We intentionally placed this discussion of the strategy in the second half of the meeting, following on a review of school-level achievement data, in order to emphasize the importance of thinking about how the strategy could help improve student outcomes and school performance. Unfortunately the conversation had to be cut short due to time limitations, but people had
a rich and animated conversation at each table. A particular highlight of a few conversations seemed to be a recognition that offering students—particularly newcomers and English Learners—an opportunity to learn some core academic content in Spanish might improve their integration and learning outcomes.

At the end of the meeting, although I suspected that few people, if anyone, would take me up on it, I offered the DLT one more week to send in specific written feedback on the strategy. None was received, I suspect because people felt that they had given their feedback during the meeting and were going to move on to other pressing priorities.

**Implementation Planning.** When I first began the project, Dr. Bourque and I agreed that I would help teams within the district develop implementation plans for whichever initiatives we decided to put into motion in the first year of the strategy period. The bulk of this work took place beginning in January 2017 and was anticipated to run through April. However, some of this planning work was done in parallel with the consultation and strategy development processes. By helping to put concrete plans in place for at least some of our proposed initiatives, I hoped to ease the load on the relevant teams and increase the odds that the elements of the strategy would come to fruition.

**Seal of Biliteracy.** In parallel to the larger strategy development process, I formed a subcommittee to create plans for a new Seal of Biliteracy at the high school. After consulting with the principal, we invited two world language teachers—the department head and a teacher of Spanish for Spanish speakers—to work with me on this effort. Fortunately, through my networking with the Massachusetts Association of Bilingual Educators early in the project, I had learned that they and other partners in the Massachusetts Language Opportunity Coalition were releasing a toolkit for developing a
district-level Seal, just at the time that we were beginning our work. Over the course of three meetings and a series of emails between late October and late November, we used the toolkit as a basis for drafting our own proposal for a Seal at CHS.

As we began our discussion of how best to implement the Seal, I laid down the ground rule for the team that this had to be something that was accessible not only to Advanced Placement students, but to any student that was interested in pursuing proficiency in two languages—this was a condition that Dr. Bourque and I had agreed upon in advance. Furthermore, we were clear that the Seal would not be limited to students studying Spanish but that students who were able to demonstrate proficiency in English and any other language (e.g., French, Arabic, Amharic, etc.) would be eligible. By stating this up front, we were sure that equitable access was a pillar of the guidelines.

After these initial conversations, I met separately with the school’s registrar to discuss the technical details of how we could track students who earned the Seal to ensure they received their award and that it would be documented in their transcripts. These kinds of operational details—and the buy-in of the registrar—would be key to the success of the Seal. In mid-December, the lead teacher and I shared our proposed guidelines with the high school principal and got her input. Following this meeting I revised the guidelines and shared them out with the group, this time including Dr. Bourque, who gave her endorsement.

At this stage, I sent the guidelines to one of the leaders of the Language Learning Coalition to ensure that what we had developed was, in fact, in keeping with the toolkit. She was pleased with our product, providing only one small piece of feedback. By staying in line with their guidance, we could become an official pilot district for the
Massachusetts Seal. This would enable CPS to learn alongside other districts and would ideally influence the formation of an official Seal by the state Department of Education, which was expected to be established through legislation in the near future. Furthermore, being a member of this pilot group would raise Chelsea’s profile as a district that was demonstrating leadership in the realm of multilingualism and multiliteracy, potentially increasing the legitimacy of the Seal and our broader strategy efforts, both inside the district and with external authorizers (such as the Massachusetts Department of Education and funders).

_Dual Language Immersion._ Throughout the project period, I had a series of meetings with the leadership teams of the Early Learning Center and the Kelly Elementary School to deepen my understanding of their existing Caminos programming and to consider how we might expand these activities to reach more children. In parallel to these conversations, I was also reading research on DLI best practices and talking with other districts about their experiences. In the process, I became increasingly clear that, while we were implementing successful and popular programs at both schools, both were functioning as gifted and talented strands, with children being selected for participation in large part based on test scores that demonstrated their capacity in English and Spanish. This meant that students who were categorized as low-level ELLs and children with less developed early literacy skills were not enrolled in the program. Also, children who were identified as having special education needs in elementary school were typically moved out of the Caminos program to be put in a classroom where they would receive appropriate services, as were children who appeared to be struggling academically. At the ELC, the team had gradually shifted the program from a full DLI model integrated into
the school day to an after-school Spanish class three days a week for 25 students with relatively strong capacity in English.

There were very logical and important reasons for the programs having evolved in this way. At the ELC, the changes were a result of concerns on the part of teachers that the full DLI model might be harming some children’s English language development. At both schools, the process was built with the intention of ensuring that students who came into the program would succeed—and that those who did not appear on track to do well would be moved to a classroom where they would be sure to receive appropriate supports and might be more likely to excel.

As my understanding of these issues grew, I engaged both the school teams and district leaders in more conversations about re-fashioning the Caminos approach to be as inclusive as possible and to take greater advantage of the benefits of the DLI model for educating English Learners of all levels. This meant shifting to a lottery-based system for enrollment, but it also meant ensuring that both the technical knowledge and appropriate supports were in place—including push-in and pull-out services provided by special education, literacy, and ESL specialists—to make sure that all students could thrive and succeed in the program. Dr. Bourque was fully behind this change, and the school leadership teams agreed that it was important, too. But everyone also agreed that the support was central to ensuring that both children and teachers would feel confident and successful under the adapted model.

At the same time that we were figuring out how to evolve the existing Caminos approach, we were also continuing a conversation about how to expand to accommodate more students and how to create more of a continuum of learning from pre-K through
middle school. In a series of individual meetings with the ELC and Kelly leadership teams in December and January, we were excited to arrive at plans for adding Caminos classes in a cost-neutral way in 2017-18 by taking advantage of staff vacancies to bring dual language teachers on board. I went back to City Hall after each of these meetings and excitedly declared victory to Dr. Bourque—not only could we expand both programs in the coming year with almost no added cost, but we were also moving much faster with expansion at the Early Learning Center than we had anticipated. We would be adding both pre-K and Kindergarten classes when, as we began the whole project, we were not sure if the ELC leadership team would be interested in returning to an integrated Dual Language Model at all (I thought that, if it happened, it might be a matter of years and that it would likely only follow successful expansions at the elementary and middle school levels). I incorporated these expansion plans into the larger strategy document.

However, on February 8th, the plans for expanding at the Kelly School in the coming year hit a snag. The principal and assistant principal asked me to come in and talk with them to discuss the adaptive change that would be required to move their Caminos teachers from the current program model to a more inclusive approach. I invited the ELL coordinator to join, since by this time I had begun to bring him into more of the day-to-day project work in preparation for my transition out of the district. Once in the meeting, the Kelly leadership team raised concerns about whether or not they could provide the appropriate support to students with special education needs in an expanded Caminos program with their current staff capacity. They were thinking of delaying expansion by a year. I made a quick calculation that it would be better not to push on the issue of expansion but instead to stand firm on the plan to change the enrollment process to a
lottery in the coming year. This would still require that they use existing staff in the school to address the needs of whichever children were enrolled in Caminos (meaning that specialists who had not previously worked in the dual language setting would need to begin doing so), but it would be introducing less change into the program’s ecosystem at one time. I was trying to keep driving the change process forward and yet did not want to go too fast and, in particular, I did not want to risk the possibility that, if things did not go well, it would be blamed on the decision to open up the program to a more diverse group of learners. Following this meeting, I shared this discussion and conclusion with Dr. Bourque, who approved our decision to delay the elementary expansion but emphasized that we needed to move ahead with making access to the program more equitable and inclusive.

In the last half of February, we held two meetings that brought together the leadership of the ELC and Kelly School, as well as key district staff, to come to consensus on a new application and enrollment plan, to figure out how we would get each school the staff and supports they needed to ensure success, and to plan for future coordination between the schools, including the creation of a “Caminos department” that would meet on a monthly basis. In the first meeting, I conveyed Dr. Bourque’s message that we could delay elementary expansion but needed to proceed with the new, more inclusive enrollment process. We spent much of this meeting talking through the technical details of what the enrollment system would look like, how it would evolve as we expanded Caminos at both schools, and how it would help us build more of a continuum from pre-K through elementary school. This was the first time that these two
teams had come together in anyone’s recent memory and was seen as a great step forward in seeding future collaboration.

In the second of these meetings, I brought in the district’s special education coordinator and the elementary ELL coach (also a member of our Steering Committee) to take part so that we could further discuss how we would support diverse learners to succeed, drawing on existing resources within the district. I met with both in advance to update them on our conversations and ensure that we were on the same page and that our messaging to the group would be consistent.

Between meetings, I had spent a lot of time reflecting on what significant adaptive and technical changes we were asking people in these schools to undertake—and the leadership teams to lead through—and I remembered Ron’s teaching that it is key to acknowledge the various forms of loss that people feel when they are facing adaptive change, which tend to be at the heart of people’s resistance (and Linsky, 2002). And so I decided to address this issue directly in our meeting, noting that this was going to be a difficult process, that we had hit a point where we were facing significant technical and adaptive challenges, and that people were likely to resist, because we were fundamentally talking about changing the culture of these schools. We went on to talk about some of the specific risks and challenges involved in the shift in approach and strategies for addressing these issues. At the end of this meeting, I had arranged for a person from the American Reading Company to come in and do a presentation on their dual language materials and assessment strategies. My hope was that, by continuously providing this group with support to address their technical capacity needs, I would both ease some of their concerns about the transition and continue to build my own credibility and value as
a project leader, especially as I was in the midst of asking people to do tough adaptive work.

As we got deeper into these conversations around the change in the Caminos model, I began to feel a more urgent need to bring in outside technical experts to inform our thinking and planning, because we were getting to a level of technical discussion that was beyond my base level of knowledge and this was starting to make me nervous. I did not want to get in over my head. In some ways, even more important, I believed that recognized experts in the field might provide the added credibility and reassurance that people would need as we engaged in this process of re-thinking the program approach. The assistant superintendent agreed to take funds from the district’s professional development budget to pay for technical assistance sessions for the Caminos leadership group as well as a day-long training retreat for all Caminos staff, to be held at the end of the school year. During the second joint meeting, we agreed to focus the retreat on helping people make the transition to the new enrollment system and inclusive program approach. I then began working on plans for these sessions.

*Middle School Expansion.* In November and December I held two meetings with the Browne Middle School principal to brainstorm ideas for a possible future expansion of DLI programming there. This school is currently the home for all middle-school-level newcomers from other countries and all low-level ELLs. As a result, after several conversations with Dr. Bourque, the Steering Committee, and other district leaders, we were leaning toward the Browne as a likely home for DLI. Although we were able to sketch out a possible transition plan for piloting a DLI model there, we were not able to figure out a cost-neutral way to make the change and thus it became clear that, if this idea
were to move forward, it would likely have to wait for at least a year, given immediate budget constraints. Furthermore, in the middle of our planning process, the principal of the school announced that he would be leaving at the end of the year, further complicating our efforts to plan for a pilot there. Nonetheless, the plan for expanding Dual Language Immersion to the middle school level—a strategic priority for the district—was available and ready to be further developed when the district and new principal was on board and up to speed.

**Budgeting and Fundraising.** It became obvious early in CPS’ budgeting process for the 2017-18 fiscal year that there would not be any spare funds available to support new positions or significant new programs related to our strategy. However, in consultation with the assistant superintendent, we were able to ensure there would be some support for professional development and technical assistance in existing budgets. Meanwhile, Dr. Bourque and I agreed that in my final months of residency, I would try to identify potential sources of grant funding that might enable CPS to implement larger parts of the strategy sooner. As of February, after the governor’s budget was released, it became clear that CPS was facing an especially bad upcoming fiscal year that would likely require significant cuts throughout the system. This news was likely to increase people’s anxiety and concerns about new initiatives being added.

**Transition-Planning and Handover.** While the strategy and implementation planning sessions had generated many exciting ideas and a high degree of enthusiasm, there was a risk that much of the work would fail to move forward if we were not careful to put transition plans in place for my departure and to be sure that all were clear on who owned which pieces of work. I brought this issue to Dr. Bourque during a weekly check-
in January. She identified the assistant superintendent and the ELL coordinator as the leads for this work. Although the ELL coordinator had been centrally involved in the work as a member of the Steering Committee and the assistant superintendent had been engaged through the cabinet, the Consultation Group, and my side meetings with her, there was much information that I needed to pass on, external relationships that I needed to hand over, and work plans that needed to be developed to support them in taking these efforts forward. And so in February I began to hold more regular meetings with them and send on information to prepare all of us for my departure and long-term stewardship of the strategy.

**Results to Date**

Some of the most meaningful results of this project were byproducts of the process, itself. In other words, trying to gauge the effects of the process on people and on the system is as important as looking at the concrete products that we produced. I will summarize the evidence of these outcomes here, using the original Theory of Action as a framework, followed by an exploration of why the project evolved as it did in the Analysis section below.

**If I serve as “Learner-in-Chief,”** building a strong foundation for the strategy development process by educating myself and supporting the learning of others to create a common foundation of understanding regarding current research and best practice related to multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism;

The evidence of my own learning is, to a large extent, reflected in this capstone. As noted above, I spent significant time and effort—particularly early in the project—reading research and interviewing people from other school districts to educate myself about the issues related to the project. Key findings from this effort are described in the Research and Knowledge for Action section above. I will, therefore, focus this discussion
on some of the ways in which I was able to support other people’s learning and the learning of the system.

While I cannot be sure of where individual people’s thinking began and how it evolved from the start of the project, I was able to capture snapshots of people’s learning along the way. For example, after the two Consultation Group sessions, I sent out a survey and invited people’s feedback. A total of 8 of 15 participants responded to the questionnaire after the first session and 4 out of 15 the second time. After having gotten a relatively low response rate on the first survey, I had planned to incorporate the survey on the second meeting into the meeting, itself. However, we were running short on time at the end, and so I opted to use the end of the meeting to allow more time for discussion, knowing that this would likely mean we would get a low response rate on the survey—especially since this was our last session together and thus people had no incentive to provide feedback to improve their experience in a future meeting.

The first question on the survey was, “Did you learn something new today? If so, what?” In response, one person wrote after the first meeting, “Learned about other programs in the district that I was not familiar with (Spanish for Spanish speakers), research highlights! PS: I saw an NPR article posted on facebook last night about multilingualism.” Apparently this person had not only been exposed to new information, but had also been “awakened” enough to take notice of related content appearing in social media. After the second meeting, another person wrote, “I thought learning 2 languages at the same time for a child that is on an IEP [Individualized Education Program], would confuse the child more” (the implication being that this person now understood that it was possible for children with special education needs to learn two languages
simultaneously without doing harm). In response to the question, “Did our conversation generate any new insights for you?” one person answered, “Yes, the importance of students learning in their native tongue.”

Exposure to the research on Dual Language Immersion programming began to shape the way that people in CPS talked about their work and paved the way for a shift in the district’s approach to the Caminos program. One administrator commented, “We were doing the best we could based on the understanding we had at the time, but we didn’t know about this research—now I realize that maybe we weren’t using best practice.” In meetings with administrators at all levels, I began to hear people other than me making the case that we needed to move away from a gifted and talented approach and move toward a more inclusive model that made more room for English Learners, children with newly emerging early literacy skills, and children with special education needs.

Another result of our learning effort was that we were able to gather data on parent and educator insights to incorporate into people’s thinking about the strategy. The parent survey, school site council discussion, and educator survey all reinforced the importance of Chelsea students having the opportunity to become proficient in two languages, while at the same time highlighting some anxieties about potential negative impacts of expanding initiatives related to multilingualism and dual language learning.

If I incorporate time and space in the process for engaging people in a meaningful conversation about what the underlying problems and root causes are that we intend to address through the strategy;

In my one-on-one conversations with people around the district, I specifically invited them to talk about the challenges they believed needed to be addressed with
regard to language and culture. As described above, this enabled me to identify several problems and opportunities that seemed to resonate particularly strongly with people and helped to shape the strategy development process. At both the Steering Committee retreat and the first Consultation Group meeting, I introduced a root cause analysis exercise, which generated a very rich and open discussion in both cases. Several people expressed appreciation for this conversation and the common issues it surfaced in their post-meeting feedback, as well as the positive and constructive way in which people engaged in the discussion. One person captured it in this way in the post-meeting survey:

I learned that there among the group was more wide spread agreement than I had initially expected regarding a culture of low expectations and unconscious bias that permeates our system. I was also struck by how despite acknowledging these realities, this was not a vent session. The conversations were productive and remained focused on deepening our understanding with views towards generating realistic solutions/_steps to address identified problems. It’s no easy task to balance these elements of compassion/feeling, information, and recommendations to keep conversations focused and moving forward and, at the same time, reflective. The facilitation was excellent.

Another person commented:

I was impressed by the fact that two groups, grappling with different questions, arrived at very similar points in identifying the possible root causes. I was struck by how we were able to scratch the surface and begin to have frank discussions about uncomfortable realities. I was also excited by the very hopeful possibilities raised- the recognition of bilingualism as valuable and deserving of careful
consideration/structural changes to promote and support its development. This group is digging deeper into the mission statement of the district that is posted on the school web site- that our students’ diversity is a source of strength. What do we really mean by that? I’m looking forward to actively participating in more conversations about what this means programmatically and how it translates into practice.

As a result of these open and constructive conversations about the opportunities to address underlying cultural issues in CPS, two of the five objectives in the strategy specifically address issues related to diversity and cultural proficiency:

- Build a more diverse staff district-wide, with an emphasis on recruiting multilingual/multicultural team members and developing a strong pipeline of Dual Language Immersion teachers.

- Increase the multicultural competence of staff and enhance the cultural sensitivity and relevance of curriculum, educational materials, and programming across the district.

Dr. Bourque agreed that this effort would begin with a workshop on cultural proficiency for members of the District Leadership Team incorporated into their annual end-of-year retreat in 2017 and then likely move on to pilot something with teachers in the 2017-18 school year. This plan would be further discussed and developed between March and May, incorporated into retreat planning led by the Chief Academic Officer.

If I ensure that the strategy we develop puts forward a compelling and achievable value proposition by supporting the core work and challenges of the district—particularly strengthening the instructional core and closing opportunity and achievement gaps;
The introductory paragraphs of the strategy briefly summarize the benefits of multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism. It is in the THEN statement in the Theory of Action of the strategy that we directly addressed the value that we believed would result from investment in our vision:

THEN…

- CPS will demonstrate the strong value it places multilingualism, multiliteracy, multiculturalism, and particularly on the rich linguistic and cultural heritage of students and families in the district;
- many more students will attain proficiency in two or more languages;
- overall student engagement, learning, and achievement will improve;
- students will graduate better equipped for success in college, career, and life;
- parents will feel more engaged in and better able to support their children’s learning; and
- demand for strong pathways to multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism will increase, thereby generating more support for associated programming (p. 3).

While this vision statement represents the long-term value proposition contained in the strategy, we were also intentional about building in a number of shorter-term wins, such as the expansion of the Caminos program and the introduction of the Seal of Biliteracy. In addition to being valuable on their own, we believed these more immediate successes would help build interest in and support for the broader strategy.
If I help the district to build a strategy that maintains a steady focus on the principles of equity and inclusion and is rooted in the school system’s own values—particularly the value that “the diversity of our school community (race, ethnicity, ability, and socioeconomic status) is a source of strength and a resource for the education of all learners;”

In my presentations and throughout my conversations with people about the strategy, and in discussions specific to Dual Language Immersion programming and the Seal of Biliteracy, I regularly highlighted the CPS values statement on diversity and noted the importance of making sure that we were designing our plans in such a way that we were being true to the district’s mission of “welcoming and educating ALL students.” I focused on the need to be as inclusive as possible of students of different backgrounds, academic abilities, and special education status, and to be attentive to the needs and interests of English Learners.

In drafting the strategy, I developed a series of five guiding principles, which are intended to serve as a basis for all work implemented under the strategy (each of these principles is explained in more detail on pages 2-3 of the strategy document—see Appendix G):

- Pursue an Assets-Based Approach
- Embrace Diversity
- Insist on Inclusion
- Promote Equity
- Focus on the instructional core

My hope was that people would return to these principles on a regular basis and rely on them as a reference when meeting and planning together. Indeed, as we pursued
discussions about implementation plans for various elements of the strategy early in 2017, I regularly heard people referring to these principles.

If I support the district in addressing key technical issues (such as developing a Seal of Biliteracy, identifying staffing opportunities, and mapping out budget requirements) and lay out a plan for supporting adaptive change, particularly the shift to a culture that consistently demonstrates that it values students’ and families’ language and cultural heritage as assets;

As of the end of February, guidelines for the implementation of a Seal of Biliteracy at Chelsea High School were completed and we had identified at least 17 students who we expected to be awarded the Seal in 2017 based on the criteria we had set (see Appendix H). The guidance had been reviewed and “blessed” by a leader of the Language Opportunity Coalition, ensuring that Chelsea’s pilot of the Seal would be aligned with the work being done in other districts and thus positioning Chelsea both for potential external recognition and readying the district in the event that the State of Massachusetts officially adopted a Seal in the coming year, as was expected. The details of what form the award would take and how students would be recognized around graduation were under discussion and would be finalized in early March. Likewise, I would complete a communications plan to encourage students to pursue the Seal and generate excitement in the school, district, and community in March.

We sought to address other important technical and operational issues, as well, both in the strategy and in developing plans for implementation. For example, one of the most significant concerns in trying to expand dual language programming and support students in developing proficiency in more than one language was how to appropriately staff these efforts. We addressed this issue in Objective 2 of the strategy: “Build a more diverse staff district-wide, with an emphasis on recruiting Spanish-speaking team
members and developing a strong pipeline of dual language teachers.” Achieving this aim will be a long-term endeavor, and it will require significant added planning, partnerships, and focused leadership at the district level. However, in the meantime, there had to be ways to meet staffing needs, especially if our planned changes in the size and approach of the Caminos DLI program were to be successful.

In the fall, I explored potential options for recruiting qualified bilingual candidates. In February, I followed up with possible partners and began laying the groundwork to identify new dual language teachers for the ELC and Kelly Caminos programs, including through a possible alliance with the Lynch School of Education at Boston College as well as the Bilingual Teacher Education Program, which I had learned about through my visit to Washington, DC’s DLI programming in the fall. I would continue to assist with recruiting for these positions up to the end of my residency and would hand over the partner relationships to my CPS colleagues to ensure continued access to these pipelines of new teacher candidates.

I considered it a major victory when we were able to identify cost-neutral ways to grow the Caminos program at the ELC and the Kelly (with the exception of some small materials and professional development costs that could be covered in existing budgets). However, as the budgeting process for 2017-18 unfolded, it became clear that this would be an especially tight fiscal year and so anything that could not be covered within existing line items would not happen, unless I could identify grant funding. I carried out initial research on possible donors in February and hoped to identify likely prospects in March, ideally submitting a concept paper to at least one funder before departing Chelsea. Admittedly, though, this effort to secure additional money would need to carry
on after I left and was likely to be challenging given the significant load already being carried by everyone in the district.

If I am intentional about cultivating understanding of and support for multilingualism and the strategy throughout the consultation and planning phases of the process, while anticipating and addressing potential points of resistance;

As described above, the effort to cultivate learning and generate support for the strategy was central and on-going throughout the project, with a particular focus on key district and school leaders, as well as the School Committee. Not only did the people involved in the process express support for the strategy, but many of them expressed significant enthusiasm. For example, following the first Consultation Group meeting, when asked what excited them about the conversation that day, one person responded, “Expansion of our programming to support multilingualism. It’s a huge project, but if done well, it will really benefit our schools and community.” Another person wrote, “Building on the strengths of our students and community. This feels as though it will really come to pass.” In spite of the support that appeared to exist among people who had been engaged in the process during the strategy development period, the effort to cultivate understanding and support would need to continue and broaden significantly moving forward, to include the entire school system, as well as families, community members, and community leaders. This was reflected in the fifth objective of the strategy: “Deepen understanding throughout the district and in the community of the broad benefits of multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism.”

I did not encounter any outright resistance during the strategy development process. However, there were occasionally questions that people asked or comments people made that led me to wonder if there might be some underlying skepticism (e.g.,
“So what happens if we think a kid is struggling in the Caminos program? This isn’t going to be the right model for all kids”). My response to such questions was to provide an honest assessment of the related research as I understood it. I also made a point of ensuring that I integrated potential skeptics into the process, both so that we would be sure to hear and account for different views and potential challenges, and so that their peers who were champions for our work might help to alleviate their anxieties and inform their thinking. However, this does not mean that everyone who was engaged in the process was fully sold on everything I said or all that we had planned—or that there wouldn’t potentially be more obvious resistance at some point down the road.

THEN
We will succeed in producing a comprehensive, coherent, and compelling district-wide strategy that gains the support of the District Leadership Team, the approval of the Superintendent, and the endorsement of the School Committee.

The most tangible results of the project were that we succeeded in developing and securing Dr. Bourque’s approval of a strategy as well as a guidance document that would enable Chelsea High School to pilot a new Seal of Biliteracy in time for students graduating in June of 2017 to receive the award. The strategy is comprehensive—it addresses expansion of Dual Language Immersion programming at multiple levels, envisions the diversification of Chelsea’s educator pipeline, addresses issues of cultural proficiency and multiculturalism, puts forward the aim of improving family literacy and increasing parent engagement in children’s learning, and seeks to influence people’s understanding of the value of multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism. It also looks at the system as a whole, from pre-K to adult learning. If executed with fidelity, the strategy will create greater coherence in the way that schools and people throughout the
district approach work related to multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism, aligning work across the district and also syncing it with the district’s larger mission and values. Thus far, reviewers have found the strategy compelling, responding with enthusiastic comments (cited above). However, how others react as the strategy is rolled out to a broader audience is yet to be seen.

Analysis

In this section, I will reflect on why the project played out as it did, looking not only at successes, but also examining challenges and constraining factors. In undertaking this analysis, I will return to the frameworks that informed the Theory of Action and project design, using them to make meaning of the evidence and also considering how the frameworks, themselves—particularly used in concert with one another—helped us succeed in our effort to create an assets- and equity-based strategy for promoting multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism in CPS and, in the process, seeded the technical and adaptive change that would be needed to make this vision a reality.

Exploring the Project’s Successes. Overall, this project met—and in some ways exceeded—my expectations in terms of what we would be able to accomplish in a relatively short space of time. In looking at the evidence of results to date, I believe that my Theory of Action was a strong one, in that it shaped my leadership approach and the design of the project in ways that ultimately contributed to largely successful outcomes. There were also leadership moves that I made along the way, as well as critical influence from other leaders in the system (especially Dr. Bourque) and contextual factors that contributed to our results.
Focusing on Learning. This project lent credence to my theory that positioning myself as a “Learner in Chief” would be a successful strategy for bolstering the work of the team. Certainly, I could not have led the strategy development process had I not first given myself a rapid education in the issues at hand. I believe that my years working in the international development realm prepared me well for this experience: on many occasions, I landed in a new country—in environments that were always very complex—and had to quickly get myself up to speed on a new context and unfamiliar program content, and then be able to design a strategy to respond, sell funders on the concept, and organize a team to implement. Similarly, the numerous education-related consulting projects that I had done over the previous two years at Harvard were good training for the learning exercise I undertook for this project. It also helped that the subject matter (multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism) was already of personal interest to me and that I knew I would need to apply my learning immediately, giving my research relevance and urgency.

My support for other people’s learning was also key to the project. The time I took to distill and share some of the most relevant recent research proved especially useful and worth the effort invested. People in all roles throughout the district were extremely busy and not necessarily connected to the world of academia. They did not generally have the time or easy access to research that would enable them to find and sort through material on their own. Several people expressed appreciation for this support and access to new information, both in feedback on meetings and in conversations.

I was especially impressed by the extent to which people so readily embraced the research as a basis for rethinking their work—sometimes even when what they were
learning contradicted deeply entrenched practices and notions of what was good for children. I might have expected that people would need more time and evidence to take this new information on board. The leadership teams overseeing the Caminos Dual Language Immersion programs exemplified this openness to quickly incorporating new research, especially as they accepted evidence that many kinds of learners can thrive in the DLI model and used this information as a basis for reconsidering the Caminos program approach. I attribute some of this openness to an existing culture of learning in Chelsea Public Schools, at least among the administrators with whom I interacted regularly. This orientation was evident in practices like the summer reading exercise, where all members of the District Leadership Team would read a book related to a prioritized element of work and then discuss the contents at a retreat just prior to the start of the school year. People within the district were also accustomed to looking at and analyzing internal data in district-wide and school-level meetings and, accordingly, making adjustments in their practice to try to improve student outcomes. Dr. Bourque organized the work of the district to encourage this approach and modeled a learning stance through her own avid reading and sharing of the latest research, as well as her continuous use of data to inform her leadership.

Learning was important as a foundation not only for developing the strategy and associated implementation plans (e.g., the Seal of Biliteracy guidelines and the Caminos plan for expansion and diversification), but also for addressing the different parts of Moore’s Strategic Triangle—developing a strong value proposition, building legitimacy and support, and identifying and addressing necessary operational capabilities—and
supporting the technical and adaptive change that needed to occur in the system to realize the strategy’s vision. I will discuss these aspects of learning further below.

*Digging into the Underlying Problems.* My Theory of Action called for creating “time and space in the process for engaging people in a meaningful conversation about what the underlying problems and root causes are that we intend to address through the strategy.” Although I had identified this problem exploration and root cause analysis as important at the outset, I had to make decisions along the way about how and when to initiate those conversations. At the beginning of the project, as I did one-on-one interviews with people around the district, it was relatively easy and straight-forward to engage people in conversation about what issues they thought needed to be tackled. And I felt confident in engaging the Steering Committee in a root cause analysis, because we had already established a high degree of trust and openness with one another. I already knew this group to be highly self-reflective and willing to look at the system with a constructive eye. Where I hesitated, though, was in engaging the Consultation Group in such a direct conversation. The Steering Committee suggested that we not do the root cause analysis with the larger group, in part due to time constraints and partly out of doubt that the conversation would be productive. As a result, the original agenda for the first Consultation Group meeting did not include this activity—we had planned to move straight from a presentation of the research and current district programming to a discussion of the vision and theory of action for the strategy.

I began to doubt this decision, though, because I wondered how useful the proposed vision and objectives would be if we hadn’t ever discussed as a group what issues we were trying to tackle. This seemed to contradict my own experience in working
with school districts in PELP and elsewhere. Then, in a one-on-one meeting with a senior administrator a few days before the first Consultation Group meeting, I asked what she wanted to be sure got addressed through the strategy. She responded that the biggest issue for her was the need for greater cultural proficiency in the district, but that this was not something that she would raise in a room full of administrators, because it might make people feel defensive. It was at this moment that I decided that it was critical for me, as a relative outsider and an experienced facilitator, to create a structured environment that would allow people to surface this or other issues and that, if I didn’t, the Consultation Group might never get to the topics that were critical for building a strong strategy. So I made the independent decision to include the root cause exercise and informed my Steering Committee of my thinking. I knew that it was still possible that people would choose not to engage in the conversation at a significant level of depth, but I believed that I had to at least create the opening.

The other important decision I made was to draw on the two prioritized problem statements that the Steering Committee had come up with, rather than starting from scratch with a brainstorming exercise. Admittedly, I made this choice largely because I knew we did not have sufficient time to do the whole activity from the beginning. But I think that this move ended up allowing people more time to talk about the critical underlying issues and perhaps avoided the discomfort of someone having to be the first one to name an issue that they thought might be sensitive.

Creating the opportunity for people to have an open conversation was key, but the way that people chose to engage was equally important. Consultation Group members identified issues that could have been difficult to talk about, such as implicit bias and
limitations in cultural proficiency, but they did it in a way that was humble, constructive, and oriented toward problem-solving. It was because of people’s courage and high degree of willingness to engage in self-reflection that we were able to address these underlying issues in the strategy. Hopefully, the depth of conversation in the Consultation Group meetings will also contribute to CPS achieving the longer-term aim of the strategy development process put forward by Curtis and City (2009): to “build understanding and shared ownership of the problem or opportunity, which in turn will make action more likely to happen with some success” (p. 80). While we succeeded in building a common understanding of some of the issues, we will not really know if there is shared ownership and success in tackling the challenges until the implementation of the strategy is well underway. This may take months or years.

_Tending to the Strategic Triangle._ As I began work on this project, I drew the image of Moore’s Strategic Triangle on a flip chart and posted it on the wall next to my desk. I looked up at the diagram on a regular basis as I was trying to figure out how to design the process and as we implemented it. I would stop and ask myself, “Am I neglecting one of the points in the Triangle? Am I forgetting to bring key authorizers along with me? Am I attending to the operational issues sufficiently?” I also shared the Triangle with the Steering Committee in our second meeting so that they might also have a mental model for thinking about the various pieces of work we needed to keep in our sights if we were going to be successful. Throughout the course of the project I observed myself interacting with the three parts of the triangle to varying degrees at different times.
I think that part of the success of the project can be attributed to this effort to keep the Triangle in balance. I spent much time and thought talking with people in the system about the value that would be generated by our strategy and was careful to focus particularly on how the strategy tied to the core work of the district around learning and improvement, while also giving concrete indicators of the potential benefits to students (such as increased employability). I attended to the operational point of the Triangle by ensuring that we were addressing issues such as staffing, funding, technical support, and curriculum materials. There were also operational issues that still needed to be addressed in the last phase of my residency and after I departed Chelsea, which I will discuss further below.

Recognizing the Importance of Relationship-Building. A particular strength of this project was the amount of time and care I invested in building relationships and consulting with key authorizers, including Dr. Bourque, other district leaders, and school leaders. I focused on building individual relationships with people from the time I arrived in Chelsea and made sure to listen to people’s interests and concerns. I regarded the job of winning legitimacy and support as one that started from my first meeting with each person, rather than waiting until the strategy had been developed, which I believe would have been too late. These relationship-oriented parts of the process played to my strengths as a leader and were well within my comfort zone. What was new and somewhat surprising for me was the influence that I was able to have on people’s thinking—and their support for the work we were doing—by presenting relevant research to them during our meetings. I had anticipated greater skepticism and push-back based on people’s own experience and my relative newness to this work.
Creating a Critical Mass of Sympathetic Leaders. While I was careful to build relationships and cultivate support for the project, I was also very fortunate to enter into an environment where there were several people in key leadership positions who were already generally favorably disposed towards the objectives of the project. This included not only the assistant superintendent and chief academic officer (both of whom had backgrounds in educating English Learners), but also the ELL coordinator, with whose work my project directly intersected. It would have been understandable to me if he had been concerned about me encroaching on his work territory, but instead he embraced and supported my efforts, regarding this project as an opportunity to help advance his own ideas about how best to serve English Learners.

Cultivating the Support of the School Committee. The effort to win legitimacy and support among members of the School Committee was a place where I particularly looked to Dr. Bourque for her wisdom and guidance, because she knew the Committee and was the primary owner of these relationships, because she had many years of experience in managing this work, and because I did not want to risk doing anything that might be counter-productive to the long-term success of the strategy (or, for that matter, detrimental to the district more broadly). Our effort to engage the School Committee was carefully planned, based on Dr. Bourque’s knowledge of the group and the political context. The timing of the presentations to Committee members was intended to give them enough information at the right moments to get them interested, but without overwhelming them and without evoking unwarranted concerns. In addition to the presentations, I decided to invite the members to see the Caminos work for themselves, which ended up generating significant excitement among those in attendance and
indicated that this could be a useful approach to replicate in the future as the district continued the effort to win the School Committee’s support for this work.

Maintaining the support of Dr. Bourque, herself, throughout the project was essential to the entire enterprise. If she lost faith, the strategy would be doomed. I was conscious of this and felt a healthy amount of pressure to maintain her confidence in me and in our process. Fortunately, Dr. Bourque and I had built a positive and trusting relationship early in my residency, which served as a strong foundation for our work throughout the project period. She trusted me to guide the process and I regularly asked for her advice and insight. When she told me directly that she wanted something done in a certain way (e.g., that the strategy needed to provide her with a menu of options or that she wanted to see the draft strategy before it went to the Consultation Group for review), I knew that she had just provided me with parameters for the project that I needed to heed and I was grateful for the clear guidance and boundaries. I was also able to read when there were other, more pressing issues occupying Dr. Bourque’s mind and, whenever possible, would wait to take project-related issues to her until these periods of time had passed. Had we not had such a high-functioning relationship and such a high degree of trust and understanding, I do not believe we could have produced the results we did in the short time that was available to us.

I also knew that it was critical to deliver on creating a Seal of Biliteracy, if we were to retain Dr. Bourque’s support. This was a prioritized initiative in the district’s new strategic vision document and, indeed, the original assignment that she requested me to take on. Dr. Bourque envisioned this as the first highly visible way that CPS would breathe life into the strategy, communicating an important message to students, families,
and the community about the value of multilingualism and multiliteracy, while at the same time hopefully sparking pride and excitement in students who pursued proficiency in two languages. Delivering the Seal honored a commitment I had made to her at the beginning of my residency and hopefully would have the desired impact in terms of building support for multilingualism and multiliteracy as we rolled out the strategy.

*Rooting the Process and the Strategy in the District’s Values.* In my Theory of Action, I named the importance of grounding the strategy development work in the values of the district, with a particular focus on equity, inclusion, and diversity. As the process evolved, I grew to see this effort as critical to the whole project. We could have succeeded in developing a strategy to promote multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism without this focused effort, but we might have done it in such a way that the strategy only benefitted a small sub-set of students, thus promoting inequity instead of equity, exclusion instead of inclusion. For example, we might have perpetuated the design of the Caminos program as one that served the highest-performing students, or we might have designed a Seal of Biliteracy that only seemed to encourage Advanced Placement students to pursue the award. But by placing values front and center—and by continuously framing our work on the strategy and implementation plans in terms of the values to which the system and the educators in it already subscribed—I believe that we were able to connect with people not just intellectually, but at a gut level. We were appealing to their passion and beliefs as urban educators and we were helping them see a pathway to aligning their work to their personal values, as well as the stated mission and values of the district. These efforts drove straight to the heart of adaptive work as Heifetz (1994) defines it: “the learning required to address conflicts in the values people hold, or
to diminish the gap between the values people stand for and the reality they face” (p. 22). Whether this work will be sustained or not, we cannot be sure, but we did build into the strategy an objective (#3) that was specifically intended to foster adaptive change in the long run: “Increase the multicultural competence of staff and enhance the cultural sensitivity and relevance of curriculum, educational materials, and programming across the district.”

I believe that Dr. Bourque’s moral leadership helped create conditions that favored people’s receptiveness to a values-based strategy. She routinely reminded people in both formal and informal settings of the CPS mission—to welcome and educate ALL students and she consistently advocated for the needs and interests of Chelsea’s diverse population of learners. Her admonition that educators should not give in to “misplaced compassion” for their students but should continue to hold all students to high standards, even while showing care for them, resonated with people. This clear messaging and modeling from the top was undoubtedley helpful to this project, likely in ways that could not be directly seen or measured.

**Seeding Technical and Adaptive Change.** My Theory of Action emphasized the importance of addressing both technical and adaptive change. As noted above, we were successful in addressing a number of technical and operational issues, although much work remained to be done on this front simply due to the time available to us during the project period. Here I will focus on the adaptive work, because this is an area of the project that exceeded my expectations.

I had hoped that we would manage to incorporate at least one objective or activity into the final strategy that would directly address the mindset and cultural shifts that
would help CPS adopt a fully assets-based approach to multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism. As it turned out, not only did these issues feature prominently in the objectives that the Consultation Group discussed for the strategy, but I also saw hints of adaptive work already going on through the process, itself. I believe that this is a result of the integration of learning, problem analysis, and consultation that supported people in challenging their own assumptions, voicing and discussing issues related to the culture of the system, and reflecting on how current practice was not always aligning fully with people’s own values or those of CPS. This brings me back to recognizing the importance, discussed above, of grounding discussions in both solid research and core values—and of the power of engaging people in thinking about how to frame the problems at hand.

*Building on My Personal Experience and Capabilities.* Although I did not explicitly state it within my Theory of Action, I was testing another implicit assumption about my leadership throughout the project: that the project would be more likely to succeed and achieve its deliverables on time if (a) I displayed an attitude toward the work and the people around me that was defined by positivity, humility, and respect for the hard work that people throughout the district were doing, and (b) I did as much as possible to carry the bulk of the load of the day-to-day project work, relying on others primarily for their consultation and input on the most strategically significant conversations and work products and trying to avoid burdening them with tasks that would distract them unnecessarily from their core responsibilities (thus potentially causing them to withdraw from the project or even to begin resenting it). During my first two meetings with the Steering Committee, I emphasized that the role of the other two members was primarily to serve as thought partners and representatives of the project, but
that I would do as much of the heavy lifting as possible. I believe that this approach to the work proved successful, both in helping me to build open and trusting relationships with people around the district, and also in making sure that the project moved forward apace. At the same time, this way of leading also meant that I would have to be especially careful to build a sense of ownership among other people along the way (since they would not necessarily build it by owning deliverables) and to hand over the most critical pieces of work in the weeks leading up to the end of my residency (as was discussed in the sections on implementation- and transition-planning above).

In addition to the value of this intentionality around bringing a positive and service-oriented mindset to my work with others in the district, I also brought more than two decades of leadership experience, which I think served me well throughout my residency. There were moments during this project when the work began to feel overwhelming or particularly difficult—especially in November and December when we were trying to do pieces of research, consultation, implementation planning, and strategy development all at once, and then again in January and February as we began to tackle plans for re-envisioning the Caminos program model. But having worked in a number of very intense and stressful situations, including in conflict zones where bullets were flying or rockets and bombs were falling—and having dealt with threatening behavior from political groups such as the Taliban, Hamas, and Hezbollah—I felt very well-equipped to stay calm and maintain perspective on the challenges we faced during the course of this project. While the work was very important for students, families, and the system as a whole, no one’s life was on the line and my overall responsibility as a resident was relatively modest. Also as a result of my past experience, I had developed a strong ability
to quickly turn challenge into opportunity and a lack of patience for getting lost in perceived hardships. This, too, served me well and helped me to pivot, as needed, throughout the project.

**Exploring Gaps and Challenges in the Project.** As mentioned above, there are ways in which I would have liked to make this strategy development process broader and more inclusive. In an ideal situation, I would have preferred to have students, family, and community members involved in the creation of the strategy. However, I continue to believe that such an approach was not realistic in the amount of time available. I also think that we had our work cut out for us just in bringing people together around the district to engage in this process. So, I acknowledge this as a gap in the process but also believe that it was insurmountable under the circumstances. There will be opportunities to engage a broader swath of people over time, as the strategy is rolled out and implementation plans for specific initiatives are developed.

Another gap in the process was that we lacked participation by members of the high school leadership team in the Consultation Group sessions. We did have two high school teachers involved, which helped to bring that school’s perspective to the conversation. The decision not to have high school leaders at the table was made by the principal. I invited her to send senior representation to the meetings but acknowledged that their team was extremely busy around that time with a ten-year accreditation review, among other big events, and offered the possible alternative of connecting with the high school team on the side. She stated a preference for connecting and being updated separately.
The ELL coordinator and I held a meeting with two members of the high school leadership team on March 1st to discuss points of intersection between the strategy and the school’s work. At that point, it looked hopeful that we would manage to build a unit on Dual Language Immersion into the high school’s new education pathway, which would give students exposure to the possibility of becoming dual language teachers in the future. While it would have been preferable to have the high school leadership team engaged earlier in the process, this “work-around” reflected our ability to be responsive to the realities of the school system and to adapt to the pressures that school leaders face.

The last significant weakness that I see in the strategy development process was that there was no accompanying change in policy. We did not pursue policy amendments because this was not within the scope of the project and I think would have been premature at the time. However, the fact that we did not put such policies in place means that the elements of the strategy have not yet been codified in any enforceable way, making them potentially more vulnerable to change or interpretation, particularly if Dr. Bourque were to move on from her role as superintendent.

Moving From Strategy to Implementation. From my perspective, one of the most important lessons to be taken away from this strategy development process was the challenge inherent in moving from strategy to implementation. I knew from the beginning that the strategy would only achieve its full value if it was embraced and implemented. For this reason, I tried to do as much as possible to prepare the district for implementation of initial pieces of the strategy prior to the end of the project. It was in this planning phase—particularly in January and February—that I became keenly aware
of how moving from conceptual discussions to concrete planning introduces a whole new degree of difficulty into the process of adaptive change.

Ron Heifetz (personal communication, September 30, 2016) argues that people are not actually resistant to change, as is often assumed, but instead are resistant to the loss that often comes with change (this could be loss of status, loss of control, loss of feeling competent, etc.). In other words, some changes are perceived as positive; people do not tend to resist those. Where change becomes more difficult is where there is some form of loss involved. As we moved to put plans in motion for changing the approach of the Caminos program, I realized that the values of equity and inclusion—while still important to everyone—could be challenging to realize in practice and that the effort to do so was generating stress for school and district leaders. Shifting a long-standing enrollment practice would require not only a series of technical changes, but would also require significant shifts in mindset and ways of working among multiple people and, ultimately, a change in the culture of two schools. And, in order to make this cultural shift more manageable and less anxiety-producing for people, we would need to take their technical knowledge and support to a higher level. Thus, through this project, I realized that I no longer regarded technical and adaptive change as living at two ends of a spectrum (which is how I had envisioned them at the start of the project), but instead began to see them as two mutually reinforcing strands in a double helix. Both of these strands—technical and adaptive—needed to be reinforced by a focused learning effort that supported an increase in technical capacity while at the same time helping people engage in deep personal reflection and mindset shifts.
Contending With External Pressures and Political and Financial Realities. There were several contextual issues that were present in my mind throughout the project and which I think influenced our work, but not always in completely clear or tangible ways. The first was the significant and constant pressure that weighs on CPS to demonstrate improvement and meet the state’s accountability standards. While no one raised this as a reason not to change practice, some concerns surfaced about how attempts to support children’s learning in Spanish—and particularly our proposed opening of the Caminos program to a broader group of learners—might affect test scores and school accountability ratings. In speaking with people about this issue, I emphasized the research that indicates that DLI programs are successful only when they are high-quality—just like all other approaches to education. And so we would need to be careful to focus on preserving and improving quality, even as changes in the program were made. In addition, this meant ensuring that appropriate supports were in place for all students. Furthermore, the research indicates that students need to stay in a DLI program for five years or more in order to achieve proficiency in both languages and reap the rewards academically. For CPS, this means ensuring that students start in Kindergarten and stay in the program through fifth grade and it means that the there might have to be extra work done to ensure that student and school accountability scores remain at an acceptable level, in spite of the change in approach. I suspect that these accountability pressures will continue to be an issue for CPS as people move ahead with implementation of various aspects of the strategy—particularly the DLI expansion—and will need to be addressed by the district, perhaps in consultation with the state’s Department of Education.
Another ever-present contextual issue was the 2016 presidential campaign and the eventual election of Donald Trump, which generated significant anxiety in the community and school system due to the rhetoric that was swirling around about immigrants and sanctuary cities. Trump also took a decidedly anti-internationalist stance in his speeches. We could not be sure how the dynamics of this campaign—including potential support for Trump’s views—might affect the work that we were trying to do. This situation never ended up having any direct impact on the project that we were aware of. However, it could potentially influence implementation of the strategy by creating a chilling effect on efforts to promote multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism. It is my hope that our efforts to build legitimacy and support for the strategy—and to educate people about the value of multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism as an asset for all students—will help to mitigate some of the potential adverse effects of this situation moving forward.

In addition to the general political context, we were also facing the challenge of having to “undo” people’s perceptions and anxieties related to the state’s “English-only” law. The fear generated by the law lingered and so, even though there were explicit and implicit loopholes that made it possible to implement dual language programs and do everything that was proposed in our strategy, there were occasionally people in the district raising questions about what was possible under the law. Continuing to educate people about the actual wording of the law and the current legislative efforts to change the remaining “undesirable” language that it contains will be important to cultivating legitimacy and support for the strategy in the coming months and years.
Another significant contextual factor was the ever-worsening budget picture that unfolded throughout the project period. By February, the situation for the upcoming school year was looking especially dire. While we had accounted for a tight budget in our strategy development and planning, there was still the issue of how the anxiety around looming budget cuts would color people’s attitudes towards the strategy. Even though we were careful to tie the strategy to the core work of the district and to keep costs to a minimum, the strategy would still be vulnerable to the perception that this was an added initiative that could not be afforded at such a difficult time. This is where the district leadership would again need to remain steadfast in its resolve to see the strategy through and to keep explaining it to people, even in the midst of their anxieties and frustrations around the budget.

**Tying it all Together: Learning at the Core and All Around.** In reflecting on this strategy development process—and the larger effort that it initiated to move the culture of a school system to a place where it consistently takes an assets- and equity-based approach to the language and culture of students—I am struck by the way in which learning emerges as a common theme throughout. Learning was both the goal of the work and a driving factor in each aspect of the process. I and others in the district had to acquire a base level of content knowledge to even engage in the strategy development process at all. Learning was also key to supporting the process as it evolved, and particularly to ensuring that the three elements of the Strategic Triangle were sufficiently strong: developing a compelling value proposition, identifying and accounting for operational capacity needs, and winning support for the project from a wide variety of stakeholders or authorizers. Similarly, in order to move from strategy to implementation,
a higher level of learning was necessary for the system to get to the more advanced level of technical capacity it needed and a deeper level of personal learning was essential in order for people to successfully engage in an adaptive change process.

The above diagram represents the way that I now picture the relationship between the different elements of our effort to build a strategy to drive change in a school system and ultimately to improve student learning. Student learning lies at the center, surrounded by what I think are the most immediate influences on a young people’s learning outcomes. These two inner circles represent a re-thinking of the instructional core, which is defined as the relationship between teacher, student, and content. It recognizes that there are other mediating factors in a child’s learning that are also essential, including language and culture, family and community, the support that the child receives within and outside of school, and the environment in which the student is trying to learn.

The next concentric circle out is where technical and adaptive change live—these are the changes that need to occur in order to influence the two innermost circles.
Wrapped around technical and adaptive change are the elements of the Strategic Triangle—these have to be well addressed if the needed technical and adaptive changes are going to be achieved. Throughout this project, I debated in my own mind the relationship between the elements of Moore’s Strategic Triangle and Heifetz’s concepts of technical and adaptive change. In particular, I often found myself wondering whether Moore’s notion of putting operational capacity in place might effectively be equivalent to Heifetz’s idea of fostering technical change. The relationship between the elements of these two theories in this diagram represents my conclusion that the two are actually fundamentally different. Based on my experience, I now believe that all three elements of the Strategic Triangle (including operational capacity) must be in place both to achieve both technical and adaptive change.

Supporting all of these inner rings is the outermost circle, where I have placed adult learning and the learning of the system as a whole. Without learning at these levels, the inner circles will be weak. And, in the case of this project, without this learning in the outer circle, Chelsea could never achieve the goal of taking an assets- and equity-based approach to multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism throughout the district.

**Implications**

Having explored why the project unfolded as it did, I will now turn to a discussion of the implications of these findings for my own leadership, for Chelsea Public Schools, and for the education sector more broadly.
Implications for My Leadership

This project was rich with learning for me, both in increasing my knowledge of issues related to language learning and to multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism, and in deepening my understanding of strategy development within a school system and technical and adaptive change, more generally.

Pursuing the “Three Ms.” As a result of this project, I am excited to continue working to promote multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism (what I now think of as the “three M’s”) in school systems and beyond. I am especially interested in and hopeful about the possibility of harnessing students’ linguistic and cultural assets to support their learning and academic achievement. Particularly invigorating to me is the potential of growing Dual Language Immersion programs as a way to engage and support the learning of diverse groups of students. As I look ahead to next steps in my career, I would like to play a leadership role in trying to address the challenges that make Dual Language Immersion (or other forms of bilingual education) difficult and, in particular, to help school systems build pipelines of multilingual and multicultural educators. Because the majority of such programs in the country focus on Spanish-English immersion, I also plan to return to my effort to learn Spanish, which started and ended during the first few months of this project due to a lack of time to see it through. Having learned other languages in the past, I know that this will take a dedicated effort in the coming years.

Maintaining a Learning Stance. This project reaffirmed for me the importance of leading from a learning stance. At the same time, I am cognizant that the structure of the Ed.L.D. residency makes such a learning approach possible—indeed, expected. Now, as I anticipate exiting residency and re-entering the workforce on a full-time basis, I am
considering the ways in which I can build structures and practices into my future work that will help me to sustain the strong learning orientation that I have maintained throughout this project. I expect that it will be challenging to carve out as much time and space as I would like to further my own learning and that of people around me, but I see it as essential and well worth the effort.

**Rooting my Leadership in Values.** For me, one of the most powerful aspects of leading this project was observing the way in which people around me were motivated by an appeal to their values as people, as educators, and as part of a school system. I also recognized that I was most energized by the project when I saw it as a way to address inequities, support marginalized students, and flip deficit-minded thinking on its head. The adaptive work of aligning practice with values is very challenging but also extremely compelling to me and it is work that I believe I am well positioned to lead in the future. At the same time, this project heightened my awareness of how critical it is to pay attention to needs for building technical capacity and making technical changes, where necessary.

**Implications for Chelsea Public Schools**

In reflecting on the implications of this project for the school system moving forward, I will focus on six particular recommendations for helping to bring the strategy to life and support achievement of the vision:

**Recommendation 1: Bolster Long-Term Project Leadership.** Although it is unrealistic given current budget realities to think that oversight of the strategy could be provided on a full-time basis, it will be critical that there be dedicated and high-level district leadership to shepherd and coordinate implementation. At present, it is envisioned that this will be carried out by a combination of the assistant superintendent and the ELL
coordinator. It is likely that there will need to be added consideration given to how these roles expand to incorporate the added strategy-related responsibilities and to finding ways to increase support to the ELL team to ensure that this broader set of functions can be fully covered while also not compromising any of that team’s current work.

**Recommendation 2: Create a Task Force to Work on Staffing Pipeline Issues.**

Objective 2 of the strategy calls for CPS to “build a more diverse staff district-wide, with an emphasis on recruiting Spanish-speaking team members and developing a strong pipeline of dual language teachers.” This is a particularly significant piece of work that will require dedicated staff time and attention. Creating a task force to begin working on this issue could be a way to start moving this effort forward. Meanwhile, this should be an area that is prioritized for fundraising from foundation donors.

**Recommendation 3. Create a Task Force to Work on Family Engagement Issues.**

Objective 4 in the strategy calls for work to increase the engagement of families in their advancing their children’s literacy and learning. While this is something for each school to attend to, it is also an issue that cuts across the whole district and should be looked at comprehensively. This is another piece of the strategy that deserves the focused attention of a task force, which should include representation from people at all levels—from pre-K to adult education—and including district and school-based staff, as well as people from the Parent Information Center and parent liaisons. This task force should either include—or make plenty of provisions for engaging—family members and representatives of community organizations that work with the local community.

**Recommendation 4. Encourage Integration of the Strategy Into Existing Work.**

This strategy will end up collecting dust on many shelves (or get consigned to
recycling bins) if it is seen as “just another initiative” or regarded as a side show to the “real work.” In drafting the strategy, we attempted to tie it to the core work of the district. However, it will be critical for the district leadership to message this and to encourage the integration of the strategy components into the ongoing work of people throughout the district. This also means developing mechanisms for checking in on the progress being made against the strategy’s objectives, just as senior leadership might review the status of work on efforts to improve achievement scores or to ensure compliance with special education and ELL-related statutes.

**Recommendation 5: Stay the Course.** Given that successful implementation of this strategy involves adaptive change work, it can be anticipated that resistance will crop up in multiple forms, some overt and some more subtle. It will be important for both district and longer-term project leadership to be on the look-out for such resistance and to insist that people stay the course. This is particularly important when it comes to making changes that help ensure that CPS is remaining aligned to its values as a school system.

**Recommendation 6. Celebrate Often and Publicize Widely.** CPS already has much to be proud of when it comes to language-related programming—particularly the Kelly Caminos program and the strong performance of Chelsea High School students on Advanced Placement Spanish exams. Celebrating and publicizing these and future successes will be important to spreading the good word about the value of cultivating multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism throughout the system.
Implications for the Education Sector

I see vast untapped potential for the education sector to cultivate multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism as a means to improving student outcomes. I will focus on three particular recommendations for the sector to advance work in this area:

**Recommendation 1: Create a Favorable Policy Environment.** The difference between states that have actively encouraged bilingual education and those that have discouraged it is dramatic. In New York, for example, the state actively encourages the use of dual language programming to educate English Learners and provides various incentives to encourage teachers to become certified as dual language educators, as well as grants to schools of education to build technical capacity in school districts and build a pipeline of dual language educators (Y. Vasquez Johnson, personal communication, November 3, 2016). On the other hand, in states like Massachusetts and California that adopted English-only laws, capacity to implement bilingual education of any kind was diminished and qualified teachers reportedly left for other, more hospitable states. To move this work forward, states such as Massachusetts should adopt laws and policies that encourage the development of high-quality dual language programs and that provide incentives to school districts to increase multiculturalism and cultural proficiency. State education agencies could also encourage the development of a more robust and diverse pipeline of educators—including multilingual and multicultural educators—by supporting partnerships between teacher training institutions and school districts as well as providing direct incentives to new teacher candidates.

**Recommendation 2: Fund Research and Programming in the 3Ms.** Funders should consider investing in research, pilot projects, and scaling efforts that help build the
case for assets- and equity-based approaches to cultivating multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism. In particular, there is a need for many more rigorous research studies to explore the many facets of Dual Language Immersion programs so that we can better understand (and potentially replicate) the elements that are most successful—a new national research alliance on dual language immersion being spearheaded by the American Councils for International Education would be a good place to start (R. Slater, personal communication, November 3, 2016).

**Recommendation 3: Tackle the Pipeline Problem.** There is much debate and fretting over the general concern that the country is facing a teacher shortage, particularly in areas such as science, math, and technology. It is also widely understood that the American educator force is far more white and female than the students in our public schools, who are now “majority minority.” This issue is all the more acute when it comes to staffing schools with teachers who are not only bilingual and biliterate, but also qualified to teach in a dual language setting. To expand dual language programming will require a much larger force of qualified teachers, which do not currently seem to be in the pipeline. Funders, education entrepreneurs, schools of education, school districts, and government agencies should band together to solve this problem.
Conclusion

At a time when there is significant evidence to support the value of multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism—and when public schools in the United States are more racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse than they have ever been—there is an especially exciting opportunity to harness the language skills and cultural heritage of students and families to support learning and improve short- and long-term outcomes for young people. As this project illustrates, though, to infuse an entire school system with an assets- and equity-based approach to language and culture demands the creation of a comprehensive and coherent strategy that is purposefully rooted in these core values. And to achieve such ambitious outcomes requires a combination of technical and adaptive change—shifting both the practice and the culture of a system to support a new way of viewing and working with students and families. Furthermore, if such a strategy is to be accepted and positioned to deliver on its objectives, there must be careful attention paid to developing a strong value proposition, resources invested in building appropriate operational capabilities, and significant effort dedicated to building legitimacy and support among key authorizers of the strategy. Ultimately, the success of this project—and I believe any similar effort to develop and deliver on a strategy to promote an assets- and equity-based approach to multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism—must be grounded in learning. This learning must take place at a personal level among adults within and around the system, and it must happen within the system, itself.
Bibliography


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Appendix A

Steering Committee
Scope of Work

The Steering Committee will play a leading role in coordinating the development of the CPS District Strategy on Multilingualism. The primary roles and responsibilities of the steering committee include:

- Providing input and guidance on the overall direction of and schedule for the strategy development process;

- Designing and facilitating sessions of the Multilingualism Working Group;

- Providing input on the agenda and plans for and, where possible, supporting the collection of data on attitudes toward multilingualism and dual language programming in Chelsea;

- Participating in the development and editing of the strategy document;

- Promoting the importance of multilingualism and dual language programming within and beyond the CPS system;

- Preparing for and participating in formal presentations of the strategy, as needed; and

- Supporting the creation of work plans that detail how key elements of the strategy are to be carried out.

It is expected that the Steering Committee will meet on a weekly basis for one hour from late September 2016 through the end of April 2017, with additional meeting time scheduled as needed, particularly in the lead-up to Working Group sessions, presentations of the strategy, or other important events.
Appendix B

Steering Committee
Retreat Agenda
10/28/16
9:00 – 2:30

Objectives:
- Continue to build our knowledge of each other and capacity to work together as a team
- Develop shared understanding of how research and data inform our strategy development
- Clarify the problem(s) we are trying to solve and analyze root causes
- Agree on draft framework for the strategy
- Identify ways to engage key stakeholders outside of Consultation Group
- Finalize work plan for strategy process
- Create detailed plan for Consultation Group sessions
- Discuss update to DLT on November 2nd

Schedule:

9:00-9:10  Settle in/ Get coffee and eats
9:10-9:20  Check in
9:20-9:30  Identify hopes and fears about this strategy (process and longer-term implementation)
9:30-9:45  Discuss parameters for our work based on key points from recent meetings
9:45-10:45 Problem identification and root cause analysis
10:45-11:00 Break
11:00-11:45 Discuss stakeholder engagement (city government, school committee, district leaders, community, families, students, administrators, teachers, other staff)
11:45-12:00 Review/revise draft work plan for strategy development
12:00-1:45 Working Lunch/ Plan Consultation Group sessions (map out arc of sessions, develop detailed plan for at least the first session)
1:45 – 2:25  Discuss plan for 11/2 update to DLT
2:25 – 2:30  Next meeting
Appendix C

Scope of Work
Consultation Group

Summary

The Consultation Group will inform and provide feedback on the development of a new CPS Strategy for Promoting Multilingualism. CPS currently has some very exciting and successful dual language programming at the Early Learning Center (after-school Spanish program for Kindergartners) and the Kelly School (grades 1-4 Spanish-English dual immersion program) and Spanish for Spanish speakers courses at Chelsea High School (leading up to and including two AP Spanish courses).

In accordance with the district’s recently adopted five-year strategic vision, CPS will introduce a Seal of Biliteracy at Chelsea High School and expand dual language programming into the Middle School level. The Kelly School is currently studying the feasibility of expanding its elementary dual language program.

Consultation Group Roles and Responsibilities

- Participating in 3 2-hour sessions to contribute to the development of the strategy, working from a common base of research and knowledge about best practice and drawing from experience in CPS (November/December 2016)

- Review and provide feedback on strategy drafts (December 2016)

- Participate in the development of work plans for elements of the strategy, as relevant to members’ particular areas of work (December 2016 – April 2017)

- Promote multilingualism in CPS, with families, and in the community and help to generate support for the strategy, once developed (On-going)

The activities of the working group will be planned and guided by the Multilingualism Steering Committee, with coordination and leadership provided by the CPS Resident Administrator.
Appendix D

Consultation Group Member List

Steering Committee:
ELL Coordinator
Elementary ELL Coach
Resident Administrator/Special Asst. to the Superintendent

Full Consultation Group:
Assistant Superintendent
Chief Academic Officer
Early Learning Center Principal
Hooks Elementary School Principal
Kelly Elementary School Principal
Browne Middle School Principal
Clark Avenue Middle School Assistant Principal
Adult Learning Director
Literacy and Humanities K-4 Coordinator
Early Learning Center ELL/SPED Coach
Parent-Information Center Coordinator/Communications Manager
Middle Schools Parent Liaison
Chelsea High School World Language Department Head
Chelsea High School Spanish for Spanish Speakers Teacher
Appendix E

Consultation Group
Agenda: Meeting #1
11/29/16

Meeting Objectives:

- Establish a common foundation of knowledge and understanding for our discussions around the multilingualism strategy
- Identify potential ideas/successes to build on
- Explore root causes of challenges to be addressed by the strategy

3:00 – 3:05 (5 mins) Settle in/ Greetings

3:05 – 3:10 (5 mins) Intro to the Strategy Process

3:10 – 3:20 (10 mins) Hopes and Fears about the Strategy

3:20 – 3:50 (30 mins) Quick Intro to the Research, Current Policy, & Program Models

3:50 – 4:20 (30 mins) Overview of Current Related CPS Programs

- Early Learning Center Caminos (Jackie Bevere Maloney)
- Kelly School Caminos (Maggie Sanchez-Gleason)
- CHS World Language/Spanish for Spanish Speakers (Kim Lynch)
- District approach to English Language Learners (Sean Sibson)

4:20 – 4:55 (35 mins) Root Cause Analysis

4:55 – 5:00 (5 mins) Wrap-up/ Next Steps/ Feedback
Appendix F

Consultation Group Agenda: Meeting #2 12/6/16

Meeting Objectives:

- Shape a shared Vision for our district multilingualism strategy
- Generate potential Theories of Action about how to achieve the Vision
- Discuss and share input on potential strategy components and priorities

Detailed Schedule:

3:00 – 3:05 (5 mins) Welcome/Intros
3:05 – 3:10 (5 mins) Quick update on Seal of Biliteracy
3:10 – 3:20 (10 mins) Data Snapshots from In-District Research
3:20 – 3:30 (10 mins) Dual Language Video from Arlington
3:30- 3:50 (20 mins) Input on Strategic Vision
3:50 – 4:00 (10 mins) Program Components Exercise
4:00 – 4:50 (50 mins) Theory of Action/ Priority-Setting
4:50 – 5:00 (10 mins) Next Steps and Feedback
Appendix G

Promoting Multilingualism, Multiliteracy & Multiculturalism in Chelsea Public Schools
A Five-Year Strategy
2017 - 2021

Introduction
In 2016, Chelsea Public Schools (CPS) published a new five-year strategic vision that reinforces the district’s mission of welcoming and educating ALL students and families. One of the core values highlighted in that document, “A Commitment to Our Students: Expanding Opportunities 2016-2021),” is that “the diversity of our school community (race, ethnicity, ability and socioeconomic status) is a source of strength and a resource for the education of all learners.” Similarly, the rich and diverse linguistic and cultural heritage of our community members is a particularly important resource for the district and for our students—one that has the potential to strengthen teaching and learning, increase student engagement, and contribute to improved student outcomes.

This document lays out a strategy for harnessing, cultivating, and formally recognizing students’ linguistic and cultural assets and, in particular, for promoting multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism, which have benefits for all people, no matter their background or first language. A significant body of research points to the value of multilingualism and multiliteracy, including enhanced cognitive development, improved academic achievement, positive social-emotional growth, and increased cultural competency and sense of belonging to community. By reinforcing students’ proficiency

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3 *Multilingualism* is the ability to understand and speak two or more languages. *Multiliteracy* is the ability to read and write in two or more languages. *Multiculturalism* is the understanding of and ability to engage successfully with more than one culture.

in their home language and supporting them to become multilingual/multiliterate, schools also bolster students’ confidence and increase their engagement in school. There is also evidence that Dual Language Immersion programming may contribute to reduced dropout rates. In addition, attaining proficiency in two or more languages prepares young people for success in college, career, and life in the 21st Century. In Massachusetts, demand for bilingual employees has doubled in the past five years alone, an indication of the kind of opportunity that awaits our students if they work hard to attain proficiency in more than one language.

**Strategic Vision**

The following vision describes the long-term outcomes that CPS strives for by adopting this strategy:

CPS becomes an engine of multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism through which:

- All students’ linguistic and cultural heritages are cultivated as an asset in their learning and achievement, from pre-K to adult learning programs;
- All students graduate proficient in two or more languages, preparing them for success in college, career, and life;
- A diverse community of educators has the multicultural competence, strengths-based mindset, and comprehensive skills necessary to fully engage, challenge, and support all learners; and
- Families and community members of all backgrounds are involved as full partners in their children’s learning and development.

**Guiding Principles (“P-E-I-P-F”)**

The following guiding principles have informed the development of this strategy and should serve as a basis for planning and decision-making as the strategy is implemented.

- **Pursue an Assets-Based Approach**
  CPS will seek out and build upon students’ and families’ assets and, specifically, will treat students’ home language as a strength to be cultivated rather than an obstacle to be overcome.

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- **Embrace Diversity**  
  CPS will value and tap into the rich diversity of students, families, and the broader community as a resource.

- **Insist on Inclusion**  
  All students—including students with disabilities and students with limited early literacy skills—can benefit from and succeed in dual language immersion and other programs that promote multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism, if provided the appropriate supports. Therefore, all students should be given equal access to such opportunities. Wherever possible, students should be integrated in classes and programs, whatever their special education needs, abilities and disabilities, language backgrounds, duration living in the U.S., etc.

- **Promote Equity**  
  CPS will leverage its efforts to promote multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism in order to increase educational opportunity and success for potentially marginalized learners, with a particular focus on ensuring that English Language Learners, newcomers to the country, and students from low-income backgrounds have a chance to thrive and excel.

- **Focus on the Instructional Core**  
  This strategy and all related efforts to cultivate multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism should ultimately connect to and strengthen the instructional core: the interaction between teacher, student, and content that is the basis for learning.

**Theory of Action**  
This Theory of Action identifies the key actions that CPS will undertake in order to achieve the district’s desired set of results related to multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism:

**IF...**

- CPS increases opportunities and incentives for all students to become multilingual, multiliterate, and multiculturally competent;
- develops a diverse and highly multiculturally competent staff district-wide;
- ensures that the diversity and richness of students’ linguistic and cultural heritage is reflected through curriculum and education programming, including enabling students to access academic content in Spanish;
- fully engages families as partners in their children’s learning and literacy development; and
continuously builds understanding of and support for the benefits of multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism in the district and broader community;

THEN...

CPS will demonstrate the strong value it places on multilingualism, multiliteracy, multiculturalism, and particularly on the rich linguistic and cultural heritage of students and families in the district;

many more students will attain proficiency in two or more languages;

overall student engagement, learning, and achievement will improve;

students will graduate better equipped for success in college, career, and life;

parents will feel more engaged in and better able to support their children’s learning; and

demand for strong pathways to multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism will increase, thereby generating more support for associated programming.

Five-Year Strategic Goal

Whereas the Vision above articulates the long-term outcome that should result from implementation of this strategy, this Goal defines the overarching aim of the coming five-year strategy period:

Goal: Increase multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism throughout Chelsea Public Schools.

Five-Year Strategic Objectives

While the strategic goal establishes a broad, overarching aim for the strategy period, the following five strategic objectives represent the specific areas of focus that will contribute to CPS achieving that larger goal.

It is important to note that these objectives are intended to provide direction and guidance around priorities. However, the initiatives proposed below will be implemented only as funds become available and based on the approval of the Superintendent. Furthermore, priorities may change as the strategy period unfolds, depending on realities on the ground at the time. Ultimately, the Superintendent will make the final determination about which elements of the strategy to pursue when, after evaluating available resources and priorities and consulting with key leaders and stakeholders.

Strategic Objective 1
Grow pathways to multilingualism and multiliteracy for all students, with a focus on promoting Spanish language learning through expanded Dual Language Immersion and Spanish for Spanish/heritage speakers programming.

As of 2016, there is one after-school Spanish class at the Early Learning Center serving 30 kindergarten children and a full Spanish-English Dual Language Immersion (DLI) program at the Kelly Elementary School that serves approximately 200 students in grades 1 to 4 (both of these programs are known as Caminos). There are strong Spanish Foreign Language and Spanish-for-Spanish-speakers courses (including two Advanced Placement courses) at Chelsea High School, in addition to French and Latin courses. A total of 875 CHS students are currently enrolled in these classes. There are currently no DLI or world/heritage language courses offered at the middle school level.

In the coming five years, CPS will work to expand its Caminos Dual Language Immersion programming at the Early Learning Center, initially introducing one classroom at the pre-K level and two Kindergarten classes, and growing the Kelly School to a whole-school Dual Language Immersion model through a gradual expansion, starting with the addition of two classrooms at the first-grade level. (Both of these growth plans can be achieved at minimal cost, with a small amount of funding required to support professional development, educational materials, and translation services.) During the first year of the strategy period (2017-18), the Hooks Elementary School will explore the feasibility of introducing a DLI strand into that school and, based on the results of this process, will develop a proposal to present to the superintendent for review (as with the expansions of the programs at the ELC and Kelly School, the goal will be to find relatively cost-neutral approaches to making this shift). During the second year of the strategy period (2017-18), pending the availability of resources, CPS will pilot a DLI model at the Browne Middle School, introducing a Spanish language course and teaching one core academic course in Spanish. In addition, given sufficient financial and staffing resources, the Clark Avenue Middle School will pilot Spanish courses for students.⁷ (The details of the implementation approaches at the Browne and Clarke Avenue Schools are still under discussion.)

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⁷ It should be noted that, while the current and proposed DLI and heritage language programs described here focus on Spanish because of the high prevalence of Spanish as a first language among families in Chelsea, CPS will encourage students to pursue proficiency in any language that is of interest to them and/or is part of their heritage. In the future, dual language and heritage/foreign language options at the pre-K to middle school levels could potentially expand to incorporate other languages. This is an issue that should be revisited at the end of this strategy period.
During the first year of the strategy period, Chelsea High School will introduce a Seal of Biliteracy, which is intended to attract more students to its Spanish for Spanish Speakers and foreign language courses and to encourage students to achieve proficiency in two or more languages. The Seal is offered at three levels—silver, gold, and platinum—recognizing increasing degrees of mastery of two languages, both oral and written. While the majority of foreign language students at CHS currently study Spanish, any student can earn the Seal if they can demonstrate proficiency in English and a second language (see full CHS Seal of Biliteracy Guidelines for details). Chelsea is one of a small number of school districts in Massachusetts to pilot the Seal in 2017. Students who earn the Seal will have it documented on their high school transcript and will receive recognition at graduation, increasing their appeal to colleges and potential employers. Once the Seal is well established at the high school level, CPS may consider introducing “pathway awards” to recognize milestones in students’ growing language proficiency at earlier grade levels.

In addition to these initiatives that focus on students’ learning during the school day, CPS will seek to identify funding and/or partnerships to support after-school and summer language immersion programs that simultaneously advance students’ multilingualism/ multiliteracy and either reinforce core academic content and/or provide engaging enrichment opportunities. For example, this could take the form of accelerated math classes in Spanish. It might also include an art or theater class in Spanish, or a civic engagement program conducted in English that includes service projects in Latino or dual-language settings.

To support these increased efforts to promote students’ language learning, CPS will also research and test new educational materials and approaches, including technology-based and blended learning programs that allow for easy differentiation of tasks among language learners of different levels of proficiency. CPS will also place significant emphasis on professional development and on ensuring that the DLI and other programs are aligned with current research and best practice and implemented to the highest possible standard of quality, as well as with the districts’ own values and the “P-E-I-P-F” guiding principles contained in this strategy. This effort will begin with a revision of the enrollment process for the Caminos programming at the ELC and Kelly School, introducing a lottery system in order to make the program equally accessible to children with varying levels of capacity in English and Spanish and to make it inclusive of children with special education needs.
Strategic Objective 2

Build a more diverse staff district-wide, with an emphasis on recruiting multilingual/multicultural team members and developing a strong pipeline of Dual Language Immersion teachers.

To recruit a more diverse, more multilingual staff—and particularly to identify qualified dual language teachers—will require an intentional and persistent effort over time, with a mix of short- and long-term strategies. In the near term, CPS can begin with creative, low-cost marketing efforts to sell the school district as an exciting and dynamic place to work, with innovative programs and a growing “Garden of Eden” or “Mecca” of language learning, multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism. By increasing communication and partnership with schools of education that have bilingual and dual language training programs for educators (such as the Lynch School at Boston College), CPS may attract new candidates, as well as generate opportunities to host student interns that could be encouraged to stay in Chelsea to pursue a career here. CPS will also explore the potential for attracting dual language teachers through partnerships with organizations such as the Bilingual Teacher Exchange Program (BTEP).

In parallel to its short-term recruitment efforts, CPS will seek to grow an internal pipeline of staff and educators—with a particular focus on encouraging current staff and students to work toward becoming certified teachers, and particularly grooming people who can eventually serve in bilingual/dual language settings. This may include expanding existing efforts to help paraprofessionals attain their teaching certificate. Existing teachers can also be encouraged to pursue a dual language certificate through online programs, such as the Online Dual Language and Immersion Certificate at University of Minnesota (such a program may also become available locally at BC’s Lynch School.) Consideration should also be given to creating a systematic incentive or salary step up for teachers that obtain dual language certification. The effort to build an internal pipeline of multilingual and multicultural teachers might also include expanded opportunities for Chelsea High School students to participate in courses and internships (including inside CPS schools and DLI programs) that expose them to the teaching profession and working with dual language students.

Strategic Objective 3

Increase the multicultural competence of staff and enhance the cultural sensitivity and relevance of curriculum, educational materials, and programming across the district.

CPS students and families come from a diverse array of backgrounds and many are immigrants. To best serve all students, it is important that staff across the school
system have a high degree of cultural awareness and multicultural competence. It is also important that CPS support all staff to reflect deeply on how identity and unconscious bias may play a role in attitudes toward and treatment of students, such as the tendency to lower expectations or rigor as a result of what Superintendent Bourque refers to as “misplaced compassion.” To encourage such individual and collective learning and reflection, CPS will organize a series of on-going trainings and professional development opportunities, beginning with a workshop for the District Leadership Team at the end of the 2016/17 school year. Some of these sessions could be led by members of the Chelsea community.

Another way to increase cultural understanding is through language study. One innovative initiative at Chelsea High School draws on the linguistic and cultural assets of students by engaging them as language instructors for CHS teachers. The district will explore opportunities to encourage language study among more educators and staff in the district, either through an expansion of this model and/or through partnerships with other organizations, such as Rosetta Stone. In examining such possibilities, the district will also explore avenues for encouraging students to take part in international learning exchange trips, such as those supported by the U.S. State Department or organized by Education First.

In addition, CPS will work toward building up more educational resources and materials that represent a diversity of cultural perspectives and are reflective of the linguistic and cultural heritage of the Chelsea community. Initially, priority will be placed on acquiring Spanish language library sets for classrooms. Over the course of the strategy period—and particularly as new curriculum or materials are purchased—there will be an opportunity to examine current resources and assess the extent to which they promote multiculturalism and diverse perspectives, as well as how they might better support dual language education.

**Strategic Objective 4**

**Expand parent education and engagement to increase family literacy and strengthen families’ role in supporting their children’s language development and overall academic achievement.**

There is strong evidence that family engagement and partnership is critical to children’s learning and the success of schools. Furthermore, the educational level and experience of parents and caregivers has a significant impact on children’s academic experience and achievement. The involvement of families in supporting children’s early literacy development is especially important.

CPS currently has a strong adult education program run by the Intergenerational Literacy Program (ILP), for which there is far more demand than can be met (a
waiting list of over 1,200, as of the fall of 2016). Many of the participants in these programs are Chelsea parents and caregivers. Chelsea’s schools also work to engage families through Parent Liaisons and the efforts of school leadership teams, teachers, and other key team members. Furthermore, Chelsea’s Parent Information Center serves as a hub of communication, support, and engagement for families.

To further bolster these initiatives and strengthen families’ partnership in children’s learning and language development, schools will be encouraged to pilot new initiatives, bringing parents and students together for joint homework help after school (in English and Spanish). Additional funding (perhaps through a new grant) would also allow the ILP to increase its adult education programming, some of which could be coordinated with schools to reinforce their efforts to engage families in supporting students’ language learning and academic growth.

**Objective 5**

*Continue to deepen understanding throughout the district and in the community of the broad benefits of multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism.*

In order to achieve the vision for CPS described here—and to ensure sufficient political and financial support for the proposed initiatives—there will need to be a coordinated effort to help people—whether students, families, staff, community members, or political leaders—to learn about the value of multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism. This will include the dissemination of information in writing and through social media; sharing through staff meetings and professional development; discussions with families during school site council meetings; and engagement with students by guidance counselors, school leaders, and teachers. Furthermore, it will be especially important to document and celebrate successes, such as students earning the Seal of Biliteracy and the success of Chelsea’s DLI and other language programs.
Summary List of Possible Program Components

The following list is a summary of program ideas that could advance CPS’ efforts to promote multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism. Some of these concepts have already been incorporated into the above strategy. Others have not been included above due to our current assessment of the system’s capacity to implement them. However, if funding and/or staff resources should become available, this list might provide district and school leaders with additional ideas to explore.

Dual Language Immersion/Transitional Bilingual Education

- Expansion of ELC dual language programming/integration into school day
- Expansion of elementary dual language programming (at Kelly/into other schools Sending newcomers/ELLS to Kelly Caminos)
- Expansion of dual language programming to the Browne/other schools
- TBE/dual language model at the high school level

Spanish for Spanish Speakers/Heritage Language Students

- Spanish language and literacy for ELC
- Spanish language and literacy for elementary
- Spanish language and literacy for middle school
- Expanded Spanish for Spanish Speakers at CHS
- Introduction of computer-based/blended learning opportunities

Alternative and Extra-Curricular Programming for Students

- After-school language classes and/or content classes in Spanish (e.g., through Citizen Schools or another partner at the MS level)
- Summer language camps (probably with partner organizations)
- Spanish internships/externships
- Dual language certification in partnership with BHCC or others

Parent/Family Education

- Increase capacity of family literacy classes
- Offer after-school homework help in Spanish for parents and students together

Cultivating Multiculturalism Within CPS

- Multiculturalism training for all staff
- Spanish classes for staff (could be taught by students, teachers, or hired contractors)
- Develop plan for increasing understanding of and partnership with parents, drawing on families’ “funds of knowledge”
- Review curricula with an eye toward cultural relevance/diversity

**Developing a Pipeline of Dual Language Educators**

- Support/incentives to paraprofessionals to get their teaching licenses/certifications
- Support to teachers to become dual language certified
- Develop policies and procedures to encourage hiring of dual language teachers when gaps exist
- Develop a dual language internship program in conjunction with BC or other colleges
- Create a “grow-your-own” dual language education program at CHS with Bunker Hill
Appendix H

Chelsea High School
Seal of Biliteracy Guidelines - 2017

Overview
The Seal of Biliteracy is an award given in recognition of students that have attained proficiency in understanding, speaking, reading, and writing in two or more languages by the time they graduate from high school. A significant body of research supports the benefits of multilingualism and multiliteracy, including enhanced cognitive development, improved academic achievement, positive social-emotional growth, and increased cultural competency and sense of belonging to community. In addition, proficiency in two or more languages prepares young people for success in college, career, and life in the 21st Century.

The Seal serves multiple purposes at once: it encourages students to pursue biliteracy, recognizes the language skills that students attain, and provides a formal accreditation that is attractive to many colleges and potential employers. By making the Seal of Biliteracy available to students, Chelsea Public Schools seeks to communicate the high value we place on multilingualism and multiliteracy. We also hope to build upon the rich linguistic and cultural assets of our community, in kee[ing with our values statement that “the diversity of our school community is a source of strength and a resource for the education of all learners.”

Seal of Biliteracy Award Levels
The Chelsea High School (CHS) criteria for attainment of the Seal described below are aligned with the statewide standards established by the Massachusetts Language Opportunity Coalition, and the guidelines contained in this document are based on the toolkit developed by the Coalition’s Seal of Biliteracy Working Group.

CHS students may earn a Seal of Biliteracy at one of three levels:

Silver Seal
The Silver Seal Award recognizes students that demonstrate an “intermediate-mid” level of proficiency in a language other than English as well as proficiency in English. Specifically, to obtain the Silver Seal, a student must achieve:

>>A “proficient” or “advanced” on the MCAS ELA exam; and
A score of 3 on the Advanced Placement (AP) test for their chosen language or a score of I-2 to I-4 on the ACTFL Assessment of Performance Toward Proficiency in Languages (AAPPL).

In addition, for English Language Learners, the student must attain a composite score of 5 or higher on the WIDA ACCESS test.

**Gold Seal**
The Gold Seal Award recognizes students that demonstrate an “intermediate-high” proficiency in a language other than English as well as proficiency on the MCAS ELA exam. Specifically, to obtain a Gold Seal, a student must achieve:

- A “proficient” or “advanced” on the MCAS ELA exam; and
- A score of 4 on the Advanced Placement (AP) test for their chosen language. (In the event that the student is pursuing the Seal for a language for which there is no AP option at CPS, then the student must achieve an I-5 on the AAPPL exam for their language.)

In addition, for English Language Learners, the student must attain a composite score of 5 or higher on the WIDA ACCESS test.

**Platinum Seal**
The Platinum Seal Award recognizes students that demonstrate an “advanced-low” proficiency level or higher in a language other than English as well as proficiency on the MCAS ELA exam. Specifically, to obtain a Platinum Seal, a student must achieve:

- An “advanced” on the MCAS ELA exam; and
- A score of 5 on the Advanced Placement (AP) test for their chosen language. (In the event that the student is pursuing the Seal for a language for which there is no AP option at CPS, then the student must achieve an A on the AAPPL exam for their language.)

In addition, for English Language Learners, the student must attain a composite score of 5 or higher on the WIDA ACCESS test.

**Alternative Forms of Assessment**
In the event that a student wishes to earn a Seal of Biliteracy in a language for which there is no AP or APPL test, the Foreign Language Department will attempt to identify another appropriate test to use for assessing the student’s level of language proficiency (several options are provided in the Seal of Biliteracy Toolkit or can be found on the Center for Applied Linguistics website [www.cal.org]).
If no appropriate assessment is available for the student’s chosen language, then the student will be required to develop and submit to the Foreign Language Department a portfolio that demonstrates the student’s proficiency in the language. The requirements for the portfolio may be obtained from the CHS Foreign Language or Guidance Departments. The portfolio will be assessed by educators identified by the Foreign Language Department that have expertise in the student’s chosen language.

**Informing and Supporting Students to Earn the Seal**

The Guidance Department and Foreign Language teachers will inform students about the Seal of Biliteracy and encourage them to pursue the courses and take the tests that would enable them to attain the Seal. It is important to emphasize that all students are eligible and encouraged to pursue attainment of the Seal.

Students should also be reminded that they are allowed to pursue an independent study at CHS. They might choose to use such a course to hone their literacy in a second language and then pursue the Seal for that language.

**Awarding the Seal of Biliteracy**

The CHS Registrar will determine who has achieved the requirements for the Seal of Biliteracy and at which level (Silver, Gold, Platinum) based on student test scores. Where alternative forms of assessment are required, the head of the Foreign Language Department will provide written confirmation to verify that the student has met the requirements of the Department.

Students who earn a Silver or Gold seal will be “upgraded” to a higher Seal level if they earn the required scores on tests taken prior to graduation.

The registrar will include the student’s Seal of Biliteracy and the level at which it was awarded in the official CHS transcript, thus ensuring that the credential travels with the student wherever they go. In addition, a Seal will accompany the diploma at the time of graduation. In addition, students will receive a cord, medal, or other symbol of achievement to be worn at the graduation ceremony. Additionally, students who attain the Seal will be recognized through a brief ceremony to be conducted by the School Committee.

In the event that a student takes a qualifying test (e.g., AP) during senior year but the test scores do not come in until after graduation, then the registrar will document the attainment of the Seal after graduation, adding it to the student’s transcript and informing the student that they can collect their award at CHS.