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Julie Esparza Brown  
*Portland State University*

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# Partnerships to Recruit and Prepare Bilingual Teachers

Julie Esparza Brown, Shawn Smallman, and Randy Hitz

## Abstract

*To address the need for teachers with the skills to effectively teach English Language Learner (ELL) students, Portland State University (PSU) collaborated with three Portland area community colleges and 17 school districts to develop a program to recruit and prepare bilingual/bicultural teachers. This nine-year-old program provides a career ladder for education paraprofessionals. Candidates begin their work at the community colleges or at the upper division or graduate levels at PSU depending upon their backgrounds. This article describes the program, assessment of the program, and lessons learned. To date, over 190 candidates have completed the program and 99 percent have been employed in partner school districts. Candidates, university faculty, and school district leaders express great satisfaction with the program, but they offer several suggestions for program refinement.*

In the last decade, Oregon has seen a rapid diversification of its public school students. In 2001, the Oregon K-12 public school student population was 22 percent students of color. By 2005 that percentage increased to over 28 percent and by 2020, 27 percent of all minority students will be Hispanic/Latino (Zanville 2006). Adding to this diversity are other ELL student groups who speak one of 138 languages other than English, students with special needs who represent 13 percent of K-12 students, and approximately 40 percent of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch.

Woodburn, a small city south of Portland, to some degree represents a microcosm of all the demographic changes taking place in the major Portland suburbs and smaller cities in Oregon. A generation ago, Woodburn was not a particularly diverse area, despite the presence of a Russian Old Believer community. By the time of the 2000 Census, however, Woodburn's total population was 20,100, of which 10,064 (50.1%) were Hispanic. The census figures also showed that 44.5% of the city's population was Mexican (Office of Economic Analysis 2000b). Similar trends can be seen in suburbs such as Gresham, which in 2000 had a rapidly growing Hispanic population of 10,732 out of a total population of 90,205 (Office of Economic Analysis 2000a). These figures actually understate the total size of the immigrant communities because some groups, such as Oregon's sizeable Russian and eastern European communities, do not appear in these census data. Moreover, in the school districts where graduates of Portland State University's (PSU) Bilingual Teacher Pathway (BTP) program teach, roughly 80 percent of students are on free or reduced costs lunches (Portland State University 2007a).

Although dropout rates are declining in Oregon according to the Oregon Department of Education (2005), African American, Hispanic, and Native American students are

dropping out at rates higher than White students. Further, ELL students who are currently enrolled in Oregon's public schools are not fairing as well academically as their majority peers. Oregon's Annual Year Progress (AYP) report for 2005-06 indicated that from ten categories of students whose progress was reported, three groups did not meet English Language Arts benchmarks: Limited English Proficient (aka ELL), Students with Disabilities, and those of Hispanic origin.

As far back as 1991, the need to diversify the teacher workforce was evident. Therefore, the Oregon Governor's Office of Education and Workforce Policy established the Minority Teacher Act. The Act was created as a blueprint for providing a teacher workforce that would mirror the diversity of the public school student body. Despite this Act, the discrepancy between Oregon's minority students and minority teachers continues to widen. The difference in the percentage of minority students and teachers grew from 15.20% to 17% between 2001 and 2003 (Zanville 2006).

Oregon, like most other states in the nation, has a shortage of teachers prepared to teach ELL students. Throughout the United States "less than 20 percent of the 56 percent of public school teachers in the U.S. who have at least one ELL student in their class are certified to teach ELL students" (Waxman, Tellez, and Walberg 2004). In 1996 as a response to this need, a consortium consisting of faculty from PSU, community colleges, and school districts began discussing the creation of a program to recruit and prepare bilingual/bicultural teachers. Shortly after they began meeting, the Consortium conducted a needs assessment survey in Portland area school districts and deemed that the richest potential source for bilingual/bicultural teachers were those bilingual paraprofessionals already working in local schools. Previous researchers (Genzuck & Baca, 1998; Harper, 1994; McGowan & Brandick, 1998; Ponessa, 1996) have also identified this group as a potentially rich source of future teachers for English Language Learners. The survey revealed that over 65 percent of the paraprofessionals had some college experience or a degree. These individuals were already committed to a career in education and often already lived within their school community. Thus, they were likely to remain in their schools rather than moving to other states or school districts. The Consortium then researched "career ladder" programs in other states and cities to explore how others had removed structural barriers to higher education for diverse individuals as well as recruitment of diverse potential teachers and retention strategies. The Consortium found that most career ladder programs were partnerships between one or two large school districts in collaboration with one or two colleges. In order to meet the needs of the Portland region, the program needed a committed network of partners across larger numbers of districts and community colleges. A partnership (Consortium) was created, which today includes 17 area school districts and PSU's Graduate School of Education (GSE), and together they designed a program to assist bilingual/bicultural education paraprofessionals in obtaining teacher licensures. Each district identifies a liaison who is usually an ESL/Bilingual Coordinator or Administrator and they attend bimonthly Consortium meetings.

The program received support from both within and outside of the university. Two federal grants provided funding to develop the program as well as student tuition support for ten years. In addition, the university provided over \$600,000 of tuition support to BTP candidates over the ten years. The Oregon Department of Education provided \$40,000 to support candidates in funding their professional exams. Within the Graduate School of Education, the Continuing Education Department (CE/ED) underwrote a portion of the ESL/Bilingual Endorsement coursework for BTP candidates totaling over \$1 million during the first decade of the program.

Now, over a decade later, because of the partnership and high level of support, Oregon’s teacher workforce has 180 new bilingual/bicultural teachers, as well as seventy more in the pipeline, uniquely prepared to address the needs of students from diverse cultures and for whom English is a second (or sometimes third) language. What follows is the story of our program, how it has developed and succeeded, and the challenges and lessons learned.

## **Description of the Bilingual Teacher Pathway Program**

One of the first tasks undertaken by the Consortium was to identify gaps and weaknesses in infrastructure that prevented bilingual/bicultural paraprofessionals from pursuing college degrees and teacher licensure. Table 1 shows the gaps and weaknesses identified and the Consortium’s agreed upon solutions. As a result the Consortium designed a career ladder with multiple pathways for bilingual/bicultural paraprofessionals to obtain an initial teaching license at any level, along with an ESL/Bilingual Endorsement.

**Table 1  
Identified Gaps and Solutions**

Gaps or Weaknesses in Infrastructure and Opportunity to Obtain Licensure/Degrees	BTP Consortium’s Agreed Upon Solutions
No path exists whereby bilingual educational paraprofessionals can continue employment and complete a teaching program part-time.	Articulate across community colleges and PSU a part-time program of study toward licensure and degree completion.
No organized efforts in place for outreach to bilingual high school students to recruit bilingual secondary students into teaching.	Develop and implement a systemic strategy for recruitment.

<p>No mechanism exists by which school districts and colleges/universities can pool their financial resources to support a preparation program and their educational paraprofessionals toward licensure.</p>	<p>Establish agreements whereby each school district pays a per-student amount for program and student support. Combine this with tuition waivers, faculty and staff, and office space/resources from colleges and PSU.</p>
<p>No system exists for providing services/supports critical for the success and retention of students. Research indicates that expert advising, language and content area assessment, foreign transcript review, mentoring, community building, and preparation for teaching exams are critical.</p>	<p>Allocate sufficient resources to provide Coordinators/Advisors at PSU and community colleges with expertise in advising bilingual students and coordinating academic programs. Also pool resources and expertise to provide all needed services and supports.</p>
<p>School districts, colleges, PSU, and unions have not collectively committed to long-term support of an agreed-upon solution to alleviate the critical shortage of bilingual teachers.</p>	<p>Build permanent support for the program and students by obtaining continuation agreements from districts to phase-in and pre-budget for eventual full support and commitment from colleges and PSU for</p>

In the spirit of broadening access to licensure to non-traditional candidates both undergraduate and graduate pathways were created. When the BTP coursework was designed, the program and PSU's Office of Graduate Studies collaborated to align the BTP program of study with the existing Master's in Education requirements. Thus, candidates who enter the program as graduate students are able to apply their BTP licensure coursework toward a Master's in Education. Once the licensure coursework is completed, students need only one course in research to obtain their Master's in Education.

For the undergraduate portion, the BTP program developed a strong partnership with PSU's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS). Together, CLAS and BTP created a specialized program in which BTP core education coursework is included in the program of study for the bachelor's degree in Liberal Studies. For candidates seeking a degree in an area other than Liberal Studies, partnerships with both the University Studies Department and the Degree Requirements unit allow candidates to use some of their BTP courses to meet junior and senior level university requirements. Since BTP candidates can be licensed at the elementary or secondary level, the collaboration includes working with content area departments in order for candidates to satisfy subject matter requirements for secondary level licenses. Each of the secondary candidates has an advisor from their respective college or department who in turn collaborates with the BTP advisor. Another area of collaboration includes the International Admissions Department. Fifty percent of the BTP participants have

received a degree outside of the U.S. and this department helps analyze transcripts as well as assists in obtaining often difficult-to-procure educational documents.

## **Program Components**

The BTP program includes (a) a strong recruiting component, (b) a teacher licensure and degree program, (c) a seamless program of course work and field experiences for bilingual paraprofessionals, and (d) individualized support for participants through advising, financial assistance, academic support, and mentors. All coursework is held during weekday evenings or intensive weekend formats since all BTP candidates continue their employment as paraprofessionals.

The BTP standards-based program of coursework is designed to build on the experience the participating paraprofessionals already have in classrooms as well as to provide a theoretical framework for educating culturally, linguistically and experientially diverse student populations. The program consists of three major areas of coursework: (1) 28-credit set of core methods and pedagogy courses framed around critical theory and multicultural concepts, (2) 16-credit hours of supervised field experiences including an ESL practicum and the option of a paid internship, and (3) 19-credit hours of ESL/Bilingual Endorsement courses. The state-authorized ESL/Bilingual Endorsement attaches to a teaching license and is included in the BTP program plan. This ensures that candidates receive specific classes in the education of culturally and linguistically diverse students along with the BTP core coursework which infuses these competencies.

Each fall, a cohort of between twenty-five to thirty candidates is admitted with some candidates entering at the undergraduate (junior) level and others at the graduate level. During the first year of the program students at the community college level were admitted as part of the BTP Program. After that initial year, however, it was evident that it was more effective to separate the programs yet maintain a smooth transition process for students wanting to transfer to PSU when they completed ninety credits. Now, eight years later, several of the students who began at the community college level have completed all licensure requirements and will begin employment as licensed teachers this fall. All participants must already be employed in one of the partner school districts, usually as a bilingual/bicultural paraprofessional. In order to apply, the applicant must be approved by their school district liaison who pre-screens them to ensure quality, motivation and commitment. Included in the application process is a group interview, two formal writing samples (in their first and second language) and a Quick Write in their second language during their group interview experience. Admission decisions are made collaboratively by district liaisons and BTP staff.

The BTP staff of four (a total of 2.75 full-time employees) includes a director, advisor, field coordinator and administrative assistant. They oversee program management, student advising and support, field experiences and policy for the seventy or so active candidates each year. The staff members are available for individual support at all times and work closely within the three-way partnership (students, BTP/PSU, and school district). Students sign a consent form upon admission allowing the program to

discuss their progress with their school districts; thus, facilitating open communication as well as broadening the student's support system. The BTP advisor develops an Individualized Program Plan for each student. Students meet with the advisor at least once each quarter. At the beginning of each quarter, we hold a mandatory quarterly meeting to assist in registering for classes as well as providing professional development that includes topics such as resume writing, interviewing skills, working with families, educational policies, advocacy and other program issues. Further support is provided through our Web site which provides crucial and up-to-date information on all aspects of the program ([www.btp.pdx.edu](http://www.btp.pdx.edu)).

In Oregon, all teacher candidates must pass standardized professional exams to assess basic skills, subject matter content knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge (only in reading, special education, library media, and ESL). The BTP program provides study guides, workshops, and other resources to help prepare candidates for these exams. Many BTP candidates are non-native English speakers for whom standardized tests can be very difficult (Brown 2005). Fortunately, Oregon's licensing board has an alternative assessment option available to any candidate who fails an exam twice. Close to thirty BTP candidates have been able to demonstrate their competencies for licensure through this route.

### **Field Experiences in Diverse Settings**

All BTP candidates participate in a minimum of three field experiences. The first, Student Teaching I is completed in their initial licensure authorization level (elementary or high school). This experience requires 135 contact hours of which fifty-five are observation and consultation with the teacher and the remaining eighty hours are actual teaching. To accomplish this, candidates who are working must take a leave of absence from their educational assistant position. There are two models of field experience for Student Teaching II. The first model is the traditional Student Teaching II where they work full-time in a school for one term during which the student gradually assumes the full range of responsibilities of a classroom teacher. This model is a difficult financial burden for many BTP students since it is non-paid and requires that they take leave of absence from their paraprofessional position. The preferred model for Student Teaching II is an internship. Oregon Administrative Rules of the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission defines an intern as, "A student of an approved institution who serves as a teacher, personnel specialist, or administrator under the supervision of the institution and of the school district in order to acquire practical experience in lieu of student teaching. Interns may receive both academic credit from the institution and financial compensation from the school district." Typically, districts compensate interns at 75 percent of a first-year teacher salary. The districts then use the cost savings to hire a mentor specifically to support the intern. The BTP Program provides university supervisors for all field experiences. All of the supervisors are retired K-12 administrators with years of experience with ESL and bilingual students.

The third field experience is the ESL/Bilingual Endorsement ninety-hour practicum. The majority of field placements are in Title I schools where a large percentage of students qualify for free and reduced lunch and where a large percentage of students are non-native English-speakers. This practicum is embedded in Student Teaching II so there is no need for candidates to take additional time away from their work as educational assistants.

## **Program Assessment**

Assessment has been an integral component of the Bilingual Teacher Pathway (BTP) program. In March 2005, the program's external evaluator, Donaldo Macedo conducted focus groups for faculty in the program, school district liaisons, supervisors, and students/alumni. In the fall of 2005, Susan Davis Lenski published an article which detailed an intensive qualitative study of ten students in the program. In June 2007, we followed up with a focus group with eight people, all of whom were school district liaisons. During the same month students and alumni of the program were invited to take part in a twenty-seven question Web survey to determine the career paths of those who had taken part in the program, the student body with which they worked, and the aspects of the program they found valuable. Combined, these sources allow us to view the BTP from multiple perspectives and to make an assessment of its strengths and areas for improvement.

There are some limitations with the data. Only thirty-five students and alumni responded to the 2007 Web survey, so it was a relatively small sample. In addition, we do not truly have longitudinal information on the BTP. While there was a two-year gap between the main assessments, this was not long enough to see how the program changed through time. As well, we were not able to carry out focus groups with all of the categories that participated in 2005. Finally, some surveying of the high school students now taught by BTP alumni and comparison with a control group might add another perspective to future research.

## **What We Have Learned**

All groups interviewed or surveyed had a favorable assessment of the program. This sense came through clearly in Susan Davis Lenski's study of ten candidates, who "were in their fourth term of a six-term program and were enrolled in a year-long reflective practitioner course" (Lenski 2005, 106). The candidates were bilingual in either Spanish or Russian. The study used multiple sources to gain information from the candidates, including "journal entries, interviews and class discussions" (Lenski 2005, 106). The candidates described language as a powerful aspect of identity in their own lives, defining who they were. They found that their ability to be "border crossers" made them in demand in their school districts, not only to translate materials and carry out similar linguistic tasks, but also because of their ability to reach across cultures. The candidates believed that they were especially skilled at communicating with students and families and had a keen awareness of their position as role models which they took seriously (Lenski 2005).



A similar perspective emerged in the student focus group in 2005 (Portland State University 2005a). In describing the program, the most common words used by students were opportunity and flexibility. Many students stressed that they could not have participated in the program without the financial support that it offered: “BTP provided the benefit of continuing education with a reduced price.” Another student commented: “The advisors are really great and my teacher advisor was excellent. They hold our hands and follow through to the end...everyone ends up with jobs” (Portland State University 2005a).

Similar comments emerged from the faculty focus group of March 2005. This group was Curriculum and Instruction faculty who taught some of the BTP core courses. They reported that the program was clearly focused and that the supervisors and faculty had been reflective in shaping the BTP to address student needs. There was also a sense that the program had improved with time: “What is different about the BTP is the level of support at all levels. I personally can say that there is a lot of discussion about the classes and a lot of discussion between the administration and the faculty. . . Every year things seem to change and tighten up” (Portland State University 2005c).

Faculty take pride in the BTP students they teach. Faculty expected students would come out of the program with a strong set of skills, in part due to the advantage of their experience as instructional assistants. From this background the students “come into courses and they just know so much. They have a lot of the skills of seasoned teachers, they just don’t have the names for the teaching methods” (Portland State University 2005c). Some BTP students also had experience in their home countries, as one supervisor noted: “Many BTP teachers I have worked with have had experiences as a teacher in another country” (Portland State University 2005d). The faculty suggested that this meant that they would be less likely to leave the field: “We don’t do induction in this country very well. I don’t know the data on the BTP, but I’d be surprised if BTP students walk away from the teaching field after two or three years” (Portland State University 2005c).

A similar sentiment emerged in the focus groups with district partners: “We have three students currently in the program. The teachers have stayed and we don’t anticipate any turnover” (Portland State University 2005b). District partners believed that hiring people with a personal connection to the schools was the key to retention. One school district liaison said that their district had gained “twenty-two certified bilingual teachers through the BTP program and the data shows that hiring in-house people—they stay and do not leave” (Portland State University 2005b). Having local people was clearly perceived to be a positive goal: “There are problems with recruiting outside Oregon, so it is good to find people who are already in the area. Paraprofessionals already have a familiarity with the area, district policy, families and students” (Portland State University 2005b).

Besides their belief that BTP alumni were more likely to be retained, both the faculty and School District Consortium partners pointed to the cross-cultural role of BTP graduates, which Lenski’s work also stressed, as something that would advance their

success in urban schools with diverse populations:

They have the experience, but they have to be culture brokers. BTP are culture brokers....Faculty, teachers, we've been there; we know how to work; we model, model, model. Students feel comfortable asking us questions that they may not be comfortable asking in their School District or with their cooperating teachers. They leave the program solid and secure. And I can tell you, because I was here from the very beginning, we are putting minority teachers out there because if you come from poverty, it is really hard to get out there unless you have culture brokers (Portland State University 2005c).

The use of the term "culture" was significant, because although there is a stronger emphasis on language in the program, the belief that BTP alumni would have a "cultural" connection to their students was a strong theme.

Despite the strongly positive evaluations of the program by all involved, some constructive criticism and concerns emerged as well. On the faculty side, people wanted to see deeper connections between students in the Graduate Teacher Education Program (GTEP) and the BTP: "Different cohorts need to come together. With the secondary methods course, we can get some BTP candidates mixing with GTEP candidates" (Portland State University 2005c). Another faculty member saw obvious overlaps with the Portland Teachers Program (PTP), a collaboration with Portland Public Schools and Portland Community College designed to diversify the teaching body. "Bring in the PTP pool—a lot of them are from poverty and are diverse" (Portland State University 2005c). Indeed, one faculty member believed that all of GTEP would benefit from drawing on the BTP program: "I would require all the students in GTEP to be proficient in a second language, at least by the time they graduate if not before. Then I would partner BTP and regular GTEP candidates in some way (Portland State University 2005c). Candidates echoed this comment: "BTP needs to push into the GTEP program" (Portland State University 2005a).

While this connection would have benefits for the BTP, faculty also suggested it would strengthen the Graduate School of Education's diversity mission: "I think that the danger is that BTP takes care of the diversity aspect of GSE for us" (Portland State University 2005c). Interestingly, the school district consortium partners had a different perspective in that, instead of stressing the need to integrate the program into GSE, they focused on the strong connections that developed within cohorts: "Each year the cohorts work together and that kind of network in a professional/personal way is a great thing. Networks can last the rest of their teaching experience. People stay in touch and that is their strength" (Portland State University 2005b).

One concern shared by faculty, district partners, and candidates was the future of the program once current federal funding ended. This echoed throughout the conversations: "It is a real challenge if you are dependent on external money" (Portland State University 2005c). Many people commented that this funding was critical because of the rapid demographic changes taking place in Oregon, particularly in the Portland suburbs. As one faculty member commented, "I've been in Portland twelve and a half years and the number of non-English speaking students has

exploded. Without BTP, we wouldn't have a response to that" (Portland State University 2005c). Similar comments came from a school district consortium focus group in January 2005 (Portland State University 2005b), wherein administrators reported trying to teach "70 percent language learners with 25 percent qualified personnel." They clearly perceived themselves to be under pressure because the number of "ELL students keeps increasing and the teaching staff does not. . ." (Portland State University 2005b). The BTP helped them to address this pressure.

At the same time, from the perspective of the district partners, the BTP program did not address the diversity of languages now faced in their schools: "Most BTP students are Spanish speakers, but we have other language speakers who need to be represented" (Portland State University 2005b). In part, this problem reflected the increasing variety of immigrants in Oregon: "Expansion is an issue. We serve sixty-five languages in our district. BTP needs to expand to other languages/cultures than just Hispanic/Spanish speakers" (Portland State University 2005b). The scale of this challenge was illustrated by a 2007 Web survey of BTP students and alumni, which included a question about which languages were spoken in their schools. Responses identified thirty-six different languages, of which Spanish was the largest. Students also spoke a number of Mexico's indigenous languages (Maya, Mixtec, Purupecha and Zapotec) and may have also had some secondary Spanish. After Spanish, the three most commonly spoken languages were Russian, Chinese, and Vietnamese, while other languages were nearly evenly represented from across the globe, with no world region dominating (Portland State University 2007a). The diversity of language requirements in the partner schools is a continuing issue for recruitment, and the school district consortium partner liaisons may need to give more consideration to district language needs in their recruitment process.

District partners also identified additional steps to strengthen the program. For example, they suggested that the internship be approached cautiously, to confirm the candidate was truly prepared for field placement. One school district consortium partner suggested identifying protocol: "There should be a real step by the GSE that indicates when the student teachers will start teaching because it seems less legitimate otherwise" (Portland State University 2007b). They also had concerns about the candidates' language and writing skills, which focus groups from both 2005 and 2007 commented upon, suggesting, for example, that there "should be some opportunities to develop language competencies throughout the program." (Portland State University 2007b). This was necessary because many non-native English-speaking students had difficulty passing the standardized professional tests (CBEST, ORELA, Praxis) or candidates are not taking these tests until the end of the program because they are scared that they won't be able to pass it (Portland State University 2007b). More structural support in this area might strengthen students' confidence and address the district partners' concerns.

In contrast, supervisors pointed to the need from more support from the partner schools, in particular to give them more direction:

Some students are placed in a school and they don't really know what their

role is. Sometimes, I see that the students don't have the supervision in the schools and don't know what to teach, especially if they are placed in a classroom with an ESL program or Pullout program, where they don't see the same students. They need more from their school than they are getting. They lack direction (Portland State University 2005d).

These supervisors are mostly retired school administrators who enter the schools to observe the candidate's teaching, which informs this comment: The supervisors suggested increasing the contacts between program staff and the cooperating teachers. Nonetheless, the supervisors agreed that the BTP was an excellent program which benefited not only the candidates but also the district partners. To some extent, the program was seen to be a hiring pathway: "I know that a lot of the principals who have the BTP interns plan on keeping them" (Portland State University 2005d).

When asked where the program had not met their needs, candidates had a less cohesive answer. They talked about the need for more hands-on activities, greater help preparing their work sample, more development of math skills, greater attention to lesson planning, more preparation for special education, and more grade-specific classes to teach literacy. Few comments were repeated and most did not seem to be particular to the BTP as opposed to GTEP. The one common sentiment, however, was that candidates wanted to serve as "mentors to the next BTP generation" (Portland State University 2005a). This echoed the district partner's comments about the intense bonds that developed within the BTP cohorts.

In summary, the BTP's assessment process has identified a number of areas where the program could be strengthened. The assessment also demonstrated the critical role played by the BTP. It found that BTP alumni were working in the local community, generally in the greater Portland Area, with most students either in Portland Public Schools, the suburbs to the west and east (in particular the Gresham-Barlow district), and Woodburn, a small city thirty-five miles south of Portland (Portland State University 2007a). A number of steps could strengthen the program: a protocol for field placement, more development of language skills within the program, greater opportunities to mix with candidates in the GTEP, and more mentoring of BTP candidates by alumni. Nonetheless, the program had a broad base of support among faculty, district partners and candidates, and clearly meets a perceived need given urban Oregon's rapidly changing demographics.

## **Reflections**

To date, over 190 bilingual/bicultural participants have completed the program and are "highly qualified" teachers. Our graduates represent twenty-six different countries and speak more than twelve different languages. They are licensed at all levels (early childhood, elementary, mid-level and high school) and in the content areas of foreign language, social studies, math, business, library media and drama. Several teach in hard-to-staff dual language immersion programs. Their average age is thirty-eight. The attrition rate is very low with no more than one to two students exiting each year.

As can be seen, the BTP Program broadens college access in two critical ways: (1) by providing a licensure program for non-traditional students, and (2) by providing a diverse teacher workforce skilled in the effective instruction of culturally and linguistically diverse learners. Thus, it is anticipated that these teachers will positively impact the academic success of diverse learners who will graduate from high school and enter college.

We have experienced a very high success rate (over 95 percent) among our BTP candidates and we believe that in large part this success is due to the high level of support given to each candidate. Given the amount of individualized support non-traditional students may require, we find this level of staffing a necessity, not a luxury. Most candidates have difficulty affording the costs of higher education even though they are employed. Many have cultural misgivings about incurring financial debt through student loans, and those who apply for loans may still have difficulty with childcare, transportation, books and other costs. Thus, tuition stipends are a critical component to providing college access to potential teachers from underrepresented groups. Career pathway programs also require strong support and partnerships as well as sufficient staff and faculty.

Perhaps BTP is summarized best by one of our candidates: “This program gave me the experience of meeting people from different cultures with rich and varied backgrounds. Above all, the most important thing has been the ability to realize my potential as a teacher, to be able to empower my students to become ‘border crossers’ and help them to discover new horizons and have more choices in their lives. At the same time, this program has empowered me to be able to help parents become involved in the delicate process of educating their children in a new and foreign country.”

Meeting the specificities of needs of the ever-increasing non-white students requires not only that we continue to refigure alternative ways to prepare teachers for the twenty-first century, but also it necessitates that we accept Carlos Fuentes’ challenge that we imagine non-White children in our schools as “the young teachers of their own and others, they are the new business people rapidly growing and diversifying U.S. services and production, they are the new doctors and lawyers and architects and biologists and politicians, they are the new singers and actors and dancers and stage directors and painters and musicians enriching U.S. culture with contrast, diversity, and generosity” (Fuentes 1999, 15).

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### **Author Information**

Julie Esparza Brown is Assistant Professor in the Graduate School of Education and the former director of the Bilingual Teacher Pathways Program. Her interests are in preparing teachers in general and special education to work with English language learners.

Shawn Smallman is the Vice-Provost for Instruction and Dean of Undergraduate Studies as well as Professor of International Studies at Portland State University.

Randy Hitz is the Dean of the Graduate School of Education.

Dr. Julie Esparza Brown  
Assistant Professor  
Graduate School of Education  
Portland State University  
P.O. Box 751  
Portland, OR 97201  
E-mail: jebrown@pdx.edu  
Telephone: 503-725-4696  
Fax: 503-725-8475

Dr. Shawn Smallman  
Vice Provost for Instruction and Dean of Undergraduate Studies  
Portland State University  
P.O. Box 751  
Portland, OR 97201  
E-mail: smallmans@pdx.edu  
Telephone: 503-725-9010  
Fax: 503-725-5262

Dr. Randy Hitz  
Dean and Professor, Graduate School of Education  
Portland State University  
P.O. Box 751  
Portland, OR 97201  
E-mail: hitz@pdx.edu  
Telephone: 503-725-4697  
Fax: 503-725-8475