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“This is our mission”: Equity and Ideological Clarity in a Montessori Dual Language School

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Educational equity remains elusive in Two-Way Immersion Bilingual programs (TWBE), where students of color experience significant disparities in academic achievement, parental voice, and meaningful engagement compared to their white peers. This study examined teachers’ and administrators’ perspectives on equity in the context of a public Montessori Dual Language School (MDLS) within a gentrifying neighborhood. The qualitative analysis of 15 interviews revealed two primary orientations to equity: political and ideological clarity and a Montessorian approach, with some educators drawing on both. Administrators shared teachers’ views of equity; however, they adopted a broader perspective on the impacts of gentrification on TWBE program sustainability. Findings suggest the critical role of ideological and political clarity within integrated dual language bilingual schools.

KEYWORDS

bilingual education (BE), dual language bilingual education, equity, gentrification, teachers’ perspectives, two-way immersion (TWI)

1 Introduction

“The dual language program needs to serve our ELLs first. They need to be our priority.”
—Penelope (Lower Elementary Teacher, 7 years experience).

Recent scholarship on socioeconomically and racially integrated dual language bilingual schools has shown the need to focus on equity and better serving language-minoritized students, especially those from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds (Cervantes-Soon et al., 2017; Palmer et al., 2019). Dual language programs, also known as Two-Way Immersion Bilingual Programs (TWBE), are those that bring together students from language minoritized backgrounds and students from language dominant backgrounds with the stated goals of bilingualism, biliteracy, and inter-cultural understanding for both groups of students. Equity has been at the forefront of critical scholarship in discussing these programs, particularly in relation to the different socio-political and economic standings of children of immigrant families versus those of well-resourced, privileged, English-speaking and white families (e.g., Cervantes-Soon et al., 2017; Flores et al., 2021; Palmer et al., 2019; Valdés, 1997, 2018). The central role of teachers in ensuring equity in these programs at the classroom level is critical, particularly in contexts of rapid gentrification (García-Mateus, 2023; Heiman and Yanes, 2018; Palmer, 2009). The increase in TWBE programs across the United States has been associated not so much with a desire for more just schooling for language minoritized children, but with a desire for language as enrichment education for language majoritized families. Scholars have termed this the “gentrification of dual language education,” (Delavan et al., 2024) calling attention to the fact that bilingual programs have been couched in the neoliberal terms

of *language as capital and accumulation*, as opposed to *language as a right* for minoritized families. (Flores and García 2017; Heller, 2006)

This article examines teachers' perspectives on equity in the context of a Montessori dual language public school in a metropolitan area of the western U. S. Located in a historically Latinx, yet rapidly gentrifying neighborhood, Montessori Dual-Language School (MDLS, pseudonym) is a unique and generative context in which to explore questions of equity. The research questions we addressed in this analysis are: *How do teachers understand equity, within their dual language Montessori context, in a gentrifying neighborhood? What actions do they describe as connected to equity?* We explored these questions through a qualitative interview study with teachers and school leaders. We first delve into what the literature reveals regarding equity in integrated TWBE contexts and research in Montessori education.

2 Equity in two-way immersion bilingual contexts in the U.S

Equity has been at the center of U.S.-based scholarship on TWBE over the past few decades. Despite being a highly acclaimed model of bilingual education, equitable outcomes for bilingual students, particularly racialized bilingual students from economically disadvantaged or working-class backgrounds, continue to be elusive (Dorner and Cervantes-Soon, 2020; Cervantes-Soon et al., 2017). Flores and García (2017) trace the rise in popularity of the TWBE model of bilingual education, which shifts the focus from teaching bilingual children to teaching two languages, to an increase in the commodification of language and the uptake of neoliberal and global human capital discourses (Heller, 2006). The authors argue this shift distances bilingual education from its civil rights origins. Instead, it emphasizes an instrumental, profit-driven economic value of bilingualism. Delavan et al. (2024) describe this as the gentrification of TWBE, which refers to “any literal or figurative pushing out of marginalized students and their interests amid the influx of more privileged students and their interests” (2024, p.13; see also Valdez et al., 2016). Research loosely grouped under this term has examined how middle-class English speaking students tend to dominate classroom interactions (Chaparro, 2019; Palmer, 2009); how white middle-class families and their interests obscure those of Spanish-speaking and immigrant families (Chaparro, 2020; Cervantes-Soon, 2014; Dorner, 2011; Flores et al., 2021; Martínez, 2017; Shannon, 2011); how program creation and implementation can be catered to and designed for English speakers (Freire et al., 2017; Sun and Wang, 2021) and how raciolinguistic ideologies impact ideas about students' bilingual proficiencies and development (Chaparro, 2019; García-Mateus, 2023).

Teachers are central actors in the pursuit of equity, especially in terms of classroom dynamics, and particularly in TWBE classrooms (García-Mateus, 2023; Heiman and Yanes, 2018; Palmer, 2009). While there may be constraints and top-down policies that teachers have no control over, they do have a great deal of control over what happens within their classroom (Babino and Stewart, 2018; Menken and García, 2010). Researchers have shown how committed teachers do make a difference. For example, Palmer (2009) highlights how one teacher in a TWBE classroom, acutely aware of how English-dominant speakers tended to dominate the floor in classroom discussions,

actively sought to create more equitable participation patterns. In contrast, her counterpart did not, and as a result, English speakers dominated the conversation. García-Mateus (2023) and Heiman and Yanes (2018) both show the impact of equity-oriented teachers in TWBE contexts. In their review of the literature, Cervantes-Soon et al. (2017) write: “To combat inequalities, TWI teachers should possess the necessary pedagogical skills, be bilingual, and have a critical understanding of what it means to serve students within TWI's inherent diversity and complexity.” (p. 412).

In addition to teachers, school leaders are instrumental for the success and maintenance of bilingual education programs (Alanis and Rodriguez, 2008; Menken and Solorza, 2015). When school leaders participate in professional development that elevates bilingualism as an asset and resource, leaders have been shown to create changes in school structures that lead to ideological, pedagogical, and curricular choices that value, foster, and celebrate students' bilingualism (Ascenzi-Moreno et al., 2016). English-only pressures impacting schools, stemming from accountability requirements and policies at the district, state, and federal levels, require school leaders to be committed to the goal of bilingual education in order to resist such pressures (Menken and Solorza, 2015). The way school leaders think about their bilingual programs has implications for students labeled “English Learners.” In an interview study of 19 principals of dual language bilingual programs, Bernstein et al. (2020) found that principals framed their programs in one of two ways: within a social justice frame or within a neoliberal/instrumentalist discourse. Indeed, school leaders, along with teachers, are critical in resisting the neoliberal, school choice, and gentrification pressures on their programs (Bernstein et al., 2021; Izquierdo et al., 2019) and can ensure to lead with political and ideological clarity in order to preserve the social justice aims of bilingual education (Izquierdo et al., 2023).

3 Montessori public education and equity

Montessori education is often described as a child-centered approach that emphasizes hands-on learning within a prepared environment and utilizes multi-age groupings in classrooms. This educational method was developed by Dr. Maria Montessori in Italy in the early 1900s. Maria Montessori was an Italian doctor, scientist, and educator who developed a school for children in one of the poorest sections of Rome. Through intense scientific observation and developmental study, Montessori created a method that is responsive to various stages of a child's growth and prioritizes independence, self-sufficiency, and choice. In her later years, Montessori firmly believed in education for peace and delivered lectures worldwide on the subject (Montessori, 1992). The central pillars of Montessori implementation include mixed-age groupings, uninterrupted work time, freedom of choice, Montessori materials, Montessori-trained teachers, and adopting a Montessori philosophy (Debs et al., 2022). Given that there is no central regulatory association or trademark, there is wide variety in implementation of the Montessori method among schools (Debs et al., 2022). The 2022 Global Montessori Census counted close to 16,000 Montessori schools worldwide, and over 3,000 in the United States (Debs et al., 2022). Only 9% of the schools worldwide appear to be government funded. In the United States, there are estimated to be 500–600 public Montessori schools (Debs et al., 2022).

Select Montessori organizations stress the essential role of equity and inclusivity in the educational method. For example, the American Montessori Society lists four key underpinnings of a Montessori education, one of which is that it is “based on ideals of equity, inclusion, and social justice” (American Montessori Society, n.d.). Similarly, the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector, a US based organization, is founded on the guiding principle that “sustainable, just, and humanizing public Montessori programs have the power to break down barriers and transform lives and societies for peace and justice” (National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector, n.d.). There is a growing body of evidence that supports the benefits of a Montessori education particularly in the areas of executive function (Diamond and Lee, 2011; Lillard, 2012; Lillard and Heise, 2016), mathematics (Lillard, 2012), social development (Lillard and Else-Quest, 2006), and overall achievement (Fleming and Culclasure, 2024; Snyder et al., 2021). Within this literature, several studies have found that Montessori is effective in closing the achievement gap for students of color (Fleming and Culclasure, 2024; Lillard et al., 2017; Snyder et al., 2021), although some results have been mixed (Ansari and Winsler, 2014). For example, in a study of South Carolina’s public Montessori schools, Black, female, and low-income students in Montessori schools demonstrated greater achievement growth in math and English Language arts (ELA) as compared to their traditional public school counterparts (Fleming and Culclasure, 2024). Similarly, Snyder et al. (2021) found that students of color and those from less-resourced homes outperformed district children in math and ELA for both grades tested (3rd and 8th grade).

Many of the aforementioned studies rarely delve into why a Montessori education might be more effective at closing equity gaps, or in what ways it better supports not only children of color, but also the ideals of equity and inclusion. The deep respect for children’s autonomy and their intrinsic motivation to learn, and the core principles of peace and respect for one’s environment, suggest a direct connection to promoting inclusivity and equity within the classroom. Moreover, the structure of multi-age classrooms allow children to reach mastery at their own pace, particularly important in order to differentiate learning. As our findings illustrate, these guiding principles were frequently highlighted by practicing teachers when discussing their perspectives on equity.

Taken together, the literature on public Montessori schools and on TWBE programs point to both opportunities and challenges to equity within these systems. Rarely have these systems been examined in conjunction. As such, this study addresses this gap and sheds light on the commitments to equity of the educators at one public Montessori dual language school. And, while the setting of a public school that combines both Montessori and a Two-Way Bilingual Education program is quite unique, its location within a gentrifying community is not. As such, the inequities existing between children in this school according to various axes of difference are also those that exist in other schools within similar contexts.

4 Theoretical framework

With equity at the center of this work, we were guided by Bartolomé’s theorizing of teachers’ political and ideological clarity

(Bartolomé, 1994; Bartolomé, 2004). Bartolomé (2004) defines political clarity as:

[T]he ongoing process by which individuals achieve ever-deepening consciousness of the sociopolitical and economic realities that shape their lives and their capacity to transform such material and symbolic conditions. It also refers to the process by which individuals come to understand the possible linkages between macro-level political, economic, and social variables of subordinated groups’ academic performance in the micro-level classroom (p. 98).

Ideological clarity, then, is the ability to engage in ideological analysis, to question the status quo and one’s own beliefs and ideologies. Alfaro and Bartolomé (2017) explain that ideological clarity:

[R]equires individuals to compare and contrast their explanations of the existing social order with those propagated by the dominant society. The expectation is that, by consciously juxtaposing ideologies, teachers will understand if, when, and how their belief systems uncritically reflect those of the dominant society and support unfair and inequitable conditions (Alfaro and Bartolomé, 2017, p. 12; see also Bartolomé, 2002, p. 168).

Based on an interview study of four exemplary teachers in one high school, Bartolomé (2004) distilled the ways in which these teachers exhibited ideological and political clarity through: (1) an awareness of power relations in society, (2) questioning the status quo and belief in meritocracy, (3) rejecting deficit views of students, and (4) interrogating white dominant culture. Additionally, Bartolomé found that all teachers had either personally experienced their own subordination or witnessed that of others, and, as such, understood their role as “cultural brokers.” This framework guided our analysis as we delved deeper into teachers’ interviews, looking specifically for ways in which teachers expressed one or more of these beliefs, and/or clearly described their actions and beliefs with political and ideological clarity. In what follows, we describe the context where this research took place, followed by a description of our methodology as well as our major findings.

5 Research context

Montessori Dual-Language School (MDLS) is located in a part of the city that was historically home to Italian American and Mexican American families. In fact, MDLS was founded with the explicit mission of educating second-generation Mexican Americans bilingually to counter the language loss experienced by many families. Yet, in the past decade, this area of the city has rapidly gentrified—with property values rising astronomically and new construction replacing older homes. From 2010 to 2020, the area declined from 37% Hispanic/Latinx to 16%. As such, MDLS serves children and families from diverse ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds. In 2018 to 2019 (the year the data was collected), the school enrolled 422 students, of whom 64% were Hispanic/Latinx, 31% were white, and 0–2% were Asian American, African American, American Indian/Alaskan Native or identifying as two or more races.

Furthermore, 35% of students qualified for free and reduced priced lunch.

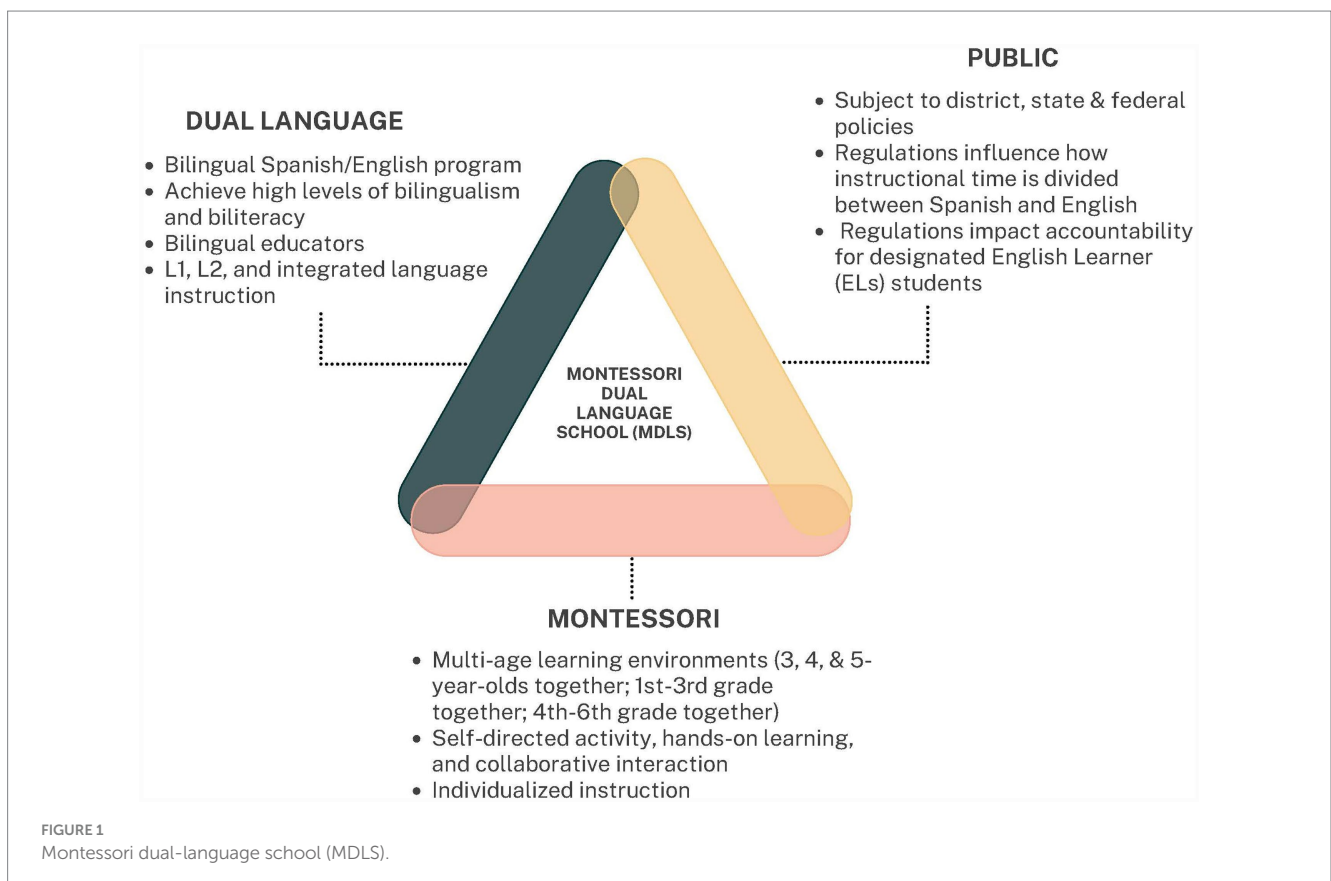
The students at MDLS have different linguistic profiles. Some children are learning Spanish as an additional language, some are learning English, and others are being raised learning both as simultaneous bilinguals (children learning both English and Spanish at home). Each group presents different linguistic strengths and needs which must be addressed through differentiated instruction. Efforts to address the “achievement gap” between white students, students of color, and students labeled “English Learners” at MDLS have led to a school-wide focus on equity that guides Data Driven Instruction (DDI) times.

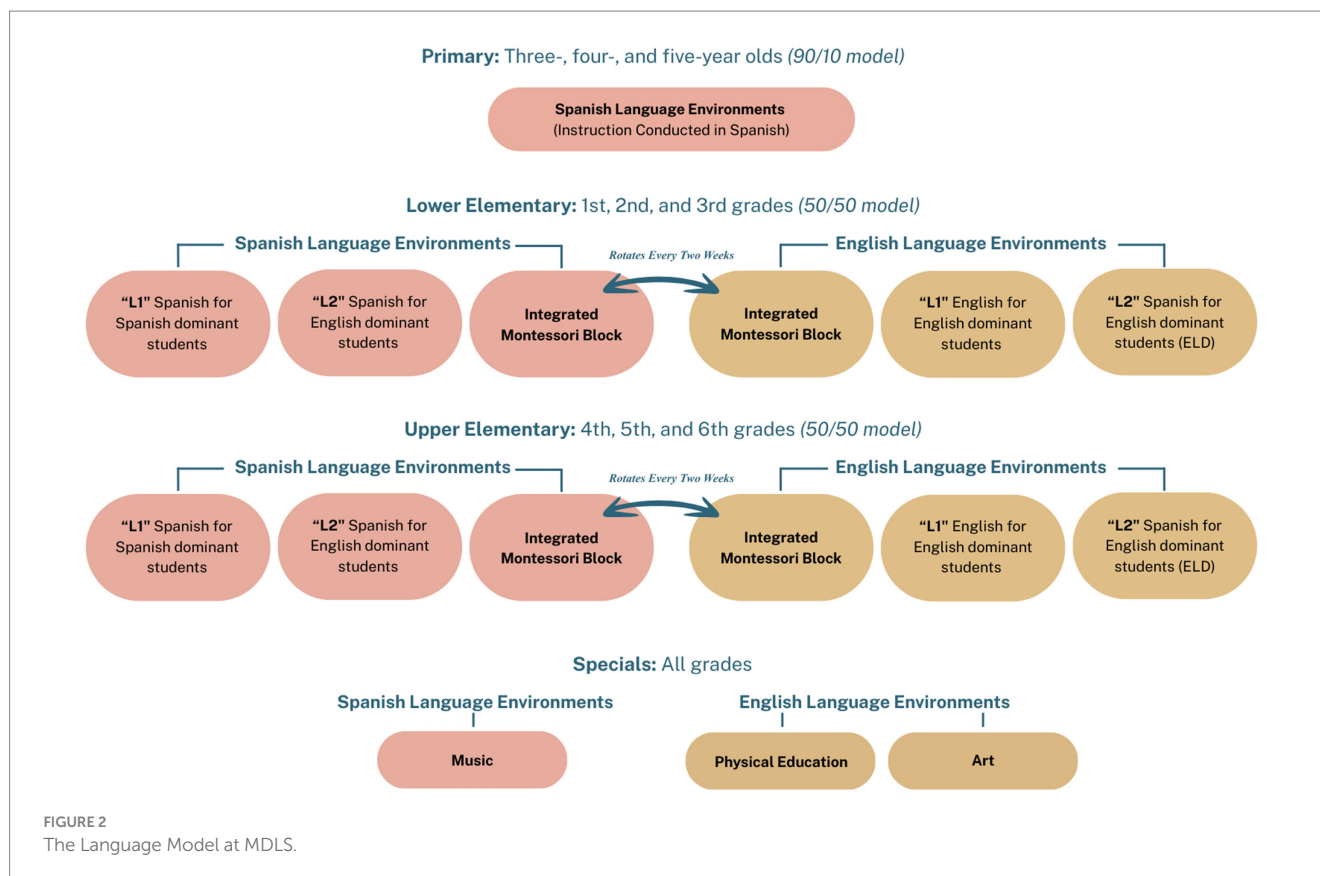
Importantly, Montessori Dual-Language School (MDLS) operates at the crux of three different systems: it is a public school, a Montessori school, and a dual language school (see Figure 1).

Each system requires a different set of priorities and policies. As a Montessori school, MDLS structures teaching and learning following the model developed by Dr. Maria Montessori in Italy and includes creating comfortable, well-designed, multi-age learning environments that facilitate student discovery, sustained work, and independent learning. To reflect this model, MDLS has three multi-age classrooms: Primary, which includes three-, four-, and five-year-olds; Lower Elementary, which includes first, second, and third graders; and Upper Elementary, which includes fourth, fifth, and sixth graders. As a dual language school, MDLS also has the goal of achieving high levels of bilingualism and biliteracy in *all* students. In order to meet both the goals of a dual language bilingual and Montessori program, at the lower and upper elementary levels, the

school divides students and instructional time in three ways: L1, L2, and integrated. “L1” refers to students and instructional time that occurs in students’ “first language”; “L2” refers to students and instructional time that occurs in students’ “second language”; and “Integrated Montessori Block” refers to heterogeneous groups of students that include various language proficiencies. The Montessori three-hour block occurs during Integrated time. However, because not all teachers are bilingual, the structure of the program is designed to match teachers’ linguistic abilities. As a result, for Lower and Upper elementary grades, Integrated Montessori time necessarily occurs only in one language environment. Therefore, integrated groups must periodically switch in order to receive bilingual Montessori time throughout the school year. At the time of the interviews, the school had recently shifted to a 90/10 model in Primary classrooms. This means that all Primary classrooms became Spanish learning environments, where all learning takes place in Spanish, around 90% of the time. The remaining 10% of English time is provided through art and physical education (see Figure 2 for a visual representation of the language model).

Finally, as a public school, MDLS is also subject to district, state, and federal policies. These include using district mandated curriculum and assessments as well as federal and state policies on teaching students who are labeled English Learners (ELs or ELLs). These regulations specifically impact accountability measures for students designated English Learners and influence how teachers divide their instructional time. In sum, these policies are often at odds with the philosophies of both a Montessori school and a dual language model.





6 Methodology and data sources

The research questions that guided this analysis were: (1) *How do teachers understand equity within their dual language Montessori context, in a gentrifying neighborhood?* and (2) *What actions do they describe as connected to equity?* In order to answer these questions, we analyzed 15 semi-structured interviews with teachers and administrators, that ranged in duration from 25 to 75 min. The majority of the interviews were conducted by the first author, with the help of a research assistant who conducted four interviews. All interviews were conducted from May 2018 to October 2019. We invited teachers to participate on a voluntary basis and recruited through email. The principal allowed us to use teachers' planning time, and for the most part the interviews took place in teachers' classrooms. We gave teachers a choice on whether to conduct the interview individually or with their partner teacher, and eight teachers (four pairs) chose to do their interview jointly. Thus, there were four interviews conducted with two individuals present, plus 11 individual interviews, for a total of 19 individual participants and 15 total interviews. Interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish, and participants were able to choose the language they answered questions in, with the exception of four teachers who were interviewed by a research assistant who was not fluent in Spanish (See [Appendix A](#) for teacher interview protocol).

As a qualitative study, the main approach to analysis was through inductive initial coding, followed by several rounds of more focused coding as themes began emerging in the data. The first round of coding was conducted by the first author, with four key interviews coded inductively in order to generate an initial

set of codes. These codes were sensitive to the two main research questions driving the overall study: (1) *What ideas about language and speakers did the participants express in this interview?* and (2) *What ideas about equity did the participants express?* To narrow the scope of our analysis, we concentrated on the second question.

At this point, the research team expanded to include the second and third authors. The three authors conducted a second round of analysis focusing exclusively on the data excerpts that connected to the idea of equity. After each coding session, each author wrote a research memo describing the main insights from the interview, focusing on the question: *What ideas about equity did the participants express?* During the discussion of findings, we identified two prominent themes: many teachers' views of equity were influenced by a Montessorian perspective, and many teachers expressed strong convictions with clear ideological and political clarity. Using Bartolomé's framework as discussed above, we identified more specifically the beliefs that teachers expressed, whether they could be characterized by a 'Montessorian view,' defined by political and ideological clarity, or by both, and how they described actions they took as connected to equity. We refined our research memos to include this information, and created a synthesis matrix where we sought to further elaborate on teachers' views of equity to find connections, patterns, and trends among the data. This method allowed us to confirm our interpretations and to reach thematic saturation in our analysis. In this final step of the analysis process we verified our interpretations of the data by checking our categories against the data, making explicit connections between the data and our literature, and extracting specific quotes to illustrate each theme.

7 Researchers' positionalities

This qualitative study was motivated by the first author's interest in bilingual education in gentrifying contexts and her experience in Montessori education from PK-6th grade in Mexico. Her unique background and experience in both systems became a point of connection with the then-principal when they were introduced by a university colleague. Informal visits to the school and conversations with the principal led to the conceptualization of this study. In particular, Sofia (first author) established rapport with teachers and staff through her identities as a Spanish-speaking Latina, a former dual language teacher, and/or a former Montessori student.

The second author joined the study during the second round of coding, extracting themes of equity through constant-comparative analysis. As an instructor of teacher candidates across Colorado, her work is shaped by the realities educators face while navigating race, privilege, and systemic inequities in their classrooms. Kathryn's (second author) background as a bilingual educator in both domestic and international settings, along with being a parent of a bilingual, bicultural child, deepens her understanding of how language, identity, and belonging are shaped by the contexts in which students are situated. As a white, cisgender woman, she recognizes that her own experiences and values influence this work and holds a deep responsibility to engage with these communities through a justice-oriented lens.

Along with the second author, the third author joined the study during the analysis phase. At the time of writing this article, Elena (third author) is a doctoral student with a concentration in Leadership for Education Equity in Early Childhood Education. As the daughter of a Spanish immigrant mother and an American father, she has experienced privilege in her life as a cisgender, white woman, and also been afforded the benefits of growing up in a bilingual, bicultural home. She currently supports Latinx home child care educators and center-based educators in her community as a bilingual coach and instructor with the local Early Childhood Council. Her previous experience working in family services at Head Start allowed her to see the wealth of knowledge that families and children bring into early learning spaces, even though they face ongoing systemic challenges and barriers.

8 Findings

We present our findings in three sections: (1) political and ideological clarity, (2) the Montessorian view of equity, and (3) school leaders' views of equity. These three sections capture the salient themes that came out of the analysis: teachers demonstrated political and ideological clarity in varying ways, expressed a Montessorian view of equity, and, in some cases, described being guided by both perspectives. Given the unique position of school leaders, and their similar perspectives on equity, as expressed in their interviews, we devote one section to analyzing their views within the complex ecology of MDLS.

Overall, we characterized nine of the educators we interviewed as displaying political and ideological clarity in their teaching context, six as describing their views of equity in line with a Montessorian perspective, and three as exemplifying a mix of both perspectives. [Table 1](#) displays basic descriptive information about each participant

along with our interpretation of their view of equity (see [Table 1](#)). We first turn to how teachers expressed political and ideological clarity in their interviews and the actions they described as connected to these perspectives.

8.1 Political and ideological clarity

8.1.1 Serving students labeled English language learners

One of the ways in which teachers expressed political and ideological clarity was by directly naming students labeled as "English Learners" as their priority. One teacher who was unequivocal in expressing this was Penelope, who was quoted in the introduction to this article. One of the frustrations that Penelope expressed was that she needed to spend considerable energy differentiating instruction for her students who were learning Spanish as a second language—that is, her English-dominant, white students from more affluent homes. Penelope taught in the Spanish environment, which meant that she taught in Spanish. Yet, because many English-dominant students were too far behind in their Spanish language development, she felt she needed to greatly scaffold the lessons, which took time away from addressing the needs of her native Spanish-speaking students. In the interview, Penelope described this dynamic and repeatedly named the school's purpose, and her own, as serving the "ELL" students, who were Latinx bilingual students. Penelope (Lower Elementary Teacher, 7 years experience) explained:

I mean I think that **this is our mission**, but I really do think that, I mean, in my opinion, anyway, **it's more important that our ELLs are being served to become bilingual and biliterate**, and our SLL's, it's like, well, sure, if, if they get there, great. [...] I've become so much more aware of it in the past few years that I, I just, I'm, like, no. I cannot. I know who I need to serve, and it's not the middle-class white kid, you know, whose, whose parents are, like, oh, he'll get a job because he'll be bilingual or whatever [emphasis added].

Penelope is very clear that her role as the Spanish environment teacher was to support the maintenance and development of her Spanish speakers' Spanish, and explicitly rejected the instrumentalist, neoliberal discourse of becoming bilingual solely to be more competitive in the job market, especially for her white, middle-class students. Penelope expresses political clarity in recognizing wider power relations in society that privilege white English speakers, and her refusal to cater to their needs over those of her Latinx Spanish-speaking students.

While not all teachers were as clear or emphatic as Penelope, those who expressed political and ideological clarity understood societal inequities that disadvantaged Latinx students and viewed the mission of the school as uplifting these students and their language.

8.1.2 Equity as countering dominance of English and/or English speakers

Closely related to prioritizing Latinx students labeled English Learners, teachers who expressed political and ideological clarity described equity as an effort to counter the dominance of English as

1 SLL - Spanish Language Learners.

TABLE 1 Participant descriptors and approaches to equity.

Participant pseudonym	Grade level/position	Years of experience	Characterization of view of equity
Carla	Primary (ECE-K)	4	Political and ideological clarity and Montessorian
Diana	Primary (ECE-K)	6	Political and ideological clarity and Montessorian
Julieta	Upper Elementary (4th through 6th grades)	11	Political and ideological clarity and Montessorian
Robert	Assistant Principal	11	Political and ideological clarity
Katalina	Home School Liaison	7	Political and ideological clarity
Catalina	Lower Elementary (1st through 3rd grades)	10	Political and ideological clarity
Marina	Lower Elementary (1st through 3rd grades)	28	Political and ideological clarity
Penelope	Lower Elementary (1st through 3rd grades)	7	Political and ideological clarity
Elizabeth	Primary (ECE-K)	1	Political and ideological clarity
Regina	Primary (ECE-K)	12	Political and ideological clarity
Adriana	Principal	Unknown	Political and ideological clarity
Corinne	Upper Elementary (4th through 6th grades)	2	Political and ideological clarity
Monica	Music Teacher	18	Montessorian
Henry	Physical Education Teacher	9	Montessorian
Valery	Primary (ECE-K)	6	Montessorian
Daniela	Primary (ECE-K)	7	Montessorian
Ivette	Upper Elementary (4th through 6th grades)	7	Montessorian
Greg	Lower Elementary (1st through 3rd grades)	8	Montessorian
Katie	Art Teacher	n/a	Differentiation (outlier)

a societal language or more specifically, to counter the dominance of English speakers in their classrooms. For several teachers, the recent change in the bilingual model—from 50/50 to 90/10, wherein Spanish was prioritized during the primary years—was one way to counter this dominance. For instance, Carla described how the switch to a 90/10 program has made a difference for Spanish-speaking students’ confidence and participation in the Primary classroom. In their joint interview, both Carla and Diana, primary teachers, described how English-fluent students had previously dominated classroom interactions. With the switch to a 90/10 model, in which the primary classroom became a Spanish-language environment, they noticed that Spanish-dominant Latinx students felt more confident, participated more, and expressed a sense of pride in themselves. Carla (Primary Teacher, 4 years experience) expressed:

Siempre los de inglés dominan, siempre, en cualquier situación, sea la que sea, ellos dominan. Pero este año como que no. No lo estamos haciendo en inglés, lo estamos haciendo en español.

[Always the English speakers dominate, always, in every situation, whatever it is. But this year, not so much. We’re not doing it [classes] in English, we are doing it in Spanish].

Here, Carla explicitly named the dynamic of English speakers dominating classroom interactions, regardless of the situation, but notes that, given the switch in language, this is no longer the case. Later in the interview, Carla adds:

[L]a confianza que ellos tienen en sí mismos a comparación del año pasado es tan grande.

[The confidence they have in themselves [Latinx students] in comparison to last year is so great].

Similarly dissatisfied with the fact that her white, middle-class, English-dominant students were dominating classroom discussions, Catalina invited her Spanish-stronger Latinx students to a weekly lunchtime problem-solving group in an effort to empower them to participate more vocally in class. Catalina (Lower Elementary Teacher, 10 years experience) shared:

And I did it only with my L1 [Spanish speaking Latinx students], and it, like, it was pretty, it was really successful in my opinion. And it was great to see how much leadership those students grew into, and so when I was talking about it at my mid-year conversation, I was, like, so proud of, you know, the work that they were doing.

During her mid-year conversation with Robert (Assistant Principal, 11 years experience), Catalina wondered if she should offer the same opportunity to her L2 students—that is, the English-dominant students—but expressed hesitancy about the amount of energy this would take, especially given that she chose to do this during lunchtime. Robert assured her that she did not need to offer this opportunity to her English speakers and that the goal of this group was to empower her Latinx students. Robert exemplifies ideological clarity by explaining that the expectation is not to provide “equal” support for both groups of students but to intervene in an already unequal educational system and prioritize students whose language and culture is devalued and/or minoritized in mainstream culture. In other words, both Catalina and Robert recognize that the lack of vocal

participation from Catalina's Latinx students was not necessarily due to not knowing, less effort, or less skill—but instead related to the wider socio-politico-economic standing of Latinx Spanish-speakers versus white dominant culture that empowers and entitles white students to be more vocal in the classroom.

The dominance of English-speaking students went beyond the classroom, as some teachers noted the differences in levels of parental presence and involvement. After receiving volunteer interest predominantly from English-speaking families, Regina invited her Spanish-speaking mothers into the classroom through a storytelling project. The “Cuenta Cuentos” project consisted of a Spanish-speaking mother coming into the classroom each month to read a book in Spanish to the class. Regina (Primary Teacher, 12 years experience) shared:

[E]ste año lo que hice para impulsar un poquito las mamás Latinas [...] fue un proyecto de cuenta cuentos para las mamás y entonces pues cada mes venía una mamá a contar un cuento en español y entonces pues bueno, para hacerlas también un poco líderes, ¿no?, de que ellas pueden venir y los, pues, su hija o hijo pues estaba pues super contento de ver a la mamá y entonces como que me gustaría seguirlo el año que viene. [...] los niños también se motivan al ver que adultos que conocemos hablan español con nosotros.

[This year what I did to motivate the Latina mothers was a storytelling project for the moms, so that each month one mom would come and tell a story in Spanish, and that, well, makes them leaders as well, right? They can come, and then, their child would be super happy to see their mom and then I would like to continue that next year...the children also become motivated to see adults that they know speak Spanish with us].

Although initially designed to increase collaboration with Spanish-speaking families, this effort positioned Latina women as leaders in the school community and celebrated their ability to enrich language and literacy learning experiences in the classroom. Catalina and Regina's efforts demonstrate their commitment to being “cultural brokers” for their Latinx bilingual students and families to “level the playing field,” (Bartolomé, 2002) in an educational system that has historically provided more opportunities to white students than to students of color.

8.1.3 Equity in access to/rights to instruction in Spanish and English

A third way in which participants at this school expressed political and ideological clarity was through the idea of equity of access. Because MDLS is working at the crux of three systems—Montessori, dual language, and public school—at times the policies and accountability required for one model were in tension with another, which in turn raised questions about equitably serving students. Federal and district policy mandated that students labeled “English Learners” receive specialized English language development instruction for a certain amount of time. Additionally, the dual language model at MDLS required students to be grouped heterogeneously during Integrated Montessori time. Furthermore, because not all educators were bilingual, there were designated English- and Spanish-language environments at the Lower and Upper

Elementary levels, necessitating a certain amount of switching and division of instructional time between groups of students and teachers. Tensions arose when attempting to maintain adequate class sizes and when deciding which language environments to place students in, especially simultaneous bilingual students who were not achieving at grade level on reading assessments. In such cases, teachers often had to make decisions that compared students' reading achievement with their language proficiencies. Catalina, for example, argued that placing her Latinx students on an English-language track based on these factors took away their rights to instruction in their “first language.” Catalina (Lower Elementary Teacher, 10 years experience) shares, “I think of equity and I'm like, so, do I tell my brown Latino student that he has to go to the English classroom because he knows less Spanish than this white student who gets to stay in Spanish because he is gifted, or is it reversed?”

Similarly, in response to the requirement of standardized testing, which in the state of Colorado is offered only in English, Julieta (Upper Elementary Teacher, 11 years experience) pointed out that students labeled “English Learners” were required to take standardized tests for accountability measures, whereas students learning Spanish as a second language did not take required or standardized assessments in Spanish. In that way, Spanish was considered “enrichment” for English-dominant speakers, while English was a requirement for Spanish-dominant speakers—something other teachers echoed. Even though Julieta was the upper-elementary Spanish-language environment teacher, she expressed a shared sense of responsibility for the accountability measures of all students, which were in English. Seeing where students needed support, she decided to conduct reading groups in English for her Spanish-dominant students who were scoring very low in English reading, even when it went against the language model and her role as the Spanish teacher. Julieta was aware of this structural and political inequality of testing, and in order to support and better meet her students' needs to succeed on standardized tests, she forwent the idea of strict separation of languages according to classroom and teacher.

Finally, Robert, the Assistant Principal, talked about access as a central idea in how he thought about equity at MDLS. Considering the three models at play at MDLS—Montessori, dual language, and public school/standards—he described equity as ensuring that all students had the same access to all three models or philosophies. Robert described that if students were not deemed to be doing “well,” as reflected in assessment data, the response was to take away the “access” to either Montessori or dual language. Robert (Assistant Principal, 11 years experience) explained:

I think that's where that's where the challenge of equity comes at our school, so there is the academic component of equity but there is also the social-emotional component of equity and the child development side of equity and I think the challenge of equity at our school is growing children without *without* removing access and opportunity for them.

As one of the school leaders, Robert recognized that not everyone was on the same page about equity and that teachers varied in how they understood the term. In fact, some teachers were hesitant or uncomfortable naming structural inequities. At least one teacher mentioned that she was uncomfortable with the school's approach to equity, specifically stating she felt an “internal conflict” with labeling

children and targeting their growth. When pressed for more specifics, this teacher explained:

And when you look at your data, and you see that all your ELLs are significantly low, it's, like, you know, that's where you need to provide equity, and, like, well, that is where I'm providing my equity, but at the same time, they have made strides. Can we look at those, but just 'cause they are not now still at—it's just, I'm learning it, and I just, I never like to pinpoint a kid, you know?

This teacher recognized she was still learning, and stated multiple times that she felt uncomfortable even addressing this topic. Later on, this teacher stresses:

[E]veryone needs to learn. So, regardless of where you are at, you are learning. High standards, everybody, my standard is grade level and above [...] I do not care what you need or who you are, everybody has to get to that point.

The discomfort expressed by this teacher can signal either a growing awareness of the sociopolitical and structural inequalities in society or simply a discomfort in naming that inequity. The teacher quoted above was adamant in emphasizing that all her students had to achieve academic growth. When asked how she accomplished this, she described various ways of differentiation, including individual lessons and small groups, which she summed up as, "It's Montessori... honestly, if you are doing Montessori correctly, you should be giving these kids the tools that they need." Thus, while teachers did vary in how they described equity, many aligned their descriptions with a Montessori philosophy, which emphasized meeting children where they were developmentally and academically.

8.2 Montessorian view of equity

The Montessori philosophy of whole-child development was an important factor in how teachers talked about equity. Many described equity as "following the child," observing children, and meeting them where they were academically. Julieta (Upper Elementary Teacher, 11 years experience) described:

...en nuestra escuela... pues, en nuestro objetivo de ser dual y de ser Montessori, pues, lo Montessori nos ayuda bastante porque la idea central de Montessori es sigue el niño y sigue sus necesidades, qué es equidad, eso es equidad.

[In our school, well our objective is to be dual and to be Montessori, and Montessori helps a lot because the central idea of Montessori is to follow the child and their needs, which is equity, that is equity].

Julieta had 11 years of experience as an educator when this interview took place. She had taught in her native country of Colombia for four years before coming to the United States, where she first taught at a dual language bilingual school prior to working at MDLS. Although this was her first time working in a Montessori setting, after four years she had incorporated a Montessori approach

into her view of equity. She expressed the central idea of Montessori as "follow the child and their needs," in a way that resonated with what many other teachers at this site mentioned. Valery, for example, who had worked at MDLS for two years at the time of the interview, described her view of equity in a similar way. Valery (Primary Teacher, 6 years experience) shared:

This is always a big question, like, what is equity? What I understand is that it's not about equality. It's about equity. You give more to the children that need it most. Yes. So, in my case, I had three children that were considered under grade level, so I did daily interventions for a very long time to get them up to where they would supposedly be.

Valery specifically talked about how she worked daily with three children who were not meeting their grade-level standards until she felt they had "caught up" to where they needed to be. The structure of a Montessori environment allowed children to learn and develop according to their own timelines, and enabled teachers to devote more small-group instructional time in this way. The mixed-age classrooms allowed this to happen naturally, enabling some children to take more time to learn certain things while others may advance more quickly.

Those who embraced a Montessori-inspired perspective framed equity as the practice of differentiation—personalizing instruction to help students progress based on their current abilities rather than through a standardized approach. As Monica (Music Teacher, 18 years experience) expressed: "The principle of equity is to follow and assist students to achieve according to their needs." To highlight this idea, Monica provided an example of how she differentiated for a student with ADHD in music/dance class. Similarly, Henry (Physical Education Teacher, 9 years experience) provided examples of differentiation in PE class as a way to teach equitably, meeting children where they are.

Overall, it was striking to see connected themes around Montessori and equity, and how clearly and similarly teachers described differentiation, meeting children where they were, and "following the child" as Montessori principles that embody an equitable perspective. The unique structure of a Montessori learning environment, as a multi-age classroom with differentiated, individualized, and small-group learning at the forefront, allowed teachers to practice this philosophy daily. At the same time, while a Montessori philosophy was critical to equity, the principal expressed concern that it could lead to teachers working without a sense of urgency. In other words, as Adriana, the principal, pointed out, in allowing children to develop on their own timeline, teachers could be "off the hook" for not helping students meet their potential, especially those from marginalized or underrepresented backgrounds. And, importantly, teachers who expressed political and ideological clarity offered more specific examples of ways they worked toward equity, more so than teachers who expressed only a Montessori philosophy.

8.3 Leaders' view of equity

Two school leaders were interviewed: Adriana, the principal, and Robert, the Assistant principal. As school leaders, both Adriana and Robert expressed a "big-picture" view of equity that included seeing all the classrooms as a whole and the school as a single unit. In Adriana's interview, three main themes regarding equity stood out: (1)

dealing with discomfort, (2) the importance of higher-order thinking, and (3) teacher ownership. Together, these themes illustrated Adriana's commitment to equity in line with the political and ideological clarity expected of a school leader. Robert's views of equity, while described differently in terms of "access," expressed similar and compatible ideas to Adriana's, particularly in describing equity in terms of the learning (or lack thereof) that goes on in the classroom.

In her interview, Adriana described the discomfort she initially felt in addressing issues of equity and inequity head-on, and how at first, as a school leader, she avoided them. When she was first asked what equity at MDLS meant to her, she reflected on her own thinking process over time, focusing on her commitment to equity and to serving students from diverse backgrounds. Adriana (Principal) described:

Si. Umm me ha tomado tiempo como asumir la responsabilidad se puede decir porque es incómodo, es muy incómodo umm y uno es mucho más fácil mmm osea vivir en un mundo donde no se tiene que ver estas cosas, verdad? Las inequidades.

[Yes. Umm it's taken me a while to assume the responsibility, you could say, because it's uncomfortable, it's really uncomfortable and it's a lot easier to live in a world where you do not see these things, right? The inequities].

Adriana went on to describe how, as a neighborhood school in a gentrifying part of the city, she could easily cater to families primarily interested in the Montessori model, rather than the dual language model—in other words, enrolling more students from affluent neighborhood families, who are predominantly white. In this way, she could improve the school's "score" on the districtwide accountability framework, which was based on the number of students meeting standards and achieving at grade level or above. Recognizing that this was not her aim, Adriana reaffirms her commitment to equity. Adriana stated:

Pero entonces eso no...yo no quiero eso entonces para mí la equidad empieza ahí es como un compromiso que te viene del alma de decir "yo quiero servir esta población".

[But then not that, I do not want that. For me equity begins there, with a commitment that comes from your heart and soul, to say, "I want to serve this population"].

In practice, for Adriana, this meant tackling disparities in student achievement head-on. Adriana expressed:

[L]os datos [que] constantemente me están recordando, que unos niños están aprendiendo más que otros. Y entonces eso causa mucho estrés para los adultos y entonces yo los primero años de ser directora y nomas quiera como ignorar y hacerme como que no está ahí y pues porque no quiera ver osea las inequidades y entonces se me hacía muy fácil pues hacerme, "Mmmm estoy aprendiendo Montessori, Montessori lo va arreglar todo. ¡Estamos bien!" pero no ha resultado así pues entonces también para mí ha sido una gran lección en lo intencional que tenemos que ser.

[The data is constantly reminding me that some of the children are learning more than others. And that causes a lot of stress for

the adults, so then the first couple of years of being principal I wanted to ignore that, and pretend like that wasn't there and I did not want to see these inequities and so it was easy for me to say, "Mmm well I'm learning about Montessori, Montessori will fix everything, we'll be okay!" But that has not been the case so then for me it has been a great lesson in how intentional we have to be].

Here, Adriana referred to the disparities in academic achievement as measured by standardized test scores, which showed that, on some measures, students of color—especially boys of color—were not achieving at the same levels as white students. When I (first author) interviewed Adriana, she had just finished a classroom observation and was disconcerted by some of what she saw in that particular classroom. One of Adriana's major preoccupations when observing teachers was whether students were doing work at levels that promote and require higher-order thinking. She described observing students who were off task for 20 min or were working on "low-level tasks," something she found upsetting. As she explained her preoccupation with the freedom of the Montessori model, Adriana shared that while Montessori allows, and is organized around, student independence, there also has to be accountability. Her worry was that the students who need it most are the ones who were not being supported or given one-on-one help. In particular, she worried about Latino boys and boys of color at the school falling behind. At one point in the interview, she stated, "we are following the child but we are not following them to a cliff;" emphasizing again that the Montessori method did not mean that teachers were "off the hook" in terms of providing a learning environment and experiences that help children thrive. Adriana explained:

[students] are supposed to be buzzing in the classroom, excited about their learning, and so then that goes to the zone of proximal development. Is the teacher giving them something that's at their ZPD², that they can access and be excited about? But so then, when that's not there, "Oh, I guess you are not engaged today!" and when that happens day after day after day then we are not building that culture of work and if kids are not working, are they learning? And if they are not learning then this is why we are in this state we are in. And then my question is look at who is not working and you'll find that it's going to be our—most of the time, our ELLs, our students of color that are just OK with not working.

Here, it is clear that Adriana was no longer hesitant to name the inequities she observed, despite the discomfort in doing so. She connected this to the idea of ownership, in particular the struggle to have teachers take ownership of all of their students' learning, not just the students in their "L1" group.

Similar to Adriana, Robert defined equity as "the work that leads to social justice for our students and families," adding that, as a school community, there is not necessarily agreement on what this means in practice, even though the school had been "asking this question for 3 years" and had conducted PD around it. As mentioned in the previous section, Robert's ideas of equity revolved around what he

2 ZPD refers to Zone of Proximal Development, a concept developed by Lev Vygotsky to refer to what students can achieve with the support of a more knowledgeable other.

called “access” and how he saw the three models at play at MDLS (Montessori, dual language, public school/standards). Robert wondered whether all students had the same access to all three models/philosophies. Similarly to Adriana, Robert described equity as being able to observe a classroom and identify it there. Robert (Assistant Principal, 11 years experience) explained:

So I walked into a classroom yesterday and saw two of our English learner boys sitting by a wall for 30 min working on an assessment but not working. These students are very far behind while the other 15 students *were* working with teachers on vigorous tasks and it's great that 15 of the students who are diverse in population are doing that, but those two boys, it's very concerning. So I think for me like equity *equity* more is, what is the experience that the students have in a classroom? What are they working on? What are they talking about? Do they feel empowered?

It was clear that Robert and Adriana were on the same page in terms of equity and what to look for during their walk-throughs and in their conversations with teachers. And, as Robert stated, it is ongoing work that had been front and center for them as a leadership team.

9 Discussion

This analysis focused on what equity means to teachers and school leaders within an ethnically and socioeconomically integrated dual language Montessori school in a gentrifying neighborhood. The findings shed light on the everyday ideological commitments of teachers in this setting. The teachers who exhibited political and ideological clarity understood the inequities inherent in Two-Way Immersion Bilingual Education in the United States: English is a requirement for Spanish dominant students, while Spanish is an elective for English-dominant students. In that sense, it is already an “uneven playing field.” Furthermore, the fact that the school was located in a gentrifying neighborhood with a shrinking Latinx/Hispanic population made teachers acutely aware of these disparities, both in and out of their classrooms. Teachers identified a clear dominance of white, English-speaking students in the classroom, prompting them to implement strategies to mitigate this imbalance. These efforts included the switch to a Spanish-language environment in the Primary grades, lunchtime small-group meetings with Spanish-dominant Latinx students, and special home-school partnerships involving Latina Spanish-speaking mothers. Moreover, this also meant that teachers understood where their priority, focus, and energy should be: on serving Latinx students who were labeled “English Learners.” Importantly, teachers who expressed political and ideological clarity provided more specific examples and actions they took toward equity, while teachers with a Montessorian perspective mentioned more general examples, such as differentiation in the classroom or meeting with small groups.

Another finding from this study is how Montessori philosophy greatly influenced how teachers spoke about equity, in terms of meeting students where they were developmentally and academically. The unique structure of a Montessori classroom enabled for differentiated learning that allowed students to learn and grow at their own pace, something many teachers strongly believed in and

mentioned as part of how they worked toward equity. At the same time, this freedom was something that concerned Adriana, the principal, in how it could allow teachers to use it as an excuse not to challenge students. In other words, teachers could unknowingly limit their expectations for students' learning under the guise of “meeting them where they are.” In particular, she worried about boys of color who were falling through the cracks, as evidenced by their lower performance on standardized tests and her classroom observations.

It is important to note that what we have described as the Montessorian view of equity is not necessarily in conflict with a politically and ideologically clear view of equity. The Montessori method and Bartolomé's framework for political and ideological clarity are both rooted in humanistic principles that position the individual as the driver of learning; however, the educator's approach to equity is different. In Montessori education, the teacher primarily functions as an observer and facilitator, ensuring the classroom environment supports individual growth, but they may inadvertently overlook systemic barriers to access learning. In contrast, Bartolomé's framework emphasizes the educator's critical consciousness when understanding the larger socio-political landscape students are positioned within. This critical role extends beyond access, actively challenging dominant narratives and affirming students' cultural and linguistic abilities, thus transforming the educational system. When combined, these two frameworks provide a robust equity stance that honors the autonomy of the child while simultaneously critically responding to systemic limitations that shape learning. We found that three teachers, Carla (Primary, 4 years experience), Diana (Primary, 6 years experience) and Julieta (Upper Elementary, 11 years experience) drew from both frameworks to discuss equity, what it meant to them, and how they achieved it in the classroom.

Finally, while 12 out of the 19 teachers interviewed expressed political and ideological clarity, there were also teachers who were reluctant to name systemic inequalities and racism in their school, as previously discussed, specifically in terms of student achievement and dynamics of the school community. Robert, the Assistant principal, directly addressed how as a school community, they continued to work towards a shared definition of equity, with intense disagreement and discomfort as part of the process.

10 Limitations

As an interview study, an important limitation is the inability to show deeper connections between beliefs and practices. While we sought examples of concrete actions that teachers could share about their work toward equity, and many teachers provided them, these accounts were self-reported. The day-to-day practices in which teachers enact their pedagogical philosophies and equity beliefs remain an important area for further examination. Additionally, establishing rapport can sometimes be a challenge and a limiting factor in one-time interviews. Limited familiarity with the interviewer, for example, may constrain how teachers talked about topics they found uncomfortable—particularly race, class, privilege, and discrimination. Yet this very discomfort can be revealing, as naming specific problems and inequities is part of developing ideological and political clarity. In this study, teachers were interviewed either by the first author or a research assistant who was a former teacher and a doctoral student at the time. In some cases,

the first author already had a relationship with the participant or had established rapport by being a Spanish-speaking Latina, a former dual language teacher, and/or a former Montessori student.

11 Implications

While focusing on a unique model of a bilingual Montessori public school, this study highlights the tensions and contradictions that *all* bilingual schools grapple with in making decisions about language of instruction, program structure, and student class placement. For example, having monolingual teachers who are not able to teach bilingually requires organizing students into groups and sharing instructional time, making it necessary to switch groups of students between language environments so they can receive bilingual instruction. That poses challenges not only for scheduling, but also for organizing students into class groups. Moreover, having to group students according to language dominance is not a simple, clear-cut process, given the complex nature of language development. This is especially true for the bilingual language development of simultaneous bilinguals, students who come from Latinx bilingual households who may use both languages flexibly and may not always exhibit a dominance of one language over the other. This, in turn, has implications for equity: *Who has a right to access instruction in English? Who should be prioritized for instruction in Spanish?* Often, teachers were responsible for deciding which content to teach in students' first or second language, but their choices were often constrained by logistical factors such as language proficiency and scheduling, rather than being fully empowered to make equitable decisions for their students. Given the prevalence of simultaneous English-Spanish bilinguals in the U. S., this case study illustrates the commitment of teachers to equity while underscoring the urgency of creating bilingual programs that reflect the fluidity and complexity of children's bilingual development.

12 Conclusion

This case study highlights how, in such a complex model of schooling that aims to provide students with a public bilingual Montessori experience, questions of equity arise at every level. Furthermore, it illustrates the different ways teachers conceptualized equity and how a Montessorian philosophy influenced how teachers talked about equity. Notably, teachers who expressed political and ideological clarity detailed more specific examples and actions they took toward equity, while teachers with a Montessorian perspective mentioned more general examples, such as differentiation in the classroom or the ability to meet with small groups. Our findings suggest that a focus on equity with ideological and political clarity is a critical component of socioeconomically, racially, and linguistically integrated dual language bilingual schools. At the same time, we concur with Bartolomé in recognizing the limits to what teachers—and, indeed, schools—are able to do in an already unequal society:

A teacher's political clarity will not necessarily compensate for structural inequalities that students face outside the classroom; however, teachers can, to the best of their ability, help their students deal with injustices encountered inside and outside the classroom (Bartolomé, 1994, p.178).

In this sense, political and ideological clarity is fundamental to promoting equity in dual language settings. Furthermore, the ongoing exploration of how these concepts shape critical pedagogy remains crucial.

13 Coda

One year after the last interview was conducted, the world experienced the COVID-19 pandemic, which was particularly difficult for students, teachers, and schools. After the pandemic, both school leaders and the majority of the teachers interviewed had moved on to other schools or educational positions. These findings highlight the work of teachers who strive for equity everyday in their classrooms within systems that at times make it impossible for students, and their teachers, to succeed.

Data availability statement

The datasets presented in this article are not readily available because the data collected was confidential and anonymous. Requests to access the datasets should be directed to Sofia Chaparro, sofia.chaparro@ucdenver.edu.

Ethics statement

The studies involving humans were approved by Colorado Multiple Institutional Review Board (COMIRB). The studies were conducted in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. The participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study. Written informed consent was obtained from the individual(s) for the publication of any potentially identifiable images or data included in this article.

Author contributions

SC: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Supervision, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. KS: Formal analysis, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. EB: Formal analysis, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

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Appendix

Appendix A: teacher interview protocol

Teacher background and education

1. How long have you been a teacher here at MDLS?
2. How long have you been a teacher in general?
3. Have you ever taught at a Montessori school previous to MDLS? Have you ever taught at a bilingual or dual language school prior to MDLS?
4. Do you have any training in being a second language/CLDE teacher? (i.e., major in college, an MA degree, an Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Education endorsement, EL Achieve DPS training, etc.).
5. Are you bilingual? If so, when/how did you learn your additional language(s)?

Teaching at MDLS

6. How do you and your partner teacher organize your days/weeks? (Ask to see a schedule, have teacher walk you through it). Why did you choose to organize it this way? What are the benefits and challenges of your schedule as it is currently? What would be an ideal schedule?
7. What happens during Montessori integrated time? Who are your students? How do you plan for instruction? How do you group students? What do you do during this time? What are students doing during this time?
8. What happens during L1 time? Who are your students? How do you plan for instruction? How do you group students? What do you do during this time? What are students doing during this time?
9. What happens during L2 time? Who are your students? How do you plan for instruction? How do you group students? What do you do during this time? What are students doing during this time?
10. What happens during SLD/ELD time? Is this the same as L1/L2?
11. What have you found are the biggest challenges of teaching at MDLS for you now?
12. What questions do you have (about MDLS, about Montessori, about dual language, in general)?
13. What areas do you feel you need more support in?

Equity

14. What does a whole-school focus on equity mean for you?
15. What does that mean (equity) in your own teaching and instruction? Can you give me an example?