Pearland ISD
Two-Way Dual Language Pilot Program

Two-Way Dual Language education equally provides bilingual education for Spanish speaking students and total immersion education for English speaking students.
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What is a Two-Way Dual Language Program?

Dual Language is an education program model in which fairly equal numbers of students who speak two different languages are taught literacy and content in both languages with the goal of helping the students to become bilingual, bi-literate, and bicultural. The Pearland ISD Dual Language Pilot Program includes two groups of students: native Spanish speakers and native English speakers. This makes the dual language programs two-way in two ways! Two languages are used for instruction and two groups of students are involved. The language is the vehicle for content instruction; it is not the subject of instruction itself.

What are the goals of a Dual Language program?

The long-range goals are:

Goal 1: All students will develop a high level of proficiency in understanding, speaking, reading, and writing in their first language.

Goal 2: All students will develop a high level of proficiency in understanding, speaking, reading, and writing in their second language.

Goal 3: Academic performance will be at or above grade level.

Goal 4: All students will demonstrate positive cross-cultural attitudes and behaviors.

What are the advantages of a Dual Language Program?

Students in a Two-Way Dual Language Program as compared with students in traditional classrooms (from Center for Applied Linguistics, 1988):

- achieve as well or better in English language arts;
- achieve greater overall proficiency in pronunciation and language skills in the second language;
- generally achieve higher scores in reading;
- perform as well or better in other subjects;
- are shown to be more creative thinkers; and
• have better developed verbal skills.

What are the benefits of knowing a second language?

In addition to developing a lifelong ability to communicate with more people, children may derive other benefits from early language instruction, including improved overall school performance and superior problem-solving skills. Knowing a second language ultimately provides a competitive advantage in the workforce by opening up additional job opportunities.

Research has shown that students of foreign language score statistically higher on standardized tests conducted in English. The College Entrance Examination Board reported that students who averaged 4 or more years of foreign language study scored higher on the verbal section of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) than those who had studied 4 or more years in any other subject area. In addition, the average mathematics score for individuals who had taken 4 or more years of foreign language study was identical to the average score of those who had studied 4 years of mathematics. These findings are consistent with College Board profiles for previous years.

Students of foreign languages have access to a greater number of career possibilities and develop a deeper understanding of their own and other cultures. Some evidence also suggests that children who receive second language instruction are more creative and better at solving complex problems. The benefits to society are many. Americans fluent in other languages enhance our economic competitiveness abroad, improve global communication and maintain our political security interests.

Why is it better for my child to learn a language in elementary school?

Studies have shown – and experience has supported – that children who learn a language before the onset of adolescence are much more likely to have native-like pronunciation. A number of experts attribute this proficiency to physiological changes that occur in the maturing brain as a child enters puberty. Of course, as with any subject, the more years a child can devote to learning a language, the more competent he or she will become. In any case, introducing children to alternative ways of expressing themselves and to different cultures generally broadens their outlook and gives them the opportunity to communicate with many more people.

What grade levels are included in the Dual Language Program?

The Dual Language Program begins in kindergarten and continues through sixth grade. Spanish is offered at the junior high school level and Pre-AP and AP Spanish classes are offered at the high school level, providing a continuum of opportunities for students to continue to develop skill and proficiency in the Spanish language.
How many years does my child have to stay in the Dual Language Pilot program?

It is important for parents to understand that they are enrolling in a kindergarten through grade 6 program. The success of dual language education is best validated by sustained continuity and intensive experience in Spanish. It is not in the best interest of the child or the program for students to be enrolled for a one or two year “interesting experience.”

What is the class size for dual language?

Class size for the dual language program is made up of approximately one-half students who are Spanish-dominant and one-half students who are English-dominant, with a maximum class size of 22.

What are the characteristics of students who are successful in Dual Language Programs?

From their personal and professional experiences, parents and educators note some common characteristics of successful Dual Language students. First, successful students tend to enjoy learning new things, and also like meeting and interacting with people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Second, successful students tend to have parents who strongly support the program: Parents who truly understand and embrace Dual Language and its goals will transmit their positive attitudes to their children. Finally, successful students understand and embrace the philosophy of dual language education. They realize that learning in two languages can be challenging at times, especially for students from a monolingual background. The successful student perseveres and learns to take risks in speaking and writing the second language.

Are there students who may not be good candidates for the Dual Language Pilot Program?

While most dual language educators believe that the program is suitable for learners of all ability levels, children with serious delays in first language development or auditory processing, auditory memory, or general auditory impairment may not be successful in a dual language program.

Will the Dual Language students follow the same curriculum as the students in the regular English program?

The curriculum in dual language programs is the same as the curriculum in English-only programs. Students receive equivalent instruction in the basic subjects: mathematics, reading, language arts, science, and social studies.
What about the first days in a dual language pilot program?

For students beginning school, the only difference between the dual language class and the non-dual language class is that the teacher is constantly using Spanish. The children are made to feel secure right from the start, and after a few days they do not focus on the fact that the teacher is speaking primarily in Spanish.

What will happen to children’s skills in English?

Although there usually are lags in English language arts for the first few years of the program, research has shown that children tend to make up these lags after formal English instruction is introduced. By the end of the elementary grades, dual language students generally perform as well or better on standardized tests of measured English skills than children in the non-dual language program.

When is English reading instruction introduced?

Formal English reading instruction (Guided Reading) will be introduced in Kindergarten.

What about reading in English?

If a child is ready to read in English and/or Spanish on his or her own, encourage this at home and deal with it in a relaxed and enjoyable manner. Nevertheless, it is very important that you read daily with your child in the language you are most comfortable using.

How can parents support their child in the Dual Language Program?

Encourage your child by telling him/her how proud you are that he/she is learning a second language. Do not feel discouraged if, at the beginning, your child cries or seems nervous about this new experience. Some students may experience some stress initially as this can be an overwhelming, albeit exciting program. Parents need to be supportive and understanding of both their child and the teacher during the initial stages. Your child will need some time to adjust to this new challenge. However, if this anxiety continues beyond the first two months, please discuss it with the teacher. By the beginning of October every child should be over the initial adjustment and be looking forward to going to school.

Most importantly, encourage your child's interest in the language and in other cultures. Show him or her that you value the ability to speak a second language. Attend cultural events that feature music, dance or food from the country or countries where the language is spoken. If possible, provide some books, videos or other materials in the second language. If you are familiar with the language yourself, read to your child.
How else can parents help?

When your child gets home, do not be upset if he or she does not feel like telling all about the day at school. Children take the routines of school for granted and often are in need of a change of subject once they get home.

Do not expect your child to start speaking the second language after the first few days, and do not try to force him or her to do so. Your child will start to use the second language on his or her own individual pace.

Become acquainted with your child’s teacher and program through attending Back-to-School night.

Be actively involved in your child’s school.

Keep informed about dual language education.

Do not attempt to correct your child if you are uncertain of the correct expression or pronunciation.

Give your child the benefit of the doubt.

Do not ask your child to translate. This requires skills not focused on in the dual language program.

Do not give in to the temptation to compare your child’s progress to that of the neighbor children. No two teachers and no two students work at the same rate.

Teach your child the songs and nursery rhymes that are part of his or her own heritage. Read stories to your child in English and/or Spanish.

Take advantage of any opportunities to expose your child to the Spanish language and culture(s) outside of the school setting.

Let your child know that you are pleased with his or her progress.
Parental Questions and Concerns as Adapted From Ecole Van Belleghem Early French Dual Language Program

Will my child fall behind if he/she learns two languages?
Concepts learned in either language become a part of the child’s general knowledge. On some tests, such as English vocabulary, Dual Language students score higher than students in regular English programs.

Won’t there be confusion between the two languages?
Sometimes interference in second language learning occurs. The children may use a rule that applies only to the other language. However, teachers plan lessons to overcome these difficulties.

Will my child lose his/her cultural identity?
Although English-speaking Dual Language students feel very friendly toward Spanish speaking people, they think of themselves as bilingual English speakers.

Will my child learn the same things as students in regular English classes?
Yes, the curriculum must follow the guidelines of the State of Texas. Materials in Two-Way Dual Language classes cover the same basic program as do regular English classes; students work toward the same academic goals regardless of the language of instruction.

How can we manage if no one in our family speaks Spanish?
This is not a difficulty. The school realizes that many parents are monolingual and will answer your questions/concerns in English.

I don’t know anything about Spanish books for children or how to find games for my child to play in Spanish.
Speak to the Bilingual Mentor, lead teacher or your child’s teacher. They will be happy to help and advise you.

Should I speak to my child in Spanish?
Generally, it is better to speak to your child in your native language. It is important for children to have good language models. On the other hand if you speak Spanish well, do not hesitate to use Spanish in the community when your child is present.

Will my child be “perfectly” bilingual at the end of elementary school?
Learning a language takes time. The more contact there is, the faster it is learned. Children differ in second language acquisition just as they do in their native language development. Although Spanish language skills improve markedly through elementary school, Two-Way Dual Language Program students remain stronger in English than in Spanish. They continue to perfect their abilities in both languages through secondary school. It is important to remember also that experiences with Spanish speakers outside of school will be useful to round out the academic and somewhat formal language learned in the classroom.
Can I switch my child out of Dual Language?
Yes, it is possible, if there is space in a regular English classroom. However, if you are not convinced that the Two-Way Dual Language Program is the situation that you want for your child, then it is better not to begin. Your child will easily pick up any negative feelings you may have and this will affect his/her learning at school.

If we move to another area, will my child fit into a regular English classroom?
If you move before first grade or after second grade, there will be few if no difficulties. Moving at the end of first grade means your child will need some help with English reading and writing until he/she catches up. Now that Two-Way Dual Language Programs exist in many school districts, you may be able to find one in your new neighborhood.

Shouldn’t some sort of screening take place?
The only children found to be very poor candidates for Two-Way Dual Language Programming are those with a poor sense of auditory discrimination or auditory memory. In almost all cases, this is apparent to the kindergarten teacher and a change can be made before first grade. Children who may have difficulty learning to read in English may have difficulty learning to read in Spanish. It is generally the actual reading skills that these children have trouble with, not the second language.

What if my child wants to go to the bathroom or is injured and he/she cannot communicate in Spanish?
All teachers speak English and if necessary, will do so in an emergency.

What type of accent will my child have?
Standard Spanish structures and vocabulary are taught. A variety of accents exist in all languages; during a school career a child will be exposed to teachers from various parts of the world that are models of well-spoken Spanish.

How can I evaluate my child’s progress if no one speaks Spanish at home?
In addition to the progress reports, there is also communication with parents through newsletters, parent-teacher conferences, special notices and phone calls. Parents are also welcome to visit Dual Language classes and assist with lessons.