

## Frequently Asked Questions (F.A.Q.)

### **What is Dual Language Instruction?**

Dual language is a form of bilingual education in which students are taught literacy and content in two languages. The majority of dual language programs in the United States teach in English and Spanish, although increasing numbers of programs use a partner language other than Spanish, such as Arabic, French, Hawaiian, Japanese, Korean, or Mandarin.

Dual language programs use the partner language for at least half of the instructional day in the elementary years. Students are immersed in each language for part of each day as they study the same subjects and follow the same curriculum as all students at the school. Teachers use sheltering techniques to make content comprehensible, so no translation takes place. These programs generally start in kindergarten or first grade and extend for at least five years, and many continue into middle school and high school.

Dual language programs foster bilingualism, biliteracy, enhanced awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity, and high levels of academic achievement through instruction in two languages. Students need the support of their families to succeed. However, families do not have to be bilingual in order for their child to succeed and become bilingual.

### **Does dual language education work?**

Yes! The first dual language programs began in Canada (French & English) and Florida (Spanish & English) over 30 years ago. Since then, this dynamic model has spread around the world, wherever parents and teachers want their children to become both academically successful and bilingual / bicultural. The average student who enters a dual language program at kindergarten or first grade speaking only English will graduate achieving at or above national averages on English-language standardized tests, as well as slightly below grade level in Spanish.

It takes most people 5-7 years to become fully fluent in a second language. What this means for students in a dual language program is that the first 2-3 years are the most challenging. All language learners go through a 'silent period' where they take in their new language but can't yet speak it themselves. This is followed by a long 'early production' period, where the person understands much more than they can express. Families and beginning teachers often worry during the first few years of a child's dual language education that the child is falling behind in their native language and not really picking up the second language. Just like a toddler learning to speak, this silent period is natural and necessary for the student. Once the child is ready, he or she will interact with peers and teachers in both languages.

### **Will my child become frustrated?**

It is common for there to be an adjustment phase in the beginning. Some children may be mildly frustrated or say, "Why doesn't my teacher just speak to me in English?" However, the teachers in the dual language classrooms will be experienced in the instruction of language learners. They will be trained in language acquisition strategies and developmentally appropriate activities for

their grade levels. Children will learn language actively through practice with their peers, with the support of visual cues, physical prompts, playful repetition and daily routine.

### **I am not bilingual. How can I support my child with homework?**

Parents can help in their native language by reading, writing, and talking to their children about what they are learning. Research shows that students with strong skills and background knowledge in their native languages are able to transfer those skills to the second language. Parents can also encourage cross cultural friendships, birthday parties, and play-dates.

### **Do I need to commit to the full K-5 Program?**

It takes most people 5-7 years to become "fully fluent" in a second language. Social, non-academic language is acquired more quickly. Successful bilingual students need to acquire the ability to read, write, and study at high levels in two languages. In order to reach those high levels of academic fluency in both languages, a commitment to the K-5 program is necessary.

### **Does my child need to enroll in full day Kindergarten?**

Yes. The dual immersion program classes are full day (3:10 p.m.). Scholarships are available.

### **Additional Benefits of Dual Language Instruction...**

- Enhanced levels of meta-linguistic awareness (i.e., knowledge of how language works), which has proven to be important to reading acquisition.
- Improved performance versus monolingual students on tasks that call for divergent thinking, pattern recognition and problem solving.
- Additional knowledge and understanding of one's native language.
- Greater understanding, tolerance, appreciation and respect for other languages and cultures.
- Ability to communicate with other ethnic and cultural groups.
- Ability to take advantage of opportunities that are available only in other languages.
- Enhanced employment opportunities once school is completed.