

CHAPTER ONE: REASONS TO CONSIDER DUAL LANGUAGE PROGRAMS



REFLECTIONS FROM THE FIELD

"...and justice for all"...Something heard every day in the hallways of our schools across this country, yet still remaining to be seen. Equity-minded, visionary schools and districts dare to believe that justice for all can and should be their primary focus, and consequently adopt board policies that make equity and access a priority. Then they walk the talk, recognizing that their culturally and linguistically diverse populations create a golden opportunity to promote equity and equity-mindedness for all involved. They understand that gap closure is best accomplished through directly and unapologetically addressing the linguistic and cultural needs of their student populations.

For more than 25 years, the equity-minded, visionary research of Wayne Thomas and Virginia Collier has confirmed that well-implemented two-way bilingual immersion programs are the optimal program to close the achievement gap for English learners, and this research has been the driving force for the adoption of two-way bilingual immersion programs around the country. Their research and undying commitment to sharing the message has indeed inspired schools and districts to dare to believe that we can, one classroom at a time, move closer to the goal of justice for all.

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Educators who have worked in the field of language education know that there are many reasons to study languages. In the traditional curriculum for U.S. schools, English language arts teachers offer required courses for all the Grades K-12, while foreign language teachers provide courses in other languages as an elective at middle and high school levels. These courses analyze the language being studied and its use in varied contexts (usually literature).

But dual language is really different! In a dual language program, the two languages are acquired through all the subjects of the curriculum. And this program is potentially for all students. Dual language classes deepen the students' and teachers' collaborative content explorations, using at least two languages as the vehicle for all curricular studies. The understanding is that teachers and students will work to meet or exceed the academic standards of math, science, social studies, and language arts for each grade level. Simultaneously, students are acquiring deeper and deeper ability to use the two program languages in oral and written form, eventually reaching native-like speaker proficiency in English and at least one other language. In other words, using the school's core curriculum is a powerful way to naturally acquire a second language while fully developing the native language.

The benefits don't stop there. Learning through two languages expands and enhances students' thinking skills, ensuring that students' cognitive development and flexibility surpass that achieved through a curriculum delivered in only one language. On top of that, students from diverse backgrounds learn to respect and value each other as partners in the learning/acquiring process.

So what does the research tell us?

When comparing dual language (DL) classrooms to English as a second language (ESL) or to mainstream English classrooms:

- English learners in DL score very significantly higher on state tests as well as norm-referenced tests than in ESL-only programs.
- English learners in DL master much more of the curriculum, academically and linguistically, than English learners in ESL-only programs. They experience full gap closure rather than partial gap closure.
- English learners in DL master English better than English learners in ESL-only programs (even though only half or less than half of their instruction is in English).

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- Language minority students who are fluent in English and of the same heritage as the English learners can enroll in DL classes (whereas they are not served in transitional bilingual or ESL-only classes). In DL classes, these students score higher on state tests as well as norm-referenced tests than language minority students in the English mainstream classroom.
 - African American native English speakers in DL score very significantly higher on state tests as well as norm-referenced tests than African American students in the English mainstream classroom.
 - White native English speakers in DL score higher on state tests as well as norm-referenced tests than White native English speakers in the English mainstream classroom.
 - Title I-eligible students in DL score significantly higher on state tests as well as norm-referenced tests than Title I-eligible students in the English mainstream classroom.
 - Special needs students in DL score higher on state tests than special needs students in the English mainstream classroom.
 - DL students don't just study a second language as a subject (as is typical in foreign language classes); they become fully proficient in a second language at no cost to their English development.
 - DL students have more favorable attitudes toward being bilingual and toward students who are different from themselves than do students in the English mainstream classroom.
 - DL students report high levels of satisfaction and enjoyment in DL classes.
 - DL students have stronger cultural identity and high self-esteem.
 - Student engagement with instruction is higher in DL classes.
 - Student overall interest in school is higher in DL programs.
 - Student overall attendance is better in DL programs.
 - Significantly fewer behavioral referrals are experienced in DL classes than in the English mainstream classes.
 - Costs for DL are less than for ESL-only because DL is a mainstream (not a separate remedial) program that is taught through two (rather than one) languages. Some extra costs may be needed for second language materials, but no additional classroom teachers are needed as in ESL-only and transitional bilingual education pullout classes.

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- In DL classrooms, required teaching strategies (e.g., cooperative learning, with emphasis on grade-level cognitive, linguistic, and academic development in a favorable sociocultural school setting) lead to more effective, efficient, and productive instruction using the same amount of instructional time as mainstream English classrooms.
 - In two-way (two language groups being schooled through their two languages) DL classrooms, instructional interaction with same-age peers (and peer language models) provides the ideal context for the enhancement of natural second language acquisition.
 - Learning in two languages develops unactivated brain areas and increases creativity and problem-solving skills.

And that's not all! Dual language programs have a positive influence on all those who participate in or interact with the education system—especially parents, administrators, teachers, and students.

Parents. Parents must grow with the dual language program. They must be one of the first groups exposed to the research and rationale for dual language education for students from all linguistic backgrounds. As they come to understand the process (language acquisition, learning in two languages, etc.) their children are going through, their initial anxieties diminish and they frequently become the program's greatest advocates. The bilingual/bicultural context of a well-implemented dual language program nurtures everyone. The school may provide cross-cultural events for families, including exchanges of skills and shared language learning experiences. Parents from all walks of life can come together in support of their children and their school's programs. Parent meetings focus on the needs of their multilingual/multicultural community.

As families come to value their neighborhood dual language school, they work harder to find ways to stay, so historically high mobility rates are lowered. Families are committed to their children remaining at the school for as many grades as possible, lessening attrition, which is a common concern in schools that serve low-income neighborhoods. A committed group of parents who understand the program well can explain the concepts of linguistic, academic, cognitive, and sociocultural development through two languages to the newly arriving families who may initially be skeptical of such a complex program. Common questions of new parents can be confidently answered by the more experienced parents in dual language programs. The parents' ability to explain how dual language education works is the most powerful form of advocacy that a parent can engage in.

With a well-implemented dual language program in place, both English-speaking parents and the parents who speak the other program language become advocates for bilingualism in the community. A core of committed parents can stem the political forces that might question the value of bilingualism, locally or even statewide. Funding appropriations for dual language schools and policies that promote bilingualism and biliteracy for all citizens are outcomes advocated by parents committed to schooling their children through two languages. Dual language parents shape the future by reinforcing the intercultural values of our society and encouraging their multilingual children to be internationally collaborative adults for the mid-21st century.

Administrators. Principals of well-implemented dual language schools truly love what they do. Those who have created a schoolwide dual language program tend to stay in these positions for many years; it can be hard to persuade a dual language principal to retire. The commitment to the community and the satisfaction of creating a bilingual/bicultural gathering place is more than enough reason to remain. Principals become re-energized when they see the higher student attainment as well, as increased collaboration among students of diverse backgrounds in their schools.

As with any new program, first year implementation of dual language is usually challenging. It is the responsibility of the principal to deeply understand the dual language program, to build teacher and parent support, and to provide intensive staff development and instructional coaching support. After recruiting the first bilingual teachers who will partner with the English-speaking staff, the principal must be constantly on the lookout for teachers truly proficient in the partner language as the program grows grade by grade. This takes patience, confidence, and a strategic staffing recruitment plan.

During the start-up years, extra funds are often sought to purchase curricular materials in both languages and to provide extra staff development for teachers. Seeking grant funds and community business partners can be a joint responsibility of the central office administrators along with the dual language principals. After many years of implementation of dual language, the long-term success of their bilingual/biliterate graduates makes everyone proud that they all played a part in developing and maintaining this cutting-edge dual language program.

Teachers. We have heard teachers in dual language schools say things like, "This is heaven," or "I can't imagine teaching anywhere else." They also say, "I've never worked this hard in my life—but it's worth it." Visiting classrooms, we see the smiles on teachers' faces, the pride reflected in students' creativity, attitudes, and comments—"I can do anything in two languages—no problem!" Dual language teachers expect students to become profoundly proficient in the languages of

instruction, grade by grade, through exploring in-depth academic themes that connect with the needs and reality of the community.

Teachers who are deeply proficient in the two languages of instruction are often also deeply bicultural. The cross-cultural experiences they have had in life lead to creativity in their teaching practices, as they create family and community in their classroom and want to share their intimate knowledge of varied cross-cultural ways of learning with their students. Monolingual English teachers who partner with the bilingual teachers also receive many of these benefits through the multicultural experiences that everyone in the program shares.

Planning time for teachers is an integral part of each school week in a dual language program. The shared resources and teaming that emerge from the planning process maximize the talents each teacher brings to the school. Heads together, teachers are often much more knowledgeable and insightful in curricular planning and responding to student behavioral concerns than when working alone. This can happen in team-teaching situations or within and across grade levels when dual language teachers are in self-contained classrooms. Dual language partners often support each other and become close colleagues, as well as friends. Because the curriculum is focused on multilingualism and multiculturalism and is accessible to everyone in the community, there is more encouragement for teachers to partner with parents in the learning process. Teachers make use of parents' knowledge and cross-cultural life experiences as resources for classroom learning.

Students. Proud, confident, excited, happy, collegial, caring ... most students know they're attending the "awesome" program, and they show it in their hard work and their commitment to helping each other. It's not easy to be able to do math, science, social studies, art, music, and language arts through two languages, but students from severe poverty as well as other difficult circumstances have proven themselves capable of meeting the challenge. Whatever the contexts and characteristics of their lives, students from every corner of our community have thrived in dual language education, achieving at significantly higher levels than comparable groups schooled only through English. What is truly remarkable is that English learners in a dual language program can outpace native English speakers in monolingual English classes, making more progress each year on academic and linguistic development than native English speakers make.

Students speak proudly of their academic accomplishments, confident in their growing bilingualism and access to a greater world through their cross-cultural competency. Student graduates state that the program changed their lives. They find that as proficient bilinguals, they are highly desirable in the 21st century world of work, and they experience personal and professional richness that crosses cultures and languages.

Summary

So go for it! This model of schooling has more potential for changing the lives of students, teachers, administrators, and parents than almost any other school innovation. Dual language schooling is dramatically effective when implemented well. In fact, dual language is the most powerful school reform model for high academic achievement that we have seen in all our 28 years of conducting longitudinal studies in our field. Throughout this book, you will find all of our writing based on the research findings on dual language education to date, and with each topic, we will describe the range of implementation possibilities that we have seen. We dual language educators still have much more to learn, as every school program is a work in progress. But dual language education is now implemented in enough contexts throughout the U.S. that our collective experience can support success in every school community. Our time has come!

Programming - what do you have

How did you start?

What is their enrollment process? what happens later? class size as yrs. go on?

How do you know it's working?
kinds of assessments?

How do they collaborate w/ rest of school? How do you prevent a division?

Biggest challenges to keep it going?

How they've changed it, why?

Subs?