

Oswego SD308 Dual Language Frequently Asked Questions

Definitions

For the purposes of understanding this document, the following terms are being used as defined here:

- **English Learner (EL) student:** A student identified by the state of Illinois who has not met English proficiency. In this document, reference to EL students reflects only Spanish speakers.
- **English Speaker:** Any student who is proficient in English according to state criteria, no matter the home language.

Description

1. What is Dual Language?

Dual Language is a program designed to promote bilingualism, biliteracy and biculturalism. This is achieved by providing instruction in both Spanish and English to EL students and English speakers. Two languages are acquired through all the core subjects of the curriculum. Simultaneously, students acquire deep ability to use two languages in oral and written form. Eventually students will develop high levels of academic English and Spanish, in addition to native-like fluency in both languages. Essentially, core curriculum is used to acquire a second language while fully developing the native language.

2. What are the benefits of Dual Language programs during the elementary years?

- Has positive effect on intellectual growth
- Enriches and enhances children's cognitive development
- Leaves students with more flexibility in thinking, greater sensitivity to language, and a better ear for listening
- Improves children's understanding of his or her native language
- Gives children the ability to communicate with people they would otherwise not have had a chance to engage with
- Opens the door to other cultures and helps children understand and appreciate people from other backgrounds and countries
- Gives children a head start in language requirements for college and life by creating a path to the Seal of Biliteracy
- Increases job opportunities in many careers where knowing another language is an asset
- Increases competitiveness in the political, business, and educational communities

3. What is the typical composition of a Dual Language classroom?

SD 308 strives to create a balance of EL and English speaking students within a single Dual Language classroom. Typically, 50% of a kindergarten Dual Language classroom is composed of EL students. The remaining 50% is composed of English speaker students.

4. Is this a rigorous program?

Yes. Dual Language offers the same rigorous mainstream curriculum, but instruction occurs in two languages. In fact, well-implemented Dual Language programs result in students acquiring a new language at a deep level of academic proficiency.

5. What qualifications do Dual Language teachers have?

Dual Language teachers must possess the same license as a bilingual teacher. They are required to hold a valid professional educator license with an endorsement in bilingual education (Spanish)/ESL.

6. What is the district commitment to Dual Language?

Dual Language is a researched-proven program model that results in high levels in academic achievement in two languages. It has been demonstrated to be particularly effective in developing high levels of language acquisition and biliteracy in EL students. As a result, Dual Language has been adopted as our default program of placement for all incoming EL students. SD 308 is committed to growing an effective Dual Language program, to meet state requirements under Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE).

7. What is the difference between Dual Language (DL) and DBE programs?

Although there are subtle differences in the instructional delivery model and language allocation in content, the most obvious difference is classroom composition. DL classrooms are comprised of approximately 50% English speaker students and 50% EL students. DBE classrooms are comprised only of EL or former EL students.

Enrollment

8. At what grade level does Dual Language start?

For English speaker students, entry into Dual Language begins in kindergarten, at the beginning of the school year. EL students who move in and have literacy skills in Spanish will be permitted to enter a Dual Language classroom at any grade level that provides Dual Language instruction.

9. How can I enroll my child in Dual Language?

Families who are interested in Dual Language must attend a mandatory meeting. At this meeting, the Dual Language Program will be explained in depth and families will have the opportunity to fill out an application after the meeting. Please contact the EL Department at 630-636-3684 or ljchavez@sd308.org for any questions. The EL Department is located in the SD 308 District Administration Center at 4175 Route 71, Oswego.

10. Why is there a selection process for some students?

A Dual Language program includes both EL students and English speaker students. EL students are given priority placement. Typically, there are fewer EL students requesting Dual Language placement than are English speaker students. The number of English speaker student spaces available directly correlates with the Dual Language enrollment of EL students. Typically, the number of spaces available to English speaker students is lower than the interest. As a result, a random and fair selection process is required to fill limited spaces available to English speaker students.

11. Why are EL students given priority for placement into this program?

The Dual Language program serves as an English Learner service for EL students. This program is a state-approved model that fulfills district legal obligations in providing bilingual education for EL students. Because this program is specifically designed to meet EL students' needs, these students must receive priority placement into the program.

12. Can I enroll my English speaker child in SD 308's Dual Language program if he participated in a Dual Language program in a different district?

A decision for this scenario will be made on a case-by-case basis. Evidence of Dual Language enrollment and assessment in both English and Spanish may be required in order to make a final determination.

13. If my child has special needs, will he or she be able to participate in the Dual Language program?

Yes. SD 308 Dual Language does not limit its consideration for acceptance based on students' special needs.

14. What is my required commitment to the program?

Although there is no formal commitment or contract required to participate in Dual Language, best practice indicates that moving students out of a Dual Language cohort can result in a negative impact upon both the child being removed and the remaining cohort. In order to begin viewing the true benefits for the program, parents must have faith that their children are growing and learning content. However, the children's ability to express themselves in two languages with confidence does require time. Initial benefits may be observed within the first year, but parents will not realize the vast gains of true bilingualism and biliteracy until after six years. For this reason, parents should make the full commitment to the Dual Language program in grades kindergarten to six, at minimum. We encourage parents to support their children's continued bilingual education through junior high and high school.

15. What if I get nervous and feel I made a mistake in selecting Dual Language for my child after the first few weeks of school?

It is not unusual for parents, especially English speaking parents, to question their decision of placing their child into a Dual Language classroom. Typically, students adjust to the majority of their content instruction being provided in Spanish within the first weeks of school. Language acquisition is a process. It is highly recommended that parents allow the process to naturally progress. Often times, parents are more anxious about the process than their children.

16. What grade level does Dual Language go up to?

Dual Language self-contained classrooms are available through fifth grade. Social Studies and Language Arts classes instructed in Spanish are available to students in junior high school. Dual Language students interested in continuing their pursuit of Spanish language study in high school may participate in courses such as Spanish for Spanish Speakers I, Spanish for Spanish Speakers II, and Advanced Placement Spanish.

17. Is the Dual Language program available for Junior High Students?

For grades 6-8, students are enrolled in a Spanish course that focuses on literacy, grammar, vocabulary and syntax. These students will also be enrolled in a core content course instructed completely in Spanish, typically Social Studies.

18. Is the Dual Language program available for High School Students?

At this time, there is not a Dual Language option at the high school level. However, students interested in advancing their Spanish language and literacy will have the option to select high-level Spanish courses such as Spanish for Spanish Speakers I, Spanish for Spanish Speakers II, or Advanced Placement (AP) Spanish offered at the high school level.

19. Which buildings provide Dual Language classes?

Dual Language is provided in the following buildings:

- Hunt Club Elementary: *Grades Kindergarten - 5*
- Boulder Hill Elementary: *Grades Kindergarten – 5*
- Plank Junior High: *Grades 6 – 8*

20. Does the district provide transportation to Dual Language schools?

If a student who is selected to participate in the Dual Language program lives more than 1.5 miles from the assigned Dual Language building, transportation will be provided to the student at the district's expense.

21. Is there a fee to participate in the Dual Language program?

At this time, there is no additional fee to students who participate in the Dual Language program.

Siblings

22. What if my child has siblings?

A younger sibling automatically qualifies for Dual Language if the parents are interested in pursuing the program for their incoming kindergartener. Parents must complete an application to indicate interest in Dual Language for their incoming kindergartner. However, the application is merely for record-keeping purposes. The sibling will not be required to participate in the selection process.

23. Can the older sibling who does not participate in Dual Language attend the same building as my child who is a Dual Language student?

Families are permitted to request an attendance exception. To do so, they must complete the [Attendance Exception](#) form, which is available on our district website. After the request has been submitted, it will be reviewed for consideration. Families will be notified of the outcome of the request.

Instruction

24. How can my child understand the class if he doesn't understand the language being used?

Dual Language teachers are specially trained with strategies that make language accessible to students. These strategies may include such things as providing gestures, enactments, visual cues, student grouping, and daily routines. In addition, some time is spent providing a bridge between languages so that students grow to learn how their native language is similar and different to the target language.

25. How can I help my child at home if I don't understand the language in which homework is assigned?

All Language Arts and Math curricular materials are available to parents in both English and Spanish. Parents will be able to access these materials online to develop an understanding of the curricular work that their children are working on. Dual Language teachers are also a great resource for learning how to support their students in specific ways; they build strong collaborative relationships with parents and are readily available to support parents and address their questions. One important aspect that a parent should provide at home is opportunities for their child to continue reading in their native language, whether it be Spanish or English. Building a strong foundation in a

student's native language is critical for students to learn and perform at high levels in a second language.

26. What does instruction in a Dual Language classroom look like?

Dual Language teachers provide the majority of the day's instruction in Spanish for grades kindergarten to two (2). Students who do not have a language background in Spanish are able to understand instruction through various strategies used by the classroom teacher, such as gestures, repetition, and routines.

Below is a link to a video of a typical beginning-of-the-school-year instruction in Dual Language classrooms. The video demonstrates how students can gather meaning without having full comprehension in the language of instruction. [DL Instruction Video](#)

27. How much Spanish and English are used in a Dual Language classroom?

In kindergarten, approximately 80% of Dual Language content instruction occurs in Spanish. Eventually, more English is added at each grade level until instruction reaches approximately 50% in Spanish and 50% in English.

28. Why is so much Spanish used initially?

Both English speakers and EL students benefit from the majority of instruction in the minority language. Typically, access to academic development of the minority language is not developed outside of the classroom. Teachers can then provide a strong foundation in reading through a single language for both groups of students. Reading skills taught in Spanish will then transfer to English when students are introduced to reading in English in older grades.

29. What challenges might my child experience in this program?

English speakers with limited or no background in Spanish may find themselves relying more heavily on teacher cues, voice intonation, classroom structure, and other student responses rather than teacher instructions initially. Very quickly, students will become familiar with commands, words, and phrases that are used on a daily basis in instruction in Spanish.

30. Will learning two languages cause my child to become confused or to develop learning problems?

Research shows that students can study the curriculum using the non-majority language at least half the instructional time with no loss to academic success in their primary language.

31. What are the stages of second language acquisition?

Initially, students will remain quiet as they learn to differentiate the sounds of their new language. Within a short amount of time, they will start making connections with repeated words and phrases and begin responding to them automatically. After being allowed time to make meaning from the new language, students will begin to naturally respond in the new language, initially with single words, and eventually expanding to phrases and complete sentences.

32. What dialect of Spanish is used in Dual Language classrooms?

The dialect used will be dependent on the classroom teacher's background in Spanish language. However, in general a Latin American dialect is used district-wide. In addition to the teacher's Spanish dialect, students will be exposed to various dialects representing different regions of Spanish-speaking countries throughout the world. The Pearson ReadyGEN Biliteracy Pathway provides authentic Spanish literature representative of different Spanish-speaking countries. This exposure will provide students opportunities to recognize multiple ways to express concepts and words in Spanish, which will be familiar to them when they hear or see them used.

33. What curriculum is used for Dual Language?

Dual Language classes follow the same curriculum and sequence as the mainstream classes. The major difference is that Dual Language content is strategically taught in both English and Spanish.

34. How can I support my child as he begins to acquire his new language?

Providing a strong foundation in the native language is an important part in assuring success for students in a Dual Language classroom. In particular, parents should continue reading to and with their child in their home language. Literacy skills that are developed in the native language will transfer to the second language being learned. Once a child learns how to read, for example, he will not have to re-learn the process of reading in the second language. Reading skills are transferable.

35. What if my child is struggling academically in a Dual Language classroom?

All students, no matter which programs in which they may participate, are monitored and supported through the SD 308 Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). School staff work collaboratively to assure that all students are provided opportunities to be successful. As monitoring dictates, students are also provided interventions that meet their needs. SD 308 fully supports students remaining in a Dual Language classroom even if students exhibit initial challenges.