

# DUAL LANGUAGE IMMERSION

A History and Review of Dual Language Programs in Indiana

(1994 - 2017)



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# Dual Language Program Glossary

**50:50** - Distribution of English instruction and partner language instruction are equal throughout the school day. 50% of instruction is provided in English and 50% in the target language.

**90:10** - The target language is used for 90% of instruction, English is used for 10% of instruction.

**Biliteracy / Bilingual** - The ability to read and write in two languages.

**Dual language program** - A program in which academic content is taught through the use of two languages, usually beginning in kindergarten.

**ELL** - Abbreviation for English-language learners.

**Immersion program** - An alternate term for a dual language program in which the students learn academic content through two languages.

**Monolingual program** - A traditional program in which academic content is taught through one language, traditionally English.

**One way program** - A dual language program in which the enrolled students are all native speakers of one language and all are learning the same second language.

**Partner language** - The non-English language of instruction, alternate term for *target language*.

**Pilot program** - A grant funding the initial creation of a dual language program in the state of Indiana for up to two years.

**Proficiency** - The ability to speak, read, write and understand a language at a high level.

**Target language** - The non-English language of instruction, alternate term for *partner language*.

**Two way program** - A dual language program in which a portion of the enrolled students are native speakers of English and a portion of enrolled students are native speakers of the partner language. Traditionally, 50% of students are native English-speakers and 50% are native speakers of the target language.

# What are dual language programs and why are they important?

Dual language programs use two languages to teach students rigorous academic content while also teaching students to be bilingual and biliterate. These programs begin at the kindergarten level with at least 50% immersion in a partner language (a language other than English) and continue through the mid-elementary to middle school grade levels. Some dual language programs continue into high school. As the grade levels progress, students continue to receive at least 50% of their core academic instruction in the partner language.

As a result of dual language immersion, students develop high language ability in both languages, often reaching a near-native level of proficiency in the target language. The benefits of dual language education do not stop with bilingualism and biliteracy. Students in dual language programs consistently perform at or above grade level on standardized assessments in math and English. These students are more aware

of the world around them, are globally minded, and carry with them a deeper understanding and appreciation for other cultures outside their own. Additionally, students are more prepared for a global workforce and better able to adapt and communicate with clients, colleagues and collaborators around the world.

Dual language programs have also been shown to transform the educational environment and close the achievement

gap among English-language learners and low income students. Because these programs have the unique ability to tailor instruction to

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speakers of many native languages, and they often employ highly qualified dual-language instructors, studies have found that students placed in these programs, regardless of English language ability and/or income level, greatly exceed expectations and often surpass their counterparts in monolingual programs. These students, who are often marginalized in traditional K-12 instruction, have an opportunity to grow, learn and thrive in an educational

environment that celebrates their language and cultural diversity. Different languages and cultures are viewed as a learning opportunity for all students, where mutual respect and admiration for all is important.

Dual language programs have the opportunity to transform the framework of education as we know it. Bilingual, biliterate, bicultural global citizens are what we stand to gain from dual language immersion programs across the country.

## Types of Dual Language Programs

When beginning a dual language program it is important to consider the type of program that will be needed to serve the desired population of students. Specifically, will the program work best as a one-way program or a two-way program? Below is a brief description of each type and their pros and cons.

**One-way program:** Also referred to as “foreign language immersion,” this type of program serves monolingual children of the same native language. For example, a one-way dual language program may enroll 25 native English-speaking kindergarteners to learn Mandarin Chinese as their partner language. This type of program is beneficial for areas where many native speakers of the partner language may

not be available, but there is still a desire to create a dual language program for a specific language. However, this type of immersion program is limited in its ability to provide authentic interactions among native speakers of the partner language. As a result, it may take up to one or two years longer for students to become fully bilingual.

**Two-way program:** This type of program serves native speakers of both languages taught in the dual language program. For example, a Spanish-English two-way program may enroll 15 native English-speaking kindergarteners and 15 native Spanish-speaking kindergarteners for a 50-50 balance of native speakers of each language. This type of program is beneficial because students have an opportunity to speak with native speakers of their second language and fluency is often developed faster and with more accuracy. This program also serves a wider range of students such as English language learners (ELL), and students who may come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Two-way programs often help bridge cultural and social divides between students of both languages and help expose children to diverse viewpoints at a young age. Because two-way dual language programs must meet specific enrollment requirements to qualify as a two-way program, many have waiting lists for enrollment.

## Amount of Partner Language Spoken in the Program

After deciding which type of program will be the best fit for the student population, it is important to consider how much of the partner language will be used for instruction. Best practices recommend that no less than 50% of the partner language be used during instruction in all levels of the program (Thomas & Collier 2012). Many dual language programs will start with a “total immersion” or 90:10 distribution of language use in kindergarten and gradually move toward

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a “partial immersion” or 50:50 distribution over a period of a few years. For example, kindergarten students would receive instruction in the partner language for 90% of their day and 10% of their instruction in English. The following year in first grade, students would receive 80% of their instruction in the partner language and 20% in English. This would continue until the students reached 5th grade where they would remain at a 50:50 language distribution for the remainder of the program.

## Total Immersion:

Students in programs that begin with a 90:10 distribution are more likely to become proficient bilinguals and are more likely to have the required language skills needed for more advanced material in the upper elementary grades (Met 1993). Also, their English reading and math test scores are very similar or better than students in partial immersion or 50:50 programs (Howard 2007). However, total immersion programs can be difficult to sell to parents as some may not be comfortable with their children learning 90% in a partner language.

## Partial Immersion:

Students in a partial immersion program begin their schooling with a 50:50 distribution of instruction with the partner language and English. This program type has not been shown to be as effective as a total immersion program since it often takes students longer to become proficient bilinguals (eight years on average as opposed to six years in a total immersion program) (Thomas & Collier 2012). However, partial immersion programs are often more attractive to parents since they are more comfortable with this distribution. Additionally, partial immersion programs can be easier to staff since this program type would potentially require fewer partner language teachers (Met 1993).

## **Separation of Languages for Instruction**

In any dual language program it is important to consider how both languages will be separated during the instructional day. Best practices recommend that students experience a clear division in their day between the two languages to help aid their comprehension and language use (Thomas & Collier 2012). This also helps teachers and administrators ensure that the minimum requirements for the use of each language are being met. In the early elementary grades this may best be accomplished by separating language use by morning and afternoon sections and by physically separating classrooms meant for instruction in English and instruction in the partner language. Students may learn some subjects in the English classroom or “English world” for part of the day and then later travel to the Spanish classroom or “Spanish world” to learn other content later in the day (Thomas & Collier 2012).

As students progress through the middle and upper elementary grades and into middle school, schools and teachers may prefer to divide language use among specific classes. For example, students may learn Science, Math and History in the partner language and English Language Arts, Physical Education and Social Studies in English. It is recommended that students alternate

languages for each subject every year so that they have the opportunity to acquire academic language in both languages for each subject area (Thomas & Collier 2012). Other language separation options may include separating language use by days of the week.

## **Length of Dual Language Programs**

It is also important to consider the length of a new dual language program. Best practices suggest starting a dual language program at the pre-kindergarten or kindergarten level and building the program sequentially year-by-year. Because it takes students at least six to eight years to become proficient bilinguals, it is recommended that dual language programs commit to at least six to eight years of dual language instruction within their program (Thomas & Collier 2012). Research suggests that student outcomes are higher when they remain in a dual language program for at least six years (Howard 2007). Ideally, a K-12 commitment would serve students best (Thomas & Collier 2012).

## **Teaching Literacy**

Best practices recommend first teaching literacy (reading and writing) to students in the partner language of the program (Thomas & Collier 2012). For example, in

a Spanish-English dual language program, all students, regardless of their native language, would first learn to read and write in Spanish. It is important to not separate students based on their native language when literacy instruction begins since students can serve as language models and tutors for one another. After developing strong literacy skills in the partner language, students would later receive literacy instruction in English.

### **Why teach literacy in the partner language first?**

The process of first teaching literacy in the partner language is suggested as a best practice because language minority students tend to benefit from receiving literacy instruction in their native language before receiving literacy instruction in English. By having a strong foundation in their native language, language minority students have been shown to score much higher on literacy tests in English and in their native language than minority students whose literacy instruction was provided in English (Howard 2007).

Additionally, language majority students (native English-speakers) score at least as high or higher than monolingual English speakers on literacy tests by the time they reach the third or fourth grade. Initial English literacy may be delayed for these students due to

instruction received exclusively in the partner language, but overall English literacy is not put at risk for language majority students (Howard 2007).

**Best practices recommend first teaching literacy to students in the partner language of the program.**

Finally, because of the wide variety of reading material available in English, it can be difficult to encourage students to read for pleasure in the partner language of the program. By teaching literacy first in the partner language, it has been found that students have a greater tendency to read for pleasure in that language and thereby develop literacy skills faster and at greater depth (Howard 2007). Even though English literacy may be delayed for dual language program students as compared to English monolinguals, overall English literacy and ability does not suffer with this technique.

### **Instruction**

It is important to consider the method and means of instruction in a dual language immersion program. Because at least half of the students' day will be taught in a language other than their native language, instructors must be creative and resourceful in the ways in

which they communicate information and vocabulary to students. There are many resources and suggestions available for dual language instructors, and many rely on similar key components of instruction. Specifically, dual language instruction should focus on high expectations of students to understand the core academic curriculum, regardless of the language in which it is taught. (Thomas & Collier 2012). Additionally, strategies such as cooperative learning, group work, and active or discovery learning are all cited as effective techniques for dual language instruction (Thomas & Collier 2012).

### **Sheltered Instruction**

The Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) also recommends the use of sheltered instruction in dual language teaching. This technique helps make instruction comprehensible to new language learners and allows for interactive exchange between students (Howard 2007). Sheltered instruction techniques include the use of visual aids, pictures, charts and graphs to help learners understand content material in the target language. Instruction modeling and the negotiation of meaning are also important components of sheltered instruction. This technique also strongly encourages the interaction of students as mediators and facilitators of curriculum to help and support their classmates.

Alternative assessments strategies, such as portfolios, may be used in sheltered instruction as a way to demonstrate comprehension of material as well (Howard 2007).

### **Learning From Established Programs**

While there are many factors to consider when beginning a dual language program or enrolling your child in this type of program, it can be most helpful to familiarize yourself with existing programs and the experiences of teachers, administrators, students and parents who have experienced dual language programming first hand.

The following sections will provide a brief history of these programs throughout the country with a specific focus on existing dual language programs within the state of Indiana. The information provided about various Indiana schools and dual language programs was gathered via interviews with school personnel and research conducted in conjunction with the Indiana Department of Education.

## Dual Language Programs in the United States

The concept of dual language education is not new. In fact, bilingual instruction has existed in the United States since the 18th and 19th centuries when bilingual education was provided in German, French and Scandinavian. In the late 1950's and early 1960's as a result of the Soviet Union's launching of Sputnik, the United States began to stress the importance of foreign language education. Additionally, the Cuban Revolution sparked an increase in immigration of Cuban refugees to the United States. As a result, the first official dual language program was created in 1965 in Florida as a way for Spanish-speaking children of Cuban refugees to retain their native language and develop academic fluency in English.

The 1970's saw an additional increase in dual language education in the United States. As a result of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, schools districts were required to ensure that all students regardless of English proficiency were provided equal educational opportunities. After the Supreme Court decision in *Lau vs. Nichols* (1974) it was decided that non-English speaking students were denied "equal educational opportunity" when they were compelled to attend schools in which instruction was provided in a language that they

could not understand. As a result, dual language immersion became the preferred method of complying with this court decision and thus providing non-English speaking students with a means of learning core academic curriculum via their native language.

**The first U.S. dual language program was created in 1965 in Florida as a response to Cuban refugees entering America and seeking Spanish-English education for their children.**

During the 1970's as dual language programs began to expand, they also gained popularity with majority English-speaking students when a Canadian style Spanish-English immersion program formed in Culver City, California. During this time bilingual education was extended to include both minority and majority language students in the same classroom as a way to teach both groups of students to be bilingual and biliterate.

Dual language programs were seen not only as an opportunity for English-learners to gain proficiency in English, but also as an opportunity for native English speaking students to become bilingual in a second language.

This is precisely what we see in states like Delaware and Utah today where statewide initiatives have supported dual language programming to help promote bilingualism among English speakers within their states.

**Dual language programs currently exist in over 35 states nationwide and the District of Columbia.**

Today dual language programs are expanding rapidly and currently exist in over 35 states and the District of Columbia. The Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) estimates the number of current immersion schools at 448 and growing. In Utah nine percent of the state's public elementary students are enrolled in dual language programs. Oregon currently has 10% of all students enrolled in dual language immersion with nearly 1 in 5 kindergarteners enrolled. Additionally, New York added or expanded 39 dual language programs in 2015 for a total of over 180 dual language programs in the state. This is not to mention the other 34 states where dual language instruction has begun and continues to expand.

Most programs across the country teach English-Spanish immersion, but a growing number of programs are available in other languages such as

Mandarin Chinese, French, Arabic, Japanese, Hawaiian and Korean.

With such a long history and recent rapid growth in dual language programming across the country, where does a state like Indiana fit into this growing trend? The sections below will outline Indiana's history with dual language programming and recent developments within the state.

## **Beginning Dual Language programs in Indiana (1994-1995)**

Dual language programs began in Indiana in part as a way to attract international businesses and employees to the state. By offering dual language education and a multicultural learning experience for children, it was thought that international businesses and business people may be attracted to Indiana as a place to work and raise a family. Additionally, a report filed by the Indiana Humanities Council in 1991 suggested that Indiana focus on ways to increase and participate in the world economy in order to make Indiana a more internationally competitive state. One way to accomplish this was to create world class international schools with strong dual language programs to create globally minded students prepared to work and compete on a world stage. As a result, in 1994 the

private International School of Indiana began offering dual language programs in Spanish and French, and the public Forest Glen Elementary school began offering dual language immersion in Spanish. While these two schools served the immediate Indianapolis area, Lindley Elementary school opened in 1995 as another dual language option to serve the Fort Wayne area.

At this time in Indiana's history dual language programming did not exist anywhere else in the state. Therefore, these newly-created schools and programs looked to examples of established dual language programs in Canada, Atlanta, Georgia, and Washington, DC for inspiration and resources regarding best practices and curriculum. Teachers in these programs also sought resources from around the world, traveling to Mexico and other Spanish-speaking countries to provide authentic materials and learning resources for their students.

These programs began at the pre-kindergarten or kindergarten level, some with full-day kindergarten and others with half-day options. For example, the dual language program at Forest Glen Elementary began with half-day kindergarten the first year and grew successively by one grade level each year. As the first class of dual language immersion students moved through the elementary grades, each grade established dual language

immersion classes and instructors for those students.

All three early dual language programs worked to create a truly international and globally minded education for their students. All programs sought highly-qualified bilingual and native-speaker instructors who built upon the experience and expertise of established dual language programs throughout the country. Additionally, these programs committed to using at least 50% of instruction in the partner language; many started with a higher use of the target language. Some programs chose to begin with 80-90% partner language use at the kindergarten level, only decreasing after at least one year of immersion instruction. As kindergarteners began the dual language program, they would experience instruction 90% in the partner language and 10% in English. The following year, in first grade, they would receive 80% partner language instruction and 20% English instruction. This decrease of partner language use and increase of English would continue by 10% increments every year until a 50:50 distribution was reached in the fourth and fifth grades. When the first class of dual language students were ready for sixth grade, more dual language programs had to be created in Indiana to accommodate and continue immersion instruction at higher grade levels.

## Continuing Dual Language Programs in Indiana (1999-2006)

In 1999 as the first class of dual language students at the International School of Indiana were beginning sixth grade in dual language education, the students at Forest Glen Elementary were preparing to move to Fall Creek Valley Middle School where their own dual language programming would continue throughout their

middle school years. Middle school dual language programs presented a unique set of challenges for program directors and instructors. At this stage in a child's education the academic material becomes more rigorous, the language of textbooks becomes more academic and abstract, and students are forced to keep up with higher stakes standardized testing. Additionally, as students grow and mature socially, their desire to fit in and establish a strong social network can cause them to withdraw from programs like dual immersion or multicultural education which may make them feel isolated or different from their peers at monolingual schools. The middle school years can be challenging for any student,

not to mention those trying to learn and function in a second language. Nevertheless, the dual language programs at the International School and Fall Creek Valley Middle School persisted in encouraging, supporting and educating their students and families about the benefits of dual language instruction. Students continued receiving at least half of their instruction in the

**Dual language students were not only becoming fully bilingual, but they were also performing at or above grade level on standardized tests.**

partner language and half in English. As a result of their persistence, these programs began to see remarkable results. Dual language students were not only

becoming fully bilingual and biliterate in their second language, but they were also performing at or above grade level on standardized tests in Math and English when compared to their monolingual counterparts. Dual language immersion was succeeding in creating bilingual, globally-minded students who could perform just as well (and often better) than students in traditional monolingual classrooms.

As a result of this success and perseverance, and as these students continued to move through the upper middle school grades and into the high school, the dual language immersion program continued to grow with them. Students at the International School

continued receiving dual language instruction throughout their high school years, and in Lawrence Township, the dual language program expanded to include Lawrence North High School in 2002 as a way to continue immersion programming for students ready to enter high school.

High school dual language programs are where students really began to see their language abilities and persistence pay dividends. During the high school years students reach a high level of proficiency in their second language at an academic level. Additionally, students have the opportunity to partner with high schools around the world to participate in exchange and travel programs to practice their language skills and experience culture from a first hand perspective. Also, both the International School and Lawrence North High School were listed as International Spanish Academies as designated by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport of Spain which provided a wide range of opportunities for each school and its students. International Spanish Academies (ISA's) have the opportunity to utilize visiting teachers from Spain, Spanish Language and Culture Assistants, professional development opportunities at home and abroad, as well as many teaching materials and resources.

High school dual language

students also have the opportunity to earn special distinctions, certificates and diplomas as a result of their dual language work. Bilingual program participants have recently earned the Seal of Biliteracy on their graduation diplomas, a distinction that certifies their abilities as fully bilingual and biliterate students. Additionally, many dual language students have earned the International Baccalaureate (IB) diploma, a true testament to their hard work and advanced education. These dual language students were then able to attend some of the nation's top colleges and universities, including international universities.

As the first graduating class of dual language immersion students were graduating in 2006, another dual language program was just beginning in the state. Theodore Potter Elementary School #74, part of the Indianapolis Public School system, began a new chapter in the state's dual language immersion programming as part of the city's magnet program. Like the other immersion programs in Indiana, Theodore Potter began its program at the kindergarten level and subsequently grew its program year by year as the first class moved through the elementary grades. Today this program is the only dual language immersion magnet offered as part of the IPS school system, and serves students in grades kindergarten through sixth grade. With a strong desire

to create “fluent readers, writers and speakers of two languages,” the students at Theodore Potter learn the same curriculum as other IPS students, but through a 50:50 Spanish-English distribution model as taught by native Spanish-speaking teachers. These students are part of a strong tradition of quality dual language instruction and multicultural education that has become well-respected in Indiana.

## **Reinvigorating Dual Language Programming: Dual Language Pilot Programs (2015-present)**

After the initial development of the dual language immersion programs at the International School of Indiana, Lawrence Township, Lindley Elementary and later Theodore Potter Elementary, Indiana’s growth in dual language programming did not change for many years. In fact, after the establishment of Theodore Potter Elementary in 2006, there were no new dual language programs in the state for almost ten years. However, that changed in 2015 with the Indiana Department of Education’s proposal to develop the Indiana Dual Language Immersion Pilot Program. This pilot program would provide a grant of up to \$100,000 of funding for two years to Indiana schools that commit to establishing a new dual

language program at their school or expanding an existing program to include a new language.

Once the proposal reached the Indiana legislature, the Indiana State Senate voted to provide \$500,000 for the 2015-2016 school year and another \$500,000 for the 2016-2017 school year to fund and support the program. Many Indiana schools applied for the competitive grant to establish their own dual language programs. Ultimately, five schools were chosen to receive the first year funding. Batesville Primary School was chosen to create their first dual language program in Mandarin Chinese, and Global Prep Academy, Poston Road Elementary, Pleasant Run Elementary, and Eisenhower Elementary were all chosen to create immersion programs in Spanish. These schools received up to \$100,000 to pay for salaries, stipends,

**The pilot program provides funding for two years to Indiana schools that commit to establishing a new dual language program at their school or expanding an existing program.**

training, professional development, recruitment, and instructional materials to help them begin their immersion programs. These five schools applied for

and received funding for the second year of the grant, and Waterford Elementary, West Noble Primary School and Landis Elementary also received funding to begin new programs.

As a result of the Dual Language Immersion Pilot Program, Indiana has seen a huge increase in the number of dual language program offerings available to Indiana students. This will not only benefit those specific students who choose to enroll in these programs, but will also benefit Indiana as a whole as the state becomes more globally competitive and produces more graduates that are bilingual, biliterate, and globally minded. As Indiana Senator Dennis Kruse was quoted by State Impact Indiana in an article published in August 2015, “When people learn a second language fluently, you actually become a smarter person. You score better in your other classes. You end up becoming a more successful person.” Indiana’s dual language programs have been creating outstanding bilingual and biliterate students for years, and will continue to do so well into the future as dual language programming continues to grow.

## **The future of Indiana Dual Language Programs**

Because of the success of the Dual Language Pilot Program, most dual language programs in Indiana are currently only available at the kindergarten or lower elementary grade levels. However, these programs plan to build successively each year to offer dual language programming at least through the elementary and early middle school years if not longer. Pending state approval and renewal of the Pilot Program, the Indiana Department of Education will continue to provide grants to schools interested in beginning or expanding their own dual language programs within the state, thereby continuing to increase the number of opportunities available to students throughout Indiana.

However, these dual language programs would not be successful without strong community support and the dedicated commitment of the administrators and teachers that serve them. In the document “Indiana Dual Language Immersion: Individual School and Program Information” each dual language program in Indiana is highlighted and accompanied with a brief explanation of the support, dedication and commitment that make their programs successful.

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