

*Frequently Asked Questions about*

# **Dual Language Immersion Programs**

## ***Why is Princeton offering a dual language immersion program?***

Compelling research from the past 30 years shows that dual language immersion programs can produce important benefits for all students including:

**Enhanced Cognitive Skills ...** as students typically develop greater cognitive flexibility and demonstrate increased attention control, better memory, and superior problem solving skills.

**Improved Academic Performance ...** as students perform as well as or better than non-immersion students on standardized tests of English and mathematics.

**Minimizing of the Achievement Gap ...** as students respond to the cognitive demands of learning content in two different languages they develop enhanced cognitive skills that benefit them throughout their K-12 academic experience.

**Higher Second Language Proficiency ...** as students achieve higher levels of second language proficiency they graduate from high school "bilingual" and "bi-literate".

**Enhanced Global Citizenship ...** as students are better prepared to collaborate, communicate and problem solve across linguistic and political boundaries, they also exhibit more positive attitudes toward other peoples and other cultures.

Currently there are over 2,000 schools with dual language immersion programs around the nation in over 30 states. New Jersey has dual language programs in very few school districts, offering Princeton Public Schools a unique opportunity to act as a role model in our area.

## ***What is a "dual language immersion" program?***

In a ***dual language immersion program***, students are taught literacy and academic content in English and a new language. According to the Center for Applied Linguistics, the goals of dual language education are for all students "to develop high levels of language proficiency and literacy in both program languages, to demonstrate high levels of academic achievement, and to develop an appreciation for and an understanding of diverse cultures." There are several models of dual language programs. Most dual language programs begin in preschool, Kindergarten or first grade and continue for at least five years.

## ***What languages will be taught in Princeton's dual language classroom?***

English and Spanish will be taught using a "50-50" program model. This means that students will spend half of the academic day learning their core academic subjects in Spanish with a Spanish-speaking teacher and the other half of the day learning in English with an English-speaking teacher.

## ***Why did the district choose Spanish?***

Globally, with over 330 million speakers, Spanish is one of the most widely spoken languages in the world, and is the official language of 44 countries. Spanish is a good springboard to learning other Romance languages (e.g., Portuguese, Italian, and French) with little difficulty. Locally, we have district staff who speak Spanish; and our math program, Everyday Math, already has a Spanish version.

## ***What model of dual language immersion programming is the district interested in?***

We are interested in the model known as a "50-50" program. In this model there are both English speakers, native speakers of Spanish and bilingual speakers enrolled. At Community Park, the student population will be primarily English speakers with a percentage of Spanish speakers to model the language. There will be two teachers who share teaching responsibility for teaching all the subjects in

the curriculum. One teacher will be fluent in both languages and the other will be fluent in English and may have some knowledge of the other language. At least 50% of the core academic instruction will take place in Spanish language while language arts (reading and writing) is taught in both English and Spanish.

For example, the Spanish teacher will speak only in Spanish and communicate using a range of engaging strategies including pictures, songs, games, body language, expressions, drama and pantomime. Children at this age are adept at picking up language in meaningful contexts. After a brief period at the beginning of the year, students too will speak only in Spanish during Spanish class and only in English during English class. At the completion of elementary school students will be on their way to becoming bi-literate and bilingual in Spanish and English.

***How long will the dual language immersion program experience be offered?***

Students entering the dual language program in Kindergarten will be able to continue their experience learning in English and Spanish throughout elementary school.

***What kind of parent-family commitment is required for a successful experience in a dual language immersion program?***

The willingness to commit to long-term participation in the dual language immersion program is essential. Parents must commit to five or six years of participation. Parents should take advantage of the opportunities to learn about dual language immersion education by attending parent meetings, such as the *Cafecitos* held in the morning and, occasionally, in the evening and reading articles on our website.

***Will the school-district provide information and tips for parents-family members on how to best support a child who is learning a new language?***

Yes, the school and district will provide information for parents throughout the program from Kindergarten through fifth grade. In general, research show that parents can support the process by:

- being patient and supportive since it may take time for a child to feel comfortable in a classroom setting in a different language;
- joining this exciting learning journey by learning some Spanish or English;
- reading with their child in English for 20-30 minutes daily; and
- encouraging the use of Spanish outside of school using one of the many opportunities in Princeton to speak Spanish in the community.

***Who is eligible to enroll in the Kindergarten DLI program?***

Registration will be open to students, both English speaking and Spanish speaking, who live in the Community Park School neighborhood. Each DLI classroom will be capped at 22 students. A lottery will be held for spaces, if necessary.

***When does enrollment begin?***

Parents of Kindergarteners for the 2016-17 school year should register for Kindergarten during the open enrollment period, February 2-4, 2016. Parents must attend a mandatory parent information session (Feb. 23 or Feb. 24) and submit DLI application no later than March 2, 2016. Applications will be distributed at the mandatory parent information sessions.

***Who can parents contact for additional information?***

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