

Dual Language Education

Dual Language Education is an enrichment and additive model of bilingual education that seeks to provide academic instruction in both Language 1 and Language 2 simultaneously with the goal to promote high academic success, development of both languages and a cross-cultural experience for all involved students. In this additive, two-way approach, the native language and culture is viewed as a positive and serves as a resource while the student is acquiring the second language. Teachers make every effort to continuously strengthen the student's first language in order to provide a strong support for learning the second language. Students who have a strong foundation in their native language transition more effectively to the second language. Dual language education supports mastery in two languages for English Learners, as well as for students who already speak the English language (Pankake & Littleton, 2012, pgs. 126-127).

District Content and Community

The El Paso Independent School District is made up of 94 K-12th grade campuses. The district is the 12th largest district in Texas with nearly 9,000 employees and just about 60,000 students. EPISD implemented the Dual Language program at nine K-5th grade elementary campuses, but recently has expanded their Dual Language program to every elementary campus. One elementary and one middle school provide a magnet program for a Two-Way Dual Language program for Gifted and Talented students. The district also has a high school established as a Two-Way Dual Language magnet school (Two-Way Dual Language, 2016).

Special Program Content

Instruction and Implementation

Teachers in EPISD follow a 50/50 model of instruction where half of the day instruction is in English and the other half day of instruction in Spanish. Therefore, all subjects are taught in

both languages. A typical day in a Dual Language Classroom consists of Week One instruction in Language Arts and Social Studies in English during the morning part of the day with Math and Science in Spanish in the afternoon. Week Two, then, consists of Language Arts and Social Studies in Spanish during the morning hours and Math and Science in English in the second part of the day (Dual Language Education, 2016).

Background and History

Different approaches have been tested and tried for teaching bilingualism in education. For many years, the most prevailing form of bilingual education for English Language Learners was the early exit model where students in bilingual education programs were provided instruction and support in their first language while acquiring proficiency in their second language. Once the second language was acquired, students were transitioned into English only classrooms receiving no more instruction in their native language. More recent evidence supports that Two-Way Dual Language Education creates a pathway for academic advantages that allow students to develop their skills in two languages and continue to strengthen their literacy in their native language (Murphy, 2016, pg. 2). Developing bilingually and bi-literally provides students a strong foundation that serves as a resource for learning the second language.

Mission and Vision

The goals of Dual Language Education are to develop a high level of proficiency in understanding, speaking, reading and writing in both Language 1 and Language 2, bilingualism and bi-literacy. Developing positive attitudes toward those who speak the other language and toward their culture in order to accomplish cultural competency is a key component to a strong Dual Language Education program. Furthermore, a goal of Dual Language Education is to prepare students to perform at or above grade level in both languages and to promote self-esteem

and leadership skills by working collaboratively in a multicultural environment. “Dual Language bilingual programs are an attempt to eliminate this minimalist form of bilingualism and to promote academic achievement” for English Learners, as well as the acquisition of a second language through immersion for English-dominant students (Alanis & Rodriguez, 2008, pg. 306). Based on the literature telling of the goal of successful Dual Language programs, EPISD has an active framework in place set in the promising direction to accomplish these goals.

Classroom Organization

Dual language programs shoot to achieve bilingual proficiency by developing the literacy and content instruction in both Language 1 and Language 2 and by balancing the number of native speakers in the two languages. In doing so the mindset is not that the acquisition of learning a second language is the “minority within the larger culture” but rather using the balance of students acquiring a second language as a bridge between the two languages and the two cultures (Murphy, 2016, pg. 3).

Sustainability

Different sources and studies repeatedly demonstrate that Alanis and Rodriguez conclude in their studies that in order for a Dual Language program to maintain sustainability four factors need to be in place: 1) “pedagogical equity,” 2) “effective bilingual teachers,” 3) “active parent participation,” and 4) “knowledgeable leadership and continuity” (Heinrichs, 2016, pg. 4). Developing a strong academic foundation for the Dual Language program is key to its sustainability. It is especially crucial for teachers to be completely clear of the goals and philosophy of the bilingual program (Alanis & Rodriguez, 2008, pg. 313). Furthermore, the need for active parent participation in the Dual Language program proves to be beneficial in the program’s continuity. With knowledgeable leadership and stability, the Dual Language program

has the potential to thrive. The El Paso Independent School District has established a strong academic foundation, selected effective bilingual educators, encouraged and promoted active parent participation and engaged knowledgeable leadership to provide continuity for the program.

Findings and Conclusions

The Two-Way Dual Language Education program has flourished showing the most promise of all bilingual education programs. Students participating in Dual Language programs were found to be the “most likely to reach the 50th percentile on test scores in both languages and the least likely to drop out of school” (Murphy, 2016, pg. 3). Having established goals, a clear mission, and vision with strong bilingual educators in place to deliver instruction in bilingual, bicultural environments in large part having to do with parent involvement and knowledgeable leadership, allowed for success and efficient program quality (Heinrichs, 2016, pg. 9). The El Paso Independent School District in its attempt to provide language acquisition in two languages simultaneously has put the necessary systems and structures in place that have proven to be favorable in launching a sustainable Dual Language Program.

References

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