



## Dual Language Immersion FAQs

### What is a Dual Language Immersion class?

In a full immersion Spanish classroom, Spanish is not taught as a subject; it is the language in which instruction is delivered. Immersion students master the curriculum objectives in all subject areas, while becoming highly proficient in a second language. Native English speaking students benefit from the academic rigor inherent in learning through another language. English Language Arts is introduced around grade 2 or later for 90/10 programs. The students become bilingual, biliterate, and bicultural and are equally proficient in both languages with near-native fluency in the target language.

### What is language immersion education?

The focus of language immersion programs is to help students become proficient in a target language while mastering subject content from other disciplines. In immersion programs language is not taught as a subject; it is the medium in which core instruction is delivered. Research shows the most effective way for children to acquire a second language is to integrate instruction into the standard curriculum children are already learning.

### What are the goals and benefits of a Dual Language Program?

Dual Language students will develop strong skills and proficiency in their first and second language. They will become bilingual and biliterate, achieve academically at or above grade level in both languages, acquire higher-order thinking skills and better problem solving abilities, and develop multicultural competencies and intercultural relationships in the school and community, including appreciation and respect for other languages and cultures.

Native English speakers and English-dominant students will have the opportunity of developing Spanish as a second language at an early age while continuing to grow in English. They will achieve at the same or higher levels in English compared to their monolingual English speaking peers in English-only general education classrooms. Native Spanish speakers will be able to develop English as a second language while enriching their mother tongue, Spanish. They will achieve at the same or higher levels in English than their peers enrolled in other programs.

All children will learn appropriate academic skills while developing their bilingual proficiency. Moreover, your child will be able to develop social skills that allow him/her to make friends in a multicultural and multilingual world. They will develop very positive attitudes about students of other languages and cultural backgrounds and positive attitudes about their heritage language and cultural background.

### What does it look like?

The two models you will currently find in Participate dual language programs are described by the North Carolina Department of Instruction (NCDPI) as follows:

**Two-way immersion programs:** These programs group native speakers of English with native speakers

of the target language. The mix is approximately 50 percent of each group and both become bilingual, biliterate and bicultural. Instruction is provided both in English and in the target language on alternate days, according to academic subjects, or according to a daily schedule (morning in one language and afternoon in the other). There are a variety of models, and percentages like 90/10 and 50/50 are used to refer to how much of the instruction at different grade levels is conducted in the target language versus how much is given in English. For example, one school might have 90/10 in K-1 and then move to 50/50 for grades 2-5, while another school starts at 50/50 in kindergarten and continues with that through grade 5.

**Full immersion programs:** These programs typically serve children coming from English-speaking homes in an environment where the target language is used exclusively. Content is delivered in the target language, and English Language Arts is introduced in grade 2 or later. The students become bilingual, biliterate and bicultural and are equally proficient in both languages, with near-native fluency in the target language.

### **How many dual language immersion classes are being offered in Dare County Schools?**

The number of classes offered has been determined by the size of the school. The type of program available (Full immersion or two-way immersion) has been determined by the student demographics of each school and parent interest.

Dare County Schools will offer the following opportunities for enrollment in Dual Language Immersion classes for the 2023-2024 school year.

#### **Kitty Hawk Elementary School**

Kindergarten: 1 section of full immersion (90/10)

#### **First Flight Elementary School**

Kindergarten: 1 section of full immersion (90/10)

#### **Manteo Elementary School**

Kindergarten: 2 sections of two-way immersion (50/50)

#### **Nags Head Elementary School**

Kindergarten: 2 sections of two-way immersion (50/50)

### **What is the class size of a DLI classroom?**

Our goal is for Dual Language Immersion classes to have a maximum of 25 students in each section.\* DLI classrooms are [exempt from the class size requirements](#) in grades K-3.

*\*Starting in the 2023-2024 school year, our goal is that DLI Kinder classes will have a maximum class size of 20 students.*

### **How do I sign-up my child for a spot in a Dual Language Immersion classroom?**

Applications for the Dual Language Immersion Program are a part of the Kindergarten Registration Process. The application window for each school will open in the spring of each school year. Applications for Kindergarten students will be accepted on a rolling basis. If the number of students interested exceeds the number of spots in the classroom a lottery will be conducted. This unweighted, public lottery will determine which students are in the class for the following school year.

### **What is the deadline date for transferring into the Dual Language Immersion program?**

Transfers into the Dual Language classroom from the waiting list is dependent upon space being available. Students can transfer into immersion until December of 1st grade. Transfers from other Dual Language Immersion programs (within DCS and beyond) will be considered based on the size of programs at individual

schools and space availability. In 50/50 programs, students who are native Spanish speakers may be placed in DLI classrooms depending on language proficiency assessments and availability.

### **My older child is currently in DLI. Will my younger child be enrolled in the DLI Program?**

Students with older siblings in the DLI program will be given preference to being enrolled in the DLI Program.

### **My English-dominant son is in 2nd grade and he still isn't speaking much Spanish. Is the program working?**

Children develop languages at different rates. Usually, their listening abilities develop before their speaking abilities. Your son may be reading and writing in Spanish but not comfortable speaking outside of the classroom environment yet. Talking to your child's teacher will help you understand whether or not his Spanish language development is on track and what you can do to encourage him to speak more Spanish.

### **My fourth-grade daughter has been in the program and is already bilingual in Spanish and English. Should she stay in the program?**

Yes! While young children may be speaking fluently in two languages, they have not yet developed the reading and writing skills they need to be academically successful in both languages at high levels. The goal of the DLI Program is to support Spanish and English language and literacy development through 12th grade so they will be highly proficient in both languages and prepared to earn the Seal of Biliteracy (Global Language Endorsement) in high school.

### **Will my child progress through the curriculum at a slower rate than children in general education classes because he/she is learning it in Spanish too?**

The curriculum implemented in the dual language classrooms is DCS and NC adopted curriculum and is taught through supportive, differentiated, and interactive teaching strategies, which ensure that children learn the academic content while developing their first and second languages. According to Thomas and Collier, "dual language classes are quite different from traditional language classes. Dual language students develop their second language by using it with their classmates as they study mathematics, science, social studies, language arts, music, art, and physical education. With the support of carefully planned instruction, the English learners and native English speakers acquire each other's languages through a process that is very similar to the natural acquisition of their first language. This is the best way to learn a language. The natural, subconscious, developmental process of language acquisition is always a complex and amazing feat! ... If they (English dominant students) stay in the program throughout Grades K-5, they will also typically reach grade-level achievement in their second language after 6 years of schooling through the two languages. In English, they will be scoring above grade level..." (Thomas and Collier, 2017)

### **Is an immersion program only appropriate for high-performing students?**

[Research shows](#) that immersion education can be effective for a wide variety of learners, including academically/intellectually gifted students, non-native English speakers, students with special education needs and socio-economic challenges.

### **My child is in a full immersion program, so how will he learn the English skills he needs to be successful on EOGs and other assessments in English?**

In a full immersion program, your child will get dedicated English Language Arts instruction beginning in 2nd grade. In grade 2, immersion students receive 45 minutes to an hour of English Language Arts daily. To meet English literacy requirements, all schools will move to a 50/50 Immersion Model from 3-5th grade.

### **Will my child be able to speak English in class until she learns enough vocabulary to communicate?**

In kindergarten, you will often hear children speaking or responding to teachers in English. However, their teachers will be speaking only in the target language to them, using a lot of gestures and tools to convey messages. Good immersion teachers will encourage new language learners to respond in the target language by giving them the needed vocabulary to mimic. Teachers will not revert to English unless safety or emergency necessitates. Good immersion teachers, by the middle of first grade, will insist on no English in the immersion classroom. Students will quickly realize an easy way out if they are able to speak any English (except in emergencies) with their teacher.

### **How can I help support my child in doing homework in the second language, particularly if I don't know that language?**

Parents can support students at home by making sure that they have the right environment and tools to complete the homework (e.g., a quiet space and enough time, paper, dictionaries in both languages, and school supplies). Parents can also ask questions about the homework in the language spoken at home, thus giving the students opportunities to explain the assignment in their first language. Additionally, parents can and should reach out to their child's teacher for creative options or ideas to support children at home with homework (eg, Google translate, explanation of homework tasks for parents in their home language, visits to their local library for support and resources, etc.)

### **What is my role as a parent in a Dual Language Program?**

Parents quite often feel some anxiety about having their child educated in a language, which they themselves do not speak. They often worry about not being able to help with homework, or about not understanding their child's difficulties. Dual Language teachers know that the children often come from monolingual homes and consider this when assigning homework. English dominant parents should expect some level of frustration to be expressed by their child. The calm support of parents facilitates the adjustment to a new language and instructional environment. It is important to realize that immersion provides a scholastic experience in Spanish. To attain a higher level of bilingualism parents should look for Spanish language experiences outside of school: Spanish television, radio, movies or other media, sports activities, summer camps, and get-togethers/"play dates" with their Spanish-speaking peers are among the many possibilities.

The three most effective ways that a parent can prepare their child to succeed in school are:

- reading together;
- talking together,
- and answering your child's questions about language.

Reading aloud with your child in your native language every day is very important. It creates an interest in books, it enlarges your child's vocabulary and it broadens his/her experience. Visits to the zoo, shopping center, sports events, watching TV, cooking together and family chores all provide occasions for talking together. ***Research clearly demonstrates that second language acquisition is dependent upon development of the first language. When you strengthen your child's native language, he/she becomes more successful in learning the second language.***

To reiterate the commitment expected in a DLI Program, DCS has developed Parent Compacts.

[Parent Compact 50/50](#)

[Parent Compact 90/10](#)

### **Will my child take state-mandated assessments in the foreign language?**

**mClass Reading Assessments:** mClass Reading Assessments will be administered in English and Spanish for all 50/50 programs and 90/10 programs.

**EOGs:** End-of-Grade Assessments will be taken in English. These start in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

### **Will classroom assessments be in English for children in the immersion program?**

**50/50 Programs:** Classroom assessments will be given in the language of that particular classroom. For example, in 50/50 programs assessments on English Days will be in English and assessments on Spanish Days will be in Spanish.

**90/10 Programs:** Assessments will be primarily in Spanish for dual language immersion students. As students transition to higher grade levels, more assessments will be offered in English as more of the instruction will occur in English. Although this may seem counterintuitive, decades of research indicate that this model works well for students.

### **Tell me more about your partner, *Participate Learning*.**

*Participate Learning* ([www.participatelearning.com](http://www.participatelearning.com)) builds global education programs that prepare students for success in an interconnected world. For more than 25 years, educators have leveraged *Participate Learning* professional development and curriculum, language acquisition, and teacher exchange programs to generate engaging learning environments where students can excel in core curriculum as well as develop valuable critical and creative thinking skills. Today, *Participate Learning* recruits ESL, language, and elementary education teachers in Argentina, Australia, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, France, Germany, Guatemala, Honduras, Ireland, Jamaica, Mexico, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Taiwan, the United Kingdom, Uruguay and Venezuela for placement in K-12 schools throughout North Carolina and Virginia.

### **Will international faculty have previous experience working as immersion teachers?**

All International teachers are highly qualified and have track records of academic success. Although they may not all have experience working with immersion, they all have years of general teaching experience and speak more than one language (including English).

### **Can my child move out of dual immersion and into a traditional class if he or she is struggling?**

Parents are encouraged to keep their children in the immersion program. It can take time for both parents and students to adjust to Dual Language Immersion. We encourage parents to be patient and to communicate with the administration and staff if there are concerns.

### **What if my child doesn't respond well or doesn't like it?**

Like any kindergarten child, your child will be tired at the end of the school day, and it is even more exhausting when processing a new language. If you are worried your child is not enjoying school or thriving in the immersion environment, talk to the teacher and principal. Most students respond well to an immersion program, as they are made to feel secure right from the start and, after the first few weeks, they do not focus on the fact that the teacher is not speaking English. Parents should give it at least nine weeks, if not a full semester, to see if the child responds better after getting through the transition of being in school.

### **What happens in middle and high school after completing an elementary immersion program?**

Dare County Schools will introduce the first DLI class in 6th grade in 2023-2024. Many elementary immersion programs transition into middle school. The goal of a transitional middle school dual language immersion program is to prepare children to participate and succeed in more advanced language studies and even to access a third language in high school. Middle school students will be provided an elective option to continue in the immersion sequence. In sixth grade the course is Spanish for Heritage Speakers Part A and in seventh grade students take Part B. Students receive one high school world language credit upon successful completion of both Part A and Part B. In eighth grade, students take Spanish for Heritage Speakers Level II.

Successful completion of the Level II course will also provide the student with one high school world language credit. The middle school immersion courses will be taught by native or “near-native” speakers who have the appropriate language ability and cultural knowledge to be a good fit for teaching the course. Some teachers may be Participate teachers while others will be the current Spanish teachers. In grades 9-12, students may select to continue in intermediate or advanced language study of a world language.

**If I unenroll my child from DCS for a period of time, can they re-enter the Dual Language Immersion program upon re-enrollment?**

If a student unenrolls from Dare County Schools, we can not guarantee they would have a space in the DLI classroom upon re-enrollment. The target language proficiency level will be taken into account prior to re-enrolling any student in a DLI classroom if space is available. This will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

**Who do I contact if I have questions?**

First, contact your child’s teacher(s) and building principal. You can also contact Mora Newton, ESL / DLI Coordinator at 252-480-8888, ext 1932 and [newtonmo@daretolearn.org](mailto:newtonmo@daretolearn.org).