

## Frequently Asked Questions about Dual Language Immersion 50:50 Programs

### What is a dual language immersion program?



In dual language immersion programs, the regular school curriculum is taught via the target language.

The target language is not the subject of instruction; rather, it is the vehicle for instruction. Children acquire the language naturally, while also learning the academic content.

### What is a 50:50 program?

In a 50:50 model, 50% of instruction is delivered in the target language and 50% is delivered in English for all grade levels. At some schools, the language of instruction alternates every other day (i.e. Monday all instruction is in English, Tuesday all instruction is in the target language, etc.). At other schools, the day is split in half, with the morning instruction in one language and the afternoon instruction in the other.



### What are the benefits of a dual language immersion program?

Dual immersion programs have many benefits. Children learn language much easier and more naturally than adults do, making elementary school the ideal time to become immersed in a second

language. Beyond achieving high proficiency in biliteracy and bilingual skills, research shows immersion students outperform their peers in traditional, monolingual classes on standardized tests, and have enhanced cognitive skills. Students also gain interpersonal skills, including increased cultural sensitivity, and are prepared for a global society and marketplace. Additionally, being able to communicate and excel academically in two languages also gives students greater self-esteem and a sense of accomplishment.

### Will my child be confused?



Immersion teachers are very skilled in utilizing language acquisition strategies to ensure that their students understand the language and content.

These include gestures and actions, visuals, drawings, hands-on materials, TPR (total physical response), and simultaneous participation activities. As children are learning, they may sometimes confuse words between the two languages. Yet, research shows that this extra cognitive effort is good for the brain. Constantly choosing between two languages actually makes the brain stronger and improves executive function, meaning the ability to make decisions, stay focused, follow multi-step directions, set and achieve goals, and remember things.

## How will my child's English language and literacy skills be affected by learning the target language?

Research consistently shows that being in a language immersion program actually enhances English language development. Learning in a second language increases students' metalinguistic

awareness, meaning that they have a deeper knowledge and understanding of language, which applies to both the target language and English.



## How can I help my child at home if I don't speak the language?



The best thing you can do is read aloud to your child, in your home language, every day. This builds listening and comprehension skills, as

well as a love for reading. When your child does have homework in a language you do not speak, ask him/her about the homework. It is perfectly fine for you and your child to speak in the language you use at home, since if your child can explain the homework to you in your home language, it demonstrates their understanding of the content and task. If your child has a book to read in a language you do not speak, you can listen to them read and then ask questions about the book. Again, it is fine if the questions and answers are in your home language; your child will still be able to show their level of comprehension of the book through their answers.

## How long should my child stay in the dual language immersion program?

Research shows that long-term participation of 5 to 7 years is necessary for the benefits of the dual language immersion program to be fully realized. Thus, enrolling your child in the K-5 dual language



immersion program is a long-term commitment. Additionally, continuing to participate in the dual language pathway in middle and high school will enable your child to maintain his/her bilingualism and biliteracy, as well as the possibility of taking advanced placement the target language classes and potentially earning college credits while in high school.