

Understanding the Dual Language Program: A Guide for Parents



Bilingual/ESOL Department



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**Educating Today's Students to
Succeed in Tomorrow's World**

Table of Contents

Introduction	5
I. Program Structure.....	5
Program Goals	5
Grade Span and Language Allocation	5
Program Models	5
Language Separation	5
Commitment to the Program.....	6
Kindergarten Enrollment.....	7
Grade 1 Entry.....	7
Grades 2-5 Entry.....	7
Middle School Entry	8
High School Entry	8
Late Entrance and Transfers	8
Students with Special Needs.....	8
Gifted/High Achievers.....	9
II. Curriculum	9
Overview.....	9
Curriculum Expectations.....	9
Technology Integration.....	9
III. Instruction	9
Overview.....	9
Instructional Models.....	10
Best Practices in Instruction	10
Program Expectations and Non-Negotiables	10
IV. Assessment and Accountability.....	10
Overview.....	10
Program Support and Monitoring	10
Student Progress Monitoring	10
Withdrawal Process.....	11
Biliteracy Award	11
WIDA ACCESS & WIDA Screener	11
V. Staff Quality and Professional Development	12

Overview	12
Teacher Qualifications	12
Dual Language Liaison	12
VI. Family and Community	12
Overview	12
Informational Meetings:.....	12
Newsletters and Email Lists:.....	12
Parent Involvement	13
Parent Involvement and Volunteer Guidelines	13
Multilingual Advisory Committee (MAC).....	13
Purpose and Mission	13
Key Responsibilities.....	13
Advocacy at Every Level	13
Why Parents Should Get Involved	14
VII. Support and Resources	14
Resources Provided.....	14
Closing Remarks	14

Introduction

Welcome to the Dual Language Program (DLP)! The Dual Language Program in Broward County Public Schools is built on the belief that every child can become bilingual, biliterate, and academically successful. Our model combines rigorous academics with language development in English and Spanish, while also nurturing cultural understanding and global awareness.

This guide is organized around the **Guiding Principles for Dual Language Education (3rd Edition)** from the Center for Applied Linguistics. It gives families the essential information they need to understand the program's goals, expectations, support, and how you can partner with us to ensure success for every student.

I. Program Structure

Our model benefits **all learners**, English learners, heritage speakers, and native English speakers, by promoting equitable access to rigorous content, cultural competency, and real-world language skills. Students receive instruction in both English and Spanish, developing strong language skills while mastering grade-level content.

This program is open to all students regardless of their background. Over time, research shows that participation in a dual language program not only supports language development but also strengthens cognitive skills and academic performance.

Our program is built on collaboration between families, educators, and the community. Your partnership is key to ensuring your child thrives in both languages and cultures.

Program Goals

- Bilingualism and biliteracy for all students.
- High academic achievement in both program languages.
- Cultural awareness and respect for diversity.

Grade Span and Language Allocation

The program currently serves students from kindergarten through high school, with plans to expand to 12th grade. Students in elementary school receive 1½ to 2½ hours of daily instruction in the target language (Spanish). Instruction is organized to keep languages separate, either through a partner teacher model (one English teacher, one Spanish teacher) or a self-contained teacher providing both languages at different times of the day.

Program Models

- **Two-Way Dual Language:** Balances enrollment between native English speakers and native speakers of Spanish.
- **Daily Target Language Instruction:** Students receive 1½ to 2½ hours of Spanish instruction daily.

Language Separation

Each language is taught separately — no direct translation by teachers — to ensure students engage fully in both languages.

Commitment to the Program

Families are encouraged to begin the program in kindergarten, as early entry allows students to build a strong foundation in both languages. Once enrolled, students remain in the program unless a formal withdrawal is requested by the family or determined necessary by the school after careful review. Any withdrawal will be handled in consultation with parents, teachers, and school administration, and may involve additional stakeholders such as an ELL committee.

Parents are asked to sign a Parent Compact to confirm their understanding of the program model, expectations, and commitment.

Student Enrollment and Participation Guidelines

Our Commitment to Inclusion

The Dual Language Program welcomes students from all language backgrounds and proficiency levels. The goal of the program is to help students develop high levels of proficiency in English and Spanish while achieving academic success and building cross-cultural understanding.

Enrollment

Families of accepted students must complete and submit the program enrollment form and Parent Compact within two weeks of the orientation meeting. Standard district registration forms, including emergency contact information, will also be required.

Orientation

Parents and guardians of accepted students will receive additional information about the program during the school's Open House, Meet-and-Greet, or a designated orientation session. During this meeting, school staff will explain how the Dual Language Program works, review program expectations, and provide opportunities for families to ask questions.

Qualified Dual Language Teachers

Dual Language classrooms are staffed by teachers who are qualified to provide instruction in the program's language(s) of instruction.

- In self-contained classrooms, teachers should be able to communicate and teach effectively in both English and Spanish.
- In schools that use a partner-teaching model, one teacher may provide instruction primarily in English and the other primarily in Spanish. These teachers work closely together to support students' learning in both languages.

Regardless of the instructional model, all teachers are committed to helping students grow academically while developing bilingualism and biliteracy in a supportive and inclusive environment.

Family Partnership

Families are important partners in their child's success. We encourage parents and guardians to stay engaged, attend school events, communicate regularly with teachers, and support their child's language development at home. Together, we can help students thrive in both languages.

Kindergarten Enrollment

Families are encouraged to start in kindergarten for smooth progression. The program is open to all students regardless of their background. Entry criteria may be required unless the student is an Active LY - English Language Learner (students currently receiving ELL services). Schools will use the following entry criteria:

Letter Names Letter Sounds
26/52 (English) 13/26 (English)
27/54 (Spanish) 13/27 (Spanish)

❖ **Active LYs who speak the target language (Spanish) do not need to meet entry criteria.**

- **Students succeed best** in the program when they are either **native speakers of the target language or ELLs**.
- This criterion applies to students at kindergarten entry and to any student in any grade level who is identified as LY; all identified English Language Learners (ELL) & (LY) students are excluded from standard entry criteria or screening and are eligible based on language status.
- **These students will NOT be required to meet an entry criterion if their L1 is the target language.** Students succeed in the Dual Language Program when they are speakers of the target language or (ELLs) (native Spanish language speakers).
- Kindergarten students are generally placed in the Dual Language Program based on a combination of factors, including letter names and sound recognition, language background, space availability, and a balanced mix 50% native speakers and 50% target language speakers. Priority will be given to siblings of students who are current or prior participants of the Dual Language Program, twins, students transferring from other Dual Language Programs, and school choice reassignments who transfer solely to participate in the Program.
- Incoming Kindergarten students at Dual Language schools will have the opportunity to participate in the Program regardless of ethnicity and/or language spoken at home. Students from families of the target language will be given the opportunity to enroll in the Program at any grade level if a seat becomes available. However, due to the rigor of the Program, students from families of native English speakers will be given the opportunity to participate only in kindergarten and first-grade, or when transferring from another school or district in which the student was actively participating in a Dual Language Program.

Grade 1 Entry

- Students may enter if space is available. Priority is given to those on the waiting list.
- If no waiting list exists, the school will send home Interest Forms to identify interested families
- Both ELL students and native English speakers can apply. They can be an ELL or monolingual English speaker if working on grade level (**in either language**).
- If there are more applicants than available seats, the school will conduct a lottery with Dual Language/Bilingual-ESOL district personnel staff present.

Grades 2-5 Entry

- Entry is limited to students transferring from another dual language program or who are native Spanish speakers with grade-level skills.
- Vacancies will be filled **from the waiting list** first.
- If no waiting list exists, **Interest Forms** will be sent to identify **ELL students and native target language speakers** performing at grade level.
- If there are more applicants than seats, a **lottery** will determine placement, with Bilingual/ESOL staff present.

Middle School Entry

Students entering in 6th grade must pass a district-administered Spanish proficiency screener.

- Enrollment: At the middle school level, enrollment in the Dual Language Program will depend on the feeder for elementary school(s) offering the Dual Language Program. Students from those schools will be given priority. Students interested in entering the Program at the middle school level will need to pass a Spanish proficiency screener (passing score is 70% or above).
- Placement: Middle school students may be placed in the Program based on their language proficiency, prior to dual language experience, and available space.

High School Entry

Students entering in 9th grade must pass a district-administered Spanish proficiency screener.

- Enrollment: At the high school level, enrollment in the Dual Language Program depends on the availability of such Programs in the region. Some high schools may offer advanced placement courses for students who have participated in Dual Language Programs as early as ninth grade if these score 70% or higher on the AP Spanish Proficiency Screener.
- Placement: High school students interested in the Dual Language Program will be placed based on their language proficiency, previous dual language experience, and available space.

Lottery Process for Enrollment

If the number of students applying to the Dual Language Program is greater than the number of available seats, a random lottery will be conducted to determine placement.

The following students receive priority consideration:

- Brothers and sisters of current or former Dual Language Program students.
- Twins or multiple siblings applying at the same time. If one sibling is selected through the lottery, all siblings applying together will be offered placement, provided seats are available.
- Students who are assigned (zoned) to the school.
- Students transferring from another established Dual Language Program, when space is available and program eligibility requirements are met.
- Students accepted through School Choice. Acceptance to the school through School Choice does not automatically guarantee enrollment in the Dual Language Program. Students must still qualify for and be selected through the program's enrollment process.
- To ensure fairness and transparency, a representative from the District Bilingual/ESOL Department may be present during the lottery process.

Parents will receive **written notification** within two weeks of the lottery drawing regarding their child's acceptance or placement on the waiting list.

Late Entrance and Transfers

Students entering from non-dual language programs may join K-1 if space allows. Higher-grade students must show proficiency in Spanish. Transfers from other districts with dual language experience will be assessed for placement.

Students with Special Needs

Students with disabilities are fully included in the Dual Language Program, including students with autism, speech challenges, or physical disabilities. Upon enrollment, students will receive the same level of service and support provided across Broward County Public Schools. Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) are honored, and teachers

collaborate with support staff to ensure accommodation is implemented in both languages. Visual aids, hands-on activities, and modified assessments will be used to engage and support students in their learning journey.

Gifted/High Achievers

The Dual Language Program is committed to providing an inclusive and enriched educational experience for all students, including our gifted and high-achieving learners. We believe that the benefits of our Dual Language Program extend to all learners and that the continuity of this experience is crucial as the students' progress. As a result, we ask that schools **NOT** remove gifted/high achieving students from the Dual Language Program.

Students who are identified as gifted and participate in Dual Language programs can continue to benefit from both learning opportunities. Schools work to plan services in ways that support students' academic strengths while also nurturing their bilingual or multilingual development. Gifted services may be provided within the Dual Language classroom by a teacher who is endorsed or working toward endorsement in gifted education, or through a collaborative consultation approach. These options help ensure students remain engaged in the Dual Language program while receiving appropriate support for their gifted needs.

Dual Language students in BCPS have historically outperformed their non-dual language peers, including gifted and high-achieving students. To meet the needs of these learners, it is strongly recommended that **at least one dual language teacher (either English or Spanish)** per grade level be **gifted endorsed**. This ensures that advanced students receive appropriately rigorous, differentiated instruction within the dual language framework.

II. Curriculum

Overview

The Dual Language curriculum is aligned to Florida's B.E.S.T. standards in English and Spanish, integrating language development with grade-level content. Lessons include cultural perspectives and encourage students to make cross-linguistic and cross-cultural connections.

Curriculum Expectations

All schools must use the district-adopted dual language curriculum. Supplemental resources, whether purchased or teacher-created, may be used if they support the adopted curriculum. Teachers plan lessons that integrate content objectives, language objectives, and cultural learning.

Technology Integration

In the Dual Language Program, technology plays an important role in making both English and the target language more accessible for students. It enriches the curriculum and provides access to authentic language resources. Technology also helps teachers differentiate instruction and engage students through small group work and interactive tasks. Additionally, it supports learning both inside and outside the classroom, giving students more opportunities to practice and grow in both languages.

III. Instruction

Overview

Instruction is at the heart of a successful Dual Language Program. High-quality dual language teaching blends academic rigor with intentional language development and cultural integration.

Instructional Models

- **Partner Teacher Model:** Students learn English with one teacher and Spanish with another. Each teacher maintains a classroom environment fully in the language of instruction, with a “bridging wall” for connecting concepts between languages.
- **Self-Contained Model:** One teacher delivers instruction in both languages, with clearly designated areas for English and Spanish learning, often using color coding to distinguish languages.

Best Practices in Instruction

Instruction focuses on higher-order thinking, problem-solving, and real-world applications. Teachers use strategies such as translanguageing (strategic use of both languages for learning), cooperative learning, and culturally relevant pedagogy.

Program Expectations and Non-Negotiables

To ensure the Dual Language Program delivers its promise of bilingualism, biliteracy, and high academic achievement, all participating schools follow a set of core expectations. These expectations help keep instruction consistent, fair, and effective for all students, regardless of school site.

Students receive between 1½ to 2½ hours of instruction in the target language (Spanish) every day, depending on the grade level and program model. Teachers maintain strict language separation, meaning English is taught during English time and Spanish during Spanish time, without translation between the two. This helps students fully develop each language in its own context.

Enrollment is balanced so that each class includes a mix of native English speakers and native Spanish speakers whenever possible, creating opportunities for natural language exchange. All instruction is aligned to the Florida B.E.S.T. standards in English and to Spanish language content standards.

All Dual Language teachers are required to attend ongoing professional development throughout the year to stay current on best practices and strategies that support bilingual learning. Schools must also follow the district’s adopted dual language curriculum. Supplemental materials, whether purchased by the program or created by teachers, may be used only if they support and align with the adopted curriculum.

Every school in the program is expected to uphold these non-negotiables to maintain high-quality instruction and ensure students have a consistent, rigorous, and enriching dual language experience.

IV. Assessment and Accountability

Overview

Assessment in the Dual Language Program measures student growth in both content knowledge and language proficiency. Assessments guide instruction and help ensure all students are making progress toward bilingualism and biliteracy.

Program Support and Monitoring

The Bilingual/ESOL Department regularly monitors Dual Language Programs to ensure smooth operation and compliance with district guidelines. Programs are evaluated to ensure they align with the District ELL Plan and the META Consent Decree (which protects ELL students' rights). Teachers receive additional support if needed.

Student Progress Monitoring

Students are assessed in English using Florida B.E.S.T. standards and in Spanish using Spanish language content standards. Progress is reviewed regularly to inform teaching and support student needs. Teachers use a variety of assessments in both languages to track learning and improve instruction. Grades follow district guidelines (Policy 6000.1) and reflect student mastery of grade-level standards.

Withdrawal Process

We understand that the Dual Language Program may not be the right fit for every student. Parents have the option to remove their child from the program if they feel it is not meeting their child's needs.

In some cases, the school may also determine that the program is not the best fit for a student. This decision is made carefully, with input from teachers, administrators, and program staff, after reviewing the students' progress and needs.

We are committed to working together with families to make the best decisions for each child's academic success and overall well-being.

Biliteracy Award

This award is designed to measure the attainment of age-appropriate biliteracy for students who have been in the Elementary Dual Language program. The intent of the elementary school "Biliteracy Award" (BA) is to encourage students along the path of bilingualism, to place value on the continued use of two languages, and the attainment of the Seal of Biliteracy upon graduation from a State High School.

- **5th & 8th Grade Biliteracy Awards:** Recognize students achieving age-appropriate proficiency in both languages.
- **High School Seal of Biliteracy:** Awarded upon graduation to students meeting state criteria for advanced proficiency.

WIDA ACCESS & WIDA Screener

- Age-appropriate oral and listening proficiency in both languages.

Proficiency in English

- For students identified as English Language Learners (ELLs), eligibility for the Dual Language Program requires a **WIDA ACCESS** score of "Proficient" or higher if entering in 3rd grade or above.

Kindergarten Exception

- Students entering the program in kindergarten who have Spanish identified as their primary/home language (L1 Spanish) are not required to complete the Dual Language Kindergarten entry screening for program admission.
- However, these students must still participate in the **WIDA Screener**, as required by district and state procedures, to determine English Language Learner (ELL) status and English language proficiency level.
- In other words, Kindergarten students whose home language is Spanish and are identified as active ELLs do not need to take the Dual Language Program entrance screening but will be screened through the WIDA process to determine their English language support needs.
- For L1 (native English) students, a Florida State Assessment (FSA) score of 3 or above in English Language Arts is required when entering the program after kindergarten.
- Writing skills: Ability to write coherently and purposefully in both languages (assessed using a rubric).
- Positive attitudes towards bilingualism: Demonstrated through an essay or oral presentation showing an understanding of the benefits of bilingualism.
- Completion of an end-of-year assessment provided by the district.

Program Goals	Standards	Assessments
Academic Achievement	FAST/B.E.S.T. K-5 Star Early Literacy Star Literacy Benchmark Adelante Core Curriculum K-5th FL. FAST/B.E.S.T ELA & Math 5 to 6 th 8 to 9th	Kindergarten Screener English PM1, PM2, PM3 Unit assessments LA and Math Writing Assessments in both languages; Curriculum-based assessments (i.e., end of unit tests, quizzes, and performance-based tasks) PM1, PM2 & PM3 Prueba de Ubicación - español para hispanoparlantes Prueba de Ubicación del español para MS/HS
Target Language Proficiency	AMIRA Star Alfabetización Temprana Star Lectura	ISIP - Imagination Station Online Program PM1, PM2, PM3 in Spanish/Español

V. Staff Quality and Professional Development

Overview

Effective dual language instruction requires skilled, certified, and well-supported educators.

Teacher Qualifications

Teachers must be certified in their subject areas and language of instruction. Gifted endorsement is strongly recommended for at least one partner teacher at each grade level. Spanish partners must also pass a district language proficiency screener to ensure they possess the academic language skills necessary to deliver rigorous content instruction in Spanish and support students' development of biliteracy.

Dual Language Liaison

Each school will have a liaison elected by dual language teachers (or appointed by the principal in new programs). The liaison attends meetings, communicates updates, and supports program implementation.

VI. Family and Community

Overview

Families are essential partners in student success.

Informational Meetings:

Parents will receive detailed program information at open houses, meet-and-greet events, and parent-teacher conferences.

Newsletters and Email Lists:

Schools will maintain regular communication via newsletters, class websites, and email updates.

Parent Involvement

Parents are encouraged to volunteer, attend cultural events, and join the PTA. Volunteers in classrooms must use only the language of instruction and complete district volunteer clearance.

Parent Involvement and Volunteer Guidelines

Active parent involvement is essential for student success in the DLP. Families are encouraged to:

- Assist with homework and school projects.
- Volunteer at school events, chaperone field trips.
- Join the PTA or other school committees.
- Organize cultural events and help fundraising.
- Apply for grants or support of classroom activities.

Parents volunteering in classrooms must:

- Use only the language of instruction during activities, adhering to the program's language separation policy and complete BCPS volunteer screening on the district website.

Multilingual Advisory Committee (MAC)

The MAC is a district-wide advisory group made up of parents, teachers, and administrators who are passionate about advocating for Dual Language education in Broward County Public Schools. It is not a school-based committee; rather, it represents *all* Dual Language schools across the district, serving as a voice for students, families, and educators. It advocates all dual language schools, promotes cultural awareness, supports resource allocation, and advises program growth at elementary, middle, and high school levels

Purpose and Mission

The MAC works to strengthen and expand our Dual Language Program by promoting high-quality instruction, equitable access, and cultural enrichment. The committee provides feedback to district leadership, advocates for program improvements, and raises awareness about the benefits of bilingualism and biliteracy.

Key Responsibilities

- **Program Enhancement:** Collaborates with the district to ensure the curriculum remains rigorous, culturally rich, and aligned to academic standards.
- **Advocacy:** Represents the interests of all Dual Language schools, engaging with school board members, district leaders, and policymakers to secure ongoing support for the program.
- **Community Engagement:** Organizes events, informational workshops, and cultural celebrations to bring families together and build pride in bilingualism.
- **Resource Support:** Helps identify resources and opportunities to strengthen the program, including materials, professional learning, and staffing needs.
- **Cultural Awareness:** Promotes initiatives that celebrate linguistic diversity and foster respect for all cultures represented in our classrooms.

Advocacy at Every Level

- **Elementary:** Ensures that the foundation of bilingualism and biliteracy is strong, and that students are prepared for middle school continuation.
- **Middle School:** Supports smooth transitions from elementary to middle school programs and highlights the academic and social benefits of maintaining both languages.
- **High School:** Promotes the expansion of dual language and advanced language courses, ensuring students can earn the Seal of Biliteracy upon graduation.

Why Parents Should Get Involved

Parents are vital members of the MAC because they bring firsthand perspectives on how the program impacts students. Participation gives families the opportunity to:

- Stay informed about district initiatives and changes affecting the program.
- Collaborate with other families, educators, and administrators.
- Contribute to decisions that shape the future of Dual Language education.

MAC meetings are open to all parents from Dual Language schools, and announcements about upcoming meetings are shared through school newsletters, the district's Dual Language Program webpage, and social media.

VII. Support and Resources

The district provides resources and support to ensure the success of the Dual Language Program.

Resources Provided

- Instructional textbooks in both languages
- Curriculum maps
- Professional learning sessions
- Ongoing coaching and instructional support
- Technology integration to enhance instruction

Closing Remarks

The Dual Language Program is a shared commitment between students, families, teachers, and the community. Together, we create a learning environment that nurtures bilingualism, biliteracy, academic excellence, and cultural understanding.

Your support and active involvement are essential to the success of this program. We value your partnership and the unique contributions you bring to your child's educational journey.

Thank you for choosing to be part of the Dual Language family. We look forward to working alongside you to provide a rich, challenging, and inspiring educational experience for your child.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact your children's school or the Bilingual/ESOL Department (754) 321-2590.