

What Parents Need to Know about Dual Immersion in Atlanta Public Schools

What is Dual Language Immersion?

In the Dual Language Immersion Language Program, the instructional time is divided equally between English and the immersion language throughout the elementary grades. In APS, the content areas that will be taught in the immersion language are math, science, and immersion language literacy. The goal of the Dual Language Immersion program is to provide educational experiences, from kindergarten through grade 12, that support the academic and linguistic development in two languages and that develop students' appreciation and understanding of their own and other cultures.

How does the Dual Language Immersion program work?

In order to make academic lessons comprehensible to all learners and to support their second language learning, dual immersion teachers are trained to provide a vast array of instructional strategies as they cover the academic content. Dual immersion teachers will use body language, visuals, manipulatives, exaggerated facial expressions, and expressive intonation to communicate their meaning. Teachers will also use songs, chants, and rhymes and will carefully structure their day with familiar routines and procedures. In kindergarten it is common for the students to speak with their peers or respond to their teacher in English; however, as the months and years progress, students will naturally use more of the immersion language. For our kindergarten, our goal in APS is to have students speaking in the immersion language in the classroom by the 100th day of school.

How will learning everything in a second language affect my child's language and literacy development in the native language?

Many parents are initially fearful that a dual language immersion program may have a negative impact on their child's language development in the native language. Research, however, consistently finds that the immersion experience actually enhances native language development (Cloud, Genesee, & Hamayan, 2000). There are many processes in the brain that underlie the ability to read, such as understanding the relationship between the spoken language and the written word, that transfer from one language to another (Cloud, Genesee, & Hamayan, 2000).

Will my child become proficient in the second language? How long will that take?

After only 2 or 3 years in an immersion program, students demonstrate confidence and some fluency in the language. While their speaking and writing skills are progressing, their listening and reading skills are comparable to those of native speakers of the same age. Language learning is influenced by several factors, including student's personality, motivation, teacher expectations, parental support, program leadership, and support at the school and district level. Student success requires the active involvement of all of these stakeholders. Our schools welcome your support and involvement in the dual language immersion program!

What can I do to support my child's immersion experience if I don't speak the second language?

We want all parents to play an active role in their child's education. Parents of dual immersion students should provide experiences that support and help develop the language used in the home. Read daily to your child in your home language, communicate with your teachers on a regular basis about your child's progress, support your child's use of both languages outside of the classroom, become informed about dual immersion, and make a commitment to the program. We will always welcome parent volunteers in the classroom. However...understand that our immersion teachers will only speak in the immersion language in the classrooms. Your child should never hear their immersion teacher in the other language!

Thank you for entrusting your children to us in the Dual Language Immersion program. We are preparing your children not only for college and career, but also for global success. **Multilingualism Matters!**