

Is the bilingual Program Right for Your Family?

The bilingual program truly incorporates the entire family. Students learn language during the day, while parents are encouraged to learn language by night. Children who have a love of learning, age-appropriate language development, and support and encouragement from home will find success in the bilingual program.

Your child is a good candidate for the bilingual program if he or she:

- Is developmentally on target in his or her native language
- Expresses an interest in different people, places, and things
- Wants to become fluent in Spanish and English

The program is a good fit for families that:

- Value other cultures – the people, art, history, etc.
- Support learning a second language and encourage practicing the language
- Are willing to participate in school projects and activities
- Are willing to commit to at least five years of program participation

There are many reasons families will choose to participate in the bilingual program: career opportunities, multicultural appreciation, and/or the ease of becoming bilingual at an early age. Parents, however, are the key to the success of any program. All families who enroll in this program show a commitment to support their child at school and at home.

Frequently Asked Questions

Are students screened for the two-way bilingual immersion program?

In most two-way immersion programs, there is no screening process for entry in the kindergarten classroom.

Does it matter if no one at home speaks the second language?

No, the program was designed for children of families who do not speak the second language. Teachers are aware that they will have several parents who do not have any background in the second language. For this reason written communication is translated into English or Spanish so parents can help reinforce concepts at home.

How will my child understand if he/she does not speak the second language?

In two-way immersion classrooms, teachers use many strategies to make the content understandable, such as visuals, props, manipulatives, facial expressions, gestures, physical movements, and many other instructional techniques. The teachers also repeat vocabulary and concepts and always check for understanding. REMEMBER, IMMERSION TEACHERS DO NOT EXPECT YOUR CHILD TO SPEAK THE SECOND LANGUAGE RIGHT AWAY. The students are not forced to speak the second language, and they are initially allowed to speak English/Spanish. The teachers will restate what your child says to reinforce the connection between the Spanish and English vocabulary or vice versa.

What about the first days in immersion?

Do not feel discouraged if, at the beginning, your child cries or seems nervous about the experience. Your child will need some time to adjust to this new challenge. From the start, the students are made to feel secure. Be patient. By the end of the first month, most of the students are over the initial adjustment. When your child comes home, do not be upset if he/she does not feel like telling you about his/her day at school. Children often are very tired after their day and are quite discouraged, but this is normal.

Can parents volunteer in the classroom if they do not speak English/Spanish?

Yes, you can volunteer. We welcome English/Spanish-speaking parents to volunteer their time during the English or Spanish instruction for the students. Parents can read books, play a game, or help with any other activity. Parents can also help with making photocopies, filing, cutting, and making books, projects, or any other activities where the use of English or Spanish is limited or not necessary. If you are a bilingual parent, you have the option of volunteering during the Spanish or English portion of the day. Feel free to ask your child's teacher how you can volunteer.

When will my child become fluent?

Do not expect your child to start speaking English/Spanish after the first few weeks. He/she is in the listening phase of his/her second language development. Your child will become familiar with vocabulary and then will begin to take the steps to speak English/Spanish. Do not compare your child to other two-way bilingual immersion students. Learning a second language is a process where each child develops at his/her rate. When your child begins to speak English/Spanish, do not ask him/her to translate. He/she may feel pressured and will feel discouraged. Do not attempt to correct your child's pronunciation. Give the child the benefit of the doubt.

Note:

- Students transferring from other Immersion programs after 1st grade will be considered for enrollment based upon achievement within two years of the grade level in Spanish literacy and space available.
- New immigrants and Spanish speaking English Learners do not apply for bilingual, rather families choose placement in the Bilingual Program as a service choice.
- Once accepted, students do not reapply at any time.
- If a family chooses to discontinue participation in the Bilingual Program, they are asked to communicate their request directly to the Multilingual Department Director.

