

# Galt Joint Union Elementary School District

## *Spanish/English Dual Language Immersion (DLI) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)*

### **Introduction**

In 2017, the District began to explore transitioning from the current bilingual program (serves only Spanish-speaking students in grades TK-3) to a PreK-8 dual immersion model that would serve both English and Spanish speaking students.

Planning momentum was created with grant funding that was used for teacher professional development and increasing enrollment & parent participation in prekindergarten. A dual immersion survey was completed by school district employees and parents in October and a DLI feasibility report was presented at the December 13, 2021 Board of Trustees meeting.

With sufficient parent interest, GJUESD plans to move forward with a dual language immersion program starting at the preschool and transitional kindergarten (TK) levels at the Fairsite campus beginning the 2022-2023 school year. In 2023-24, the DLI program will expand to kindergarten at Valley Oaks and a new grade level will be added each year thereafter. McCaffrey Middle School will continue the DLI program beginning in the 2030-31 school year.

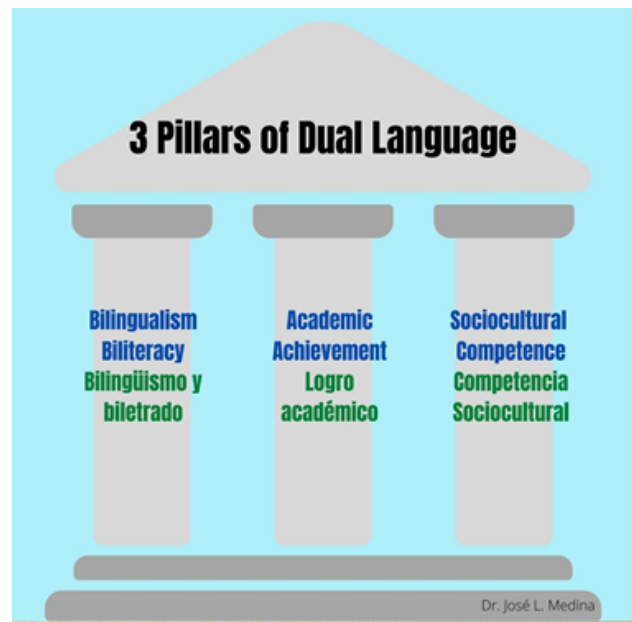
### **1. What is dual language immersion?**

The focus of dual language immersion programs is to help students become proficient in the target language while mastering content across all 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. Furthermore, students in immersion classrooms outperform students in traditional language classes, do as well as or better than non-immersion students on standardized tests and have a greater appreciation of cultural diversity.

### **2. What are the benefits of language immersion programs for students?**

In addition to becoming bilingual and biliterate, research shows immersion students outperform native English-speaking classmates 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. Being able to



communicate and excel academically in two languages also gives students greater self-esteem and a sense of accomplishment.

### **3. What is a 90:10 model of dual language immersion programs?**

The first number in the ratio indicates the percentage of time in the classroom that is spent teaching in the target language of Spanish. The second number refers to the percentage of time spent teaching in English. In 90:10 models, the instructional time for the target language decreases each year until there is a 50:50 ratio by the end of the PreK-6 program. The 90:10 model has also been shown to create higher levels of bilingualism.

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Target Language (Spanish)</b>	<b>English</b>
Preschool/TK	90%	10%
Kinder	90%	10%
First	80%	20%
Second	70%	30%
Third	60%	40%
Fourth - Sixth	50%	50%
Seventh - Eighth	1 period	5 periods

### **4. Do English learners (non-native English-speakers) get enough English instruction in a 90:10 model?**

English time must be carefully defined and implemented. High quality curriculum and instruction are essential. Research shows that when programs are fully implemented according to the program design, English learners in 90:10 models score as well as or better than their peers in other programs in English tests.

### **5. Who is eligible for the program?**

There are no specific criteria for students except parental choice. 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 some exceptionalities and students from varying socioeconomic backgrounds. Students with special education needs or learning disabilities are eligible to participate; however, decisions for these students should be made on an individual basis, especially if the native English speakers have a serious language disorder.

**6. *How can students who speak only English learn when they are instructed for up to 90 percent of the day in a language they don't understand?***

Teachers in the dual language immersion program are specially trained to make the information meaningful through the use of visuals, objects, gestures, and specialized instructional strategies. Students also will help each other.

Learning to go to school and understand school procedures and routines is a major change, but it can happen in any language. The sooner a child is exposed to other languages, the more comfortable they'll be and they'll attain higher levels of proficiency in the target language. When you watch your child responding to his or her pre-kindergarten teacher's instructions and conversing with classmates in another language, you will begin to understand the benefits.

**7. *Is this program a fit for my child and our family?***

Parents must carefully consider if dual language immersion is a fit for their family as it is a seven year commitment. For children to gain academic success and language proficiency, families must be willing and able to commit to this program. Because these programs typically have only one or two classes per grade level, your child will work with the same classmates throughout his/her elementary education. This may be an asset for your child.

**8. *Do dual language immersion students learn the same curriculum as the regular English-only programs?***

Yes. The standards and curriculum used in the dual language immersion program are the same as for all students in the Galt Joint Union Elementary School District. The only difference is the language of instruction.

**9. *Does it matter if no one at home speaks the second language? How will I help my child with homework if I do not speak the language of instruction?***

No. The most important thing you can do at home is read to your child in English. Reading in any language supports the acquisition of reading skills such as fluency, vocabulary building and comprehension. Your child's homework should support what he has learned in class, so students should be able to tackle the assignment on their own. You will be able to identify what skill is being addressed and support learning in the skill, even if you can only help in English.

By providing students with a strong foundation in their first language, parents are helping to lay the groundwork for strong second language skills. Parents can support literacy skills as well as content knowledge in the child's first language by reading together and learning about the topics the child is learning in school. For example, when students learn about community helpers in Spanish, children who are already familiar with the topic in English will transfer the knowledge, making the lesson in Spanish more comprehensible.

Parents can also support students at home by making sure that they have the right environment and tools to get homework done (e.g., a quiet space and enough time, paper, dictionaries in both languages, writing utensils, and art supplies such as construction paper, paste, tape, and colored makers). 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.

In most programs, homework sent home by teachers has a translated key for parents who do not speak the target language. Homework should not be a struggle. If it is, please talk with your child's teacher.

***10. How can parents support their child in the program?***

Participate. Keep up the high-quality education in English and/or Spanish at home. Read with your child in English and/or Spanish daily. Discuss what your child is learning. Listen to him/her read. Try to learn along with your child. Attend dual immersion meetings at school and volunteer in the class.

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

Like any pre-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.

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

In prekindergarten, 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

***13. When will my child become fluent in both languages?***

Each child is developmentally unique, so fluency will also develop individually. You will be informed on a regular basis of your child's oral fluency progress. You will also be informed regularly of your child's academic progress. Keeping the communication line between you and your child's teacher is the best resource to find out how well your child is doing.

***14. Should students enter a dual language immersion program after first grade?***

Usually dual language programs do not accept English-only speakers after first grade and English learners after second grade. Bilingual and biliterate students can enter the program at any time.

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

The elementary immersion program will transition into middle school. Middle school students continuing with immersion studies may take one or two classes aiming to further develop more advanced language skills. 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.

### ***16. If I am interested in finding out more, what should I do next or whom should I speak with?***

- Please complete the DLI interest form and we will be following up with a more in-depth parent meeting. Enrollment will begin in March.
- For additional information or questions, please call:
  - Laura Marquez, Valley Oaks Assistant Principal 209-745-1564 ext 304
  - Kuljeet Nijjar, Fairsite Early Learning Center Administrator, 209-745-1546 ext 303
  - Donna Mayo-Whitlock, Director of Educational Services, 209-744-4545 ext 304

### ***Links and websites to learn more about Dual Language Immersion:***

[\*The Benefits of Dual-Language Immersion- \(in English\)\*](#)

[\*Educación bilingüe/Doble inmersión- familias- \(in Spanish with English subtitles\)\*](#)

[\*El Programa de Inmersión de Idioma Dual en Español-Inglés - \(in Spanish with English subtitles\)\*](#)

[\*Preparing Your Child For a Dual Language Program\*](#)

[\*WHAT'S WITH THESE NEW LANGUAGE IMMERSION SCHOOLS?\*](#)

[\*Positive Impacts of Dual Language Programs\*](#)

[\*California bilingual programs ready to grow after slowing during pandemic\*](#)

[\*What is bilingual preschool & should you consider it for your child?\*](#)