

# Dual Language Immersion at Castle Heights: What would it look like and what would it entail?

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Curriculum & Academic Outcomes

#### *What is Dual Language Immersion?*

In a dual language immersion (*abbreviated DLI or DI*) program, students spend at least 50% of the school day being taught the grade-level curriculum in a non-English language and the remainder of the day being taught that curriculum in English. The program lasts at least 5 years (preferably K-12) and the goal is full bilingualism and biliteracy in English and the partner language.

The term “dual (language) immersion” is an umbrella term. It includes “*two-way immersion*” programs, where neither native English speakers nor native speakers of the partner language make up more than two-thirds of the class. It also includes “*foreign language immersion*,” where students are primarily native English speakers learning a foreign language. Other programs under this umbrella include “heritage language immersion” (aimed at heritage speakers of a non-English language) and “developmental bilingual programs” (comprised primarily of native speakers of the non-English language).

Extensive information about dual language education in general is available at [this website](#). For further details, see [this presentation](#) about dual language programs prepared by the Los Angeles Unified School District (Spanish-language version of presentation [here](#)).

#### *Is Dual Language Immersion “experimental” or does it have a proven track record at other schools?*

There are many published studies of dual language immersion programs that have been implemented in elementary schools across the United States over the past several decades. The research overwhelmingly indicates that such programs are beneficial to students of all kinds. Extensive data has been collected and longitudinal studies of learning outcomes among students who have completed DLI programs have been conducted. These studies were recently validated through an analysis of millions of student records from 36 school districts in 16 states in [this article](#), published by Thomas and Collier in 2017.

While most research has focused on the benefits of DLI education for English learners, a number of studies have also demonstrated the advantages of DLI for language-majority students (i.e. English-only speaking students in DLI programs) as well.

#### *Will being in an immersion program slow the development of children’s English language skills or negatively impact their progress in reading and writing?*

There is a large body of research that shows that, overall, children in immersion programs do as well or better in English reading and writing than do children who spend their entire school day in English. For further details, please consult the [research linked above](#).

#### *Will children who learn regular content such as math and science in another language have lower scores on standardized tests when compared with students in English-only classes?*

Research nationally has consistently shown that children in immersion programs perform as well or better than non-immersion students on standardized tests in all areas (see [research linked above](#)). It also suggests that they develop better reasoning and thinking skills. Individual variations exist and parents are free to choose the program they feel will be the best fit for their child.

*Isn't dual language immersion supposed to be for English learners only?*

While immersion has been studied most extensively among English-learners, many models (e.g. “two-way immersion” and “foreign language immersion”) currently in use within LAUSD and across the country are comprised of a mix of English-learners and English-only students in varying ratios.

*Is immersion intended exclusively for high-achieving or gifted and talented children?*

No. While immersion may not be a good fit for every child, long experience across the country and internationally has shown it to be appropriate for children of almost all abilities.

*Won't parents be limited in the extent to which they can participate in their children's education if they don't know the partner language?*

While it is true that children will quickly know much more in the immersion language, every effort is made to keep parents involved and able to help their children at home. For example, homework is given in both languages, and foreign-language homework has an English explanation for parents, including ideas and suggestions for how they can help their children.

*What is the difference between a 90/10 and a 50/50 instructional model?*

The first number refers to the amount of instructional time initially spent for instruction in the partner (non-English) language in kindergarten. The second number refers to English. In a 90/10 model, students are instructed 90% of the time in the partner language and 10% in English in the first year or two, gradually adjusting the ratio until there is a 50:50 balance of the languages taught, usually by 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> grade. 50/50 programs use English and the partner language for 50 percent of the time throughout the duration of the program.

*Do you need two teachers per classroom to implement a dual immersion program?*

No, one teacher who is proficient in the partner language and English can successfully implement a dual immersion program in the classroom. This is called a “Self-Contained” program, where there is one teacher for one group of students in one classroom, and where the teacher transitions from one language to the other with the students.

*Can students enter a two-way bilingual immersion program after first grade?*

Usually two-way 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 dependent on performance on an assessment test.

### **Alternatives to DI at CHES**

*What other options are available to parents who want their children in a DI program?*

There are six schools (3 within LAUSD, 1 charter, and 2 within CCSD) within a 10-mile radius that offer established Spanish DI programs: Grand View ES (4 mi. distance; zip code 9066); Broadway ES (4 mi. distance; zip code 90291); Cowan Ave. ES, (6.5 mi. distance; zip code 90045); City Language Immersion Charter (5 mi. distance; zip code 90019); El Marino ES (4 mi. distance; zip 90230); and La Ballona ES (2.5 mi. distance; zip code 90232).

These programs would only be an option for incoming kindergartners but not for incoming first-graders. A late application would have to be submitted through eChoices; however placement is not guaranteed.

## Costs and fundraising

*What does a dual immersion program cost parents or the school? Are there district funds available?*

LAUSD covers the costs of a DLI program in the same way that it covers costs for a regular, EO program (textbooks and instructional materials, teacher salary, etc.). After a small set-up expense, immersion costs no more than a regular elementary school classroom. In fact, immersion is the least expensive and most effective way to teach children a new language.

*How will having a DI track affect parent-driven fundraising at the school?*

In the first few years of implementation at CHES, it is likely that families enrolled in the DI track will be asked to donate more extensively to equip their classroom with items not covered by district funds (e.g. books, posters, and supplementary materials in the partner language), in addition to participating in schoolwide fundraisers.

At a number of schools in LAUSD, the implementation of a DI track has attracted passionate and involved families, thus boosting volunteerism and fundraising at the school.

Children in the dual immersion track will benefit equitably, as children in any other class, from “extras” funded by Friends of Castle Heights, such as teacher aides, enrichment classes, photocopy machine, field trips, etc. As such, there is no reason to believe families of children enrolled in a DI track would be dis-incentivized from volunteering or donating to schoolwide fundraisers.

## Teachers

*How will the adoption of a dual immersion program impact current teachers at CHES?*

Teachers need a special certification, abbreviated BCLAD, to teach in a dual immersion program. Currently there is one teacher at CHES with a BCLAD in Spanish who is willing to teach in the first year of a Spanish immersion program. Two other teachers have their BCLAD certification in Spanish as well; however they have not, to date, expressed interest in teaching in a DI track.

To fully implement a “Self-Contained” dual immersion program, a total of **6 BCLAD-certified teachers** (one to teach each grade, from K-5) would be needed. Since immersion programs are introduced one grade at a time beginning in kindergarten, only one new teacher is needed each year in a school. Thus, the school would have up to 5 years to fully staff the DI program.

Over the past 5 years, 3 new teachers have been hired at CHES due to natural turnover (retirements, voluntary displacements, etc.). It is quite possible that more positions will open due to natural attrition in the coming years and the school may choose to hire teachers with a BCLAD for these spots.

In a best-case scenario, we can project that, *if* a Spanish-English DI program is adopted and *if* recent teacher attrition/hiring trends continue, and *if* all new teachers hired over the next 5 years are BCLAD-certified in Spanish, then **no** current teachers will need to be transferred away from Castle Heights. In a worst-case scenario, it is possible that **up to 5** of the current 26 teachers will be transferred away from CHES to make room for BCLAD-certified teachers.

Even if no involuntary transfers occur, the staffing needs of the DI program make it likely that a few current teachers would need to teach a different grade level than the one they currently teach.

*Will it be possible to find BCLAD-certified teachers of the same caliber as those currently at CHES ?*

There are many ways to find excellent immersion teachers. For common languages, like Spanish, there is an existing pool of teachers in LAUSD to draw from. In order to obtain their BCLAD, teachers must have all the regular credentials needed to teach, and also pass a special test to demonstrate native or near-native fluency in the foreign language.

### **Classroom space and class sizes**

*Does CHES have the space to accommodate a DI Track?*

At CHES, the program would be a “conversion” and not an “addition.” This means that one class of the 2-4 existing classes at each grade level will be converted to a DI classroom. The district will conduct a feasibility study to confirm that the campus currently has the necessary space to accommodate a DI program. Because we cannot predict with 100% accuracy what our future enrollments will be, we cannot know exactly what the future impact on space could be, if any.

If unexpected changes in enrollment necessitate opening one or more new classrooms in the future, there is a chance that our flex-space (art/science rooms, computer lab, or in an extreme situation, one or both of the Little Dipper classrooms) will need to be utilized.

*Will having a Dual Immersion track create larger class sizes within the English-only classrooms?*

English only and Dual Immersion classrooms would maintain the same class size limits. The number of teachers needed for English only classrooms would be based solely on the number of students in the English only classes (as it is now). Although the DI class would likely have fewer children than the English Only classes at the upper grade levels, having a DI program wouldn't affect existing class size caps.

If, at any point, English Only classes become too large, it will be possible to hire a new teacher, open a new class, and redistribute the English-only students across more classrooms. However, such a situation would require using an extra classroom space. If an additional position were to open at either the K-3 or the 4-5 grade level span, we would use the rooms in the following order: 1. Art / Science Room; 2. Art / Science Room; 3. Computer Lab; 4. Little Dippers Room; 5. Little Dippers Room

Class sizes can fluctuate from year to year depending on enrollments. Since there are no conclusive class size caps per individual grade level, it is only when the TK-3 or the 4-5 grade-level bands surpass their norm limits that another position (a new class/ new teacher) is generated. If, in a grade-level band (e.g. 4th & 5th grade) enrollments are higher than usual but not high enough to warrant the creation of a new position, then class sizes for those sections will be higher than usual as well. Such a situation could happen with or without a DI program on campus.

Conversely, if enrollments in a grade-level band are significantly lower than usual (e.g., 36 or fewer for 4th/5th grade combined), a combined class will need to be created (for instance, 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> grade).

### **Permit families**

*What will happen to children who currently permit-in to CHES ?*

If a dual immersion program is implemented, all current permits will be honored and permit families with younger, incoming children will continue to be given priority for available spots in the English Only program as before. After the first year of implementation, enrollment in the dual immersion program will be through eChoices.

*What happens if a child wants to leave the dual immersion program to return to English Only instruction?*

Provided there is space, a student could transition to English Only classes. Students seeking to leave the DI program cannot 'bump' a permitted child from an English Only class.

### **School Culture and Unity**

*How is a dual immersion program integrated with other programs at a school site?*

The DI program should not be viewed as a separate program. The school should develop a common vision of equity for all students that values the students' language and culture. The same standards-based curriculum is taught in the dual immersion program that is taught in other school programs. Staff development should be provided for all staff so that the philosophy and program goals are shared. Sufficient time must also be allocated to the specific needs of the dual immersion program staff.

*How do we know that LAUSD will provide the necessary support to effectively implement this educational initiative? What guarantees do we have that this program will be successful?*

Successfully implementing and developing a DI program will require strong leadership, support from the district, and long-term investment from a passionate, engaged community. While success is never guaranteed, all 7 members of the current Board of Education strongly support dual language programs. The Board recently passed a Resolution to establish a task force exploring how to support bilingualism and biliteracy among all graduates by the year 2032 (next year's kindergarten class). DI programs are projected to continue growing, with 37 new programs beginning next school year, bringing the total to 138 districtwide.

## **QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY CASTLE HEIGHTS TEACHERS**

*Why do the majority of CHES teachers disapprove of implementing a Spanish DI program this upcoming fall (2018-2019 school year)?*

It has been the general practice within LAUSD to provide a school's staff a year for implementation and planning of a new DI track. The CHES teachers are concerned that an accelerated timeline for implementation goes against evidence-based best practices for a successful and sustainable program and does not give them an equitable opportunity to succeed. They believe the school should receive the full benefit of an implementation year to work out all the details and supports for such a program.

*If not provided a year for implementation like most other schools in LAUSD, how will teachers prepare?*

Teachers are expected to divert efforts and energies away from this current school year curriculum and planned activities in order to plan and Prepare for the DI program due to the accelerated timeline. They may also be expected to dedicate their weekends and summer break to make up for the time lost due to the rushed timeline. Currently, there has been no written support plan provided by LAUSD to mitigate the accelerated implementation.