

# MULTISTATE ASSOCIATION FOR BILINGUAL EDUCATION, NORTHEAST



A nonprofit organization for educators, families, and policy makers  
that promotes multilingualism, equity and social justice in school and community settings

## Benefits of Dual Language Education Programming

### **Definition:**

Dual Language programs foster bilingualism, biliteracy, enhanced awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity, and develop strong cognitive, social, and emotional identity.

Dual Language programs are “additive” language programs that are supportive of strong language development and proficiency in English and another language.

Two-Way Immersion (TWI), one of four types of dual language programs, is an example of an additive form of education in which students reach high levels of academic achievement through instruction of literacy and academic content in two languages.

Two-Way Immersion programs are equitable programs in that they enroll a balance of native English speakers and native speakers of the partner language, regardless of race, gender, learning abilities or socioeconomic background of the students enrolled.

According to the National Dual Language Consortium ([www.dual-language.org](http://www.dual-language.org)), dual language programs must extend for **at least five years**. The Consortium offers a definition of what is NOT a dual language program:

- Provide less than 50% of the day in the partner language for any students,
- Only allow students to take classes in the partner language for one to three years, or
- Do not offer both language arts instruction and content instruction in the partner language

Dual language programming benefits include language, academic, cognition, social-emotional and identity, school culture and climate, economic, and educational equity benefits:

### **Language Benefits:**

- Students from minority language group’s benefit from the use of the primary language for instructional purposes.

- English language learners instructed in two languages perform better in English literacy skills than similar students instructed in all-English approaches such as English as a second language (ESL) or Structured English Immersion (SEI). (*Language Instruction Education Programs Report, US DOE, May 2012*)
- Dual language programs teach language through academic content, therefore...
  - Students develop high levels of balanced language proficiency in two languages when given extended time.
  - Students develop high levels of academic language proficiency in all academic content areas.

### **Academic Benefits**

- Evidence from research documents the academic outcomes of bilingual students as better than those of their monolingual peers. This is true for students of every race, class, and gender, and for students with a broad range of learning differences. (*Thomas & Collier 2011*)
- Dual Language students are more likely than comparison peers to want to go to college immediately following high School and enroll in higher-level math courses. (*Lindholm-Leary 2002*)
- Participating in a Dual Language program can discourage Hispanic, native-Spanish speakers from dropping out of school. (*Lindholm-Leary 2002*)
- Dual Language students are more likely than comparison peers to enroll in higher-level math courses. (*Lindholm-Leary 2002*)

### **Cognition Benefits:**

- Multilingualism leads to early metalinguistic awareness and mental flexibility (cognitive and linguistic benefits) (*de Jong, 2011*) *Note: Metalinguistic awareness includes sensitivity to the details and structure of language, early word-referent distinction, recognition of ambiguities, control of language processing, and correction of ungrammatical sentences. (de Jong, 2011)*
- Children who develop healthy degrees of bilingualism tend to exhibit greater ability to focus on and use language productively, therefore developing “metalinguistic awareness”
- The skills of metalinguistic awareness have been associated with improved comprehension outcomes.

- The degree of balance of the two languages and the level of proficiency in each language are significant mediators of the positive effects of “metalinguistic awareness”.
- Extended instruction in the two languages result in better outcomes and higher levels of balanced language proficiency

### **Social Emotional and Identify Benefits:**

- There are added benefits of family cohesion, student self-esteem and identity development that can result from bilingual instruction. (*August, Goldenberg, Rueda*)
- The school culture of dual language programs embodies strong and intentional community of respect and acceptance.
- Multilingualism allows children (and adults) to negotiate their different life worlds more effectively and affirms who they are. (*de Jong, 2011*)
- Racially diverse schools provide incalculable educational and civic benefits by promoting cross-racial understanding, breaking down racial and other stereotypes, and eliminating bias and prejudice. (OCR Guidance)
- “...students (and teachers) feel more affirmed in their linguistic, cultural, and intellectual identities and more confident in their ability to succeed in school.” *Source: Jim Cummins, Dual Language Education Pioneering a Global Breakthrough in Second Language Education, NABE News, March April 2008*)

### **School Culture and Climate Benefits:**

- The multilingual and multicultural environment of bilingual and dual immersion programs can reduce prejudice and promote cross-cultural awareness and friendships.
- Portes and Rumbaut note: “Dual-language instruction has shown great promise for bringing low and middle-income, Black, Latino, Asian, and White students together in equal-status contact where they not only learn in two languages, but also learn to like and respect each other’s cultures” (*Gandara & Hopkins, 2010*).

### **Economic Benefits for today’s global society:**

- Ethnic and linguistic diversity in dual language programs can promote positive inter-group relations when both languages and both groups of students are valued equally in the classroom.
- Purposeful promotion of intergroup relationships is integral to the pedagogy of dual language programs.
- Interethnic and interracial interactions are an integral part of business and economic relations; thus, learning how to negotiate multicultural settings is an important skill that can benefit students throughout their academic and professional lives (*Gandara & Hopkins, 2010*).
- Dual Language programs can drastically improve a student's future economic success by decreasing dropout rates, encouraging students to go to college and take more advanced math courses. This is true of native-English speakers (particularly low-income students) and especially true of English Language Learners (ELLs). Additionally, speaking a second language fluently makes students much more marketable for future positions in competitive fields.
- **“There is a critical national requirement for skilled speakers of languages other than English...As a result of 21<sup>st</sup> Century economic globalization and international terrorism, it has never been more urgent to develop American citizens who fully understand and can communicate effectively with people of other cultures.”**

*Source: Jackson & Malone, 2009, Building the foreign language capacity we need: Toward a comprehensive strategy for a national language framework, CAL, in K. Mitchell Synthesis of Research for Advocacy SIG, MATSOL, 2009*

### **Educational Equity Benefits:**

- When instruction for language majority and language minority students is structured so that they have equal importance in the learning environment, and the goals of instruction are to achieve competency in academic content in both languages, the traditionally socially disadvantaged group gains an equivalent status in the classroom to the socially advantaged group.

*Main Source: Gandara, Patricia and Hopkins, Megan, editors. (2010) Forbidden Language, English Learners and Restrictive Language Policies. Multicultural Education Series, Teachers College, Columbia University*