



Dual Language Parent Handbook



Every Student Succeeds
Todos los estudiantes lo logran

Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) is pleased to share this resource for families of current and potential Dual Language students: The **Dual Language Parent Handbook**. This handbook is designed to provide families with useful information and available resources and services so they can support their child's success in the Dual Language Program. Please note this handbook contains only program highlights and an overview of important information. Complete details on policies, regulations, and practices may be found at www.acps.k12.va.us. Printed copies of ACPS policies and regulations are available to families and citizens who do not have online access.

Acknowledgements

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Dual Language in Alexandria City Public Schools

The Spanish-English two-way immersion program in Alexandria City Public Schools is designed for families who would like their children to learn another language while receiving the same high quality academic curriculum as students throughout the division. Alexandria City Public Schools offers K-5 Spanish-English two-way dual language programs at two schools. The first program was established at John Adams Elementary School over 20 years ago. A second program was begun at Mount Vernon Community School in the 2000-01 school year. The program at John Adams consists of a single strand within a school. Mount Vernon is in the process of becoming a whole school dual language program.

What are the vision and goals of the Dual Language program?

In keeping with the vision of Alexandria City Public Schools, the Dual Language program aims to become an international model of excellence in two-way immersion education. The mission of the Dual Language program is to provide an enriched bilingual, biliterate, and culturally competent educational experience for students.

The goals of the program are for students to...

- listen, speak, read and write in two (or more) languages
- attain high levels of academic and social-emotional competence
- become lifelong cross-cultural learners and critical thinkers.

What is a dual language program?

Dual language programs are a form of enrichment education based on over forty years of research showing the advantages of learning a second language through academic content instruction. The Spanish-English two-way immersion form of dual language is characterized as follows:

- Approximately half of students are from Spanish-speaking homes and half from homes in which English (or another language) is spoken.
- Instruction integrates literacy and academic content knowledge in both languages.
- Curriculum focuses on challenging, age-appropriate academic skills and knowledge aligned to high standards for all students.

Are dual language programs effective?

Research has shown that both native English speakers and native Spanish speakers in well-implemented dual language programs tend to excel academically, out-performing their peers in traditional educational settings. Students in dual language programs demonstrate significantly higher academic achievement than their peers not in dual language (Thomas & Collier, 2012).

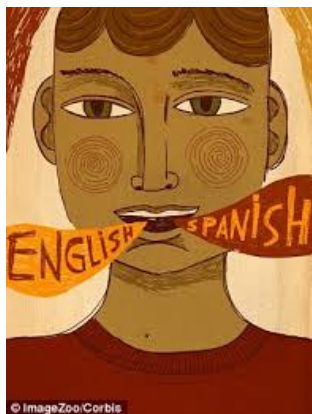
Dual language is the only program that has shown *full achievement gap closure* for English learners (ELs). ELs who participate in dual language programs become fully proficient in a second language without sacrificing their English development (Baker, 2011; Lindholm-Leary, 2009). Spanish-speaking students have the opportunity to become literate in their native language, thus enabling them to transfer skills and concepts to English (Baker, 2011; Genesee, 2004). On state assessments as well as norm-referenced tests given in English, English learners in dual language typically score significantly higher than their peers in traditional ESL programs (Thomas & Collier, 2012). Schools that offer dual language programs can expect one-fifth to one-sixth of the achievement gap for English learners to close each year (Thomas & Collier, 2002).

Schools with dual language programs can look forward to both English learner students and native English speakers being fully prepared for annual state assessments in academic subjects. The national pass rates by the end of elementary school are approximately equal for both groups, a vast improvement over the present pattern of overrepresentation of English learner students among those who do not pass. In addition to high academic achievement and bilingualism, dual language instruction has been shown to enhance students' thinking skills and creativity beyond that achieved through a monolingual curriculum (Thomas & Collier, 2012).

What is the program model in ACPS?

Schools may select from either a 50:50 or a 70:30 model¹. In the 50:50 model, Science, Math and Spanish Language Arts are taught during the Spanish half of the day, while Social Studies, English Language Arts and Encore subjects (Art, Music, Physical Education, etc.) are taught in English.

In the 70:30 model, seventy percent of the day is taught in Spanish. Students in the early grades of the 70:30 model may receive most core subjects (Math, Science, Social Studies and Language Arts) in Spanish, while English Language Arts and Encore are taught in English. As students move up in grade, the amount of Spanish instruction is decreased. By third grade, equal amounts of instructional time are provided in each language.



Which model is better? Research shows no significant difference in students' English achievement between the 50:50 and the 70:30 models. In the 70:30 model, students typically develop higher proficiency in Spanish. They usually perform comparably in English by the end of elementary school.

To support the goals of the Dual Language program, students develop language and literacy skills in both Spanish and English. They learn to make connections between what they know in their two languages, leading to high levels of cognitive development and meta-linguistic awareness (thinking about and analyzing language).

¹ These models could be adjusted to up to 80 percent instruction in Spanish if Encore is taught in Spanish.

50:50 Model

Grade	Spanish	English
Kindergarten	Math Science Spanish Language Arts 50%	Social Studies English Language Arts Encore 50%
Grade 1	Math Science Spanish Language Arts 50%	Social Studies English Language Arts Encore 50%
Grade 2	Math Science Spanish Language Arts 50%	Social Studies English Language Arts Encore 50%
Grade 3	Math Science Spanish Language Arts 50%	Social Studies English Language Arts Encore 50%
Grade 4	Math Science Spanish Language Arts 50%	Social Studies English Language Arts Encore 50%
Grade 5	Math Science Spanish Language Arts 50%	Social Studies English Language Arts Encore 50%

70:30 Model

Grade	Spanish	English
Kindergarten	Math Science Spanish Language Arts Social Studies 70%	English Language Arts Encore 30%
Grade 1	Math Science Spanish Language Arts Social Studies 70%	English Language Arts Encore 30%
Grade 2	Math Science Spanish Language Arts 60%	Social Studies English Language Arts Encore 40%
Grade 3	Math Science Spanish Language Arts 50%	Social Studies English Language Arts Encore 50%
Grade 4	Math Science Spanish Language Arts 50%	Social Studies English Language Arts Encore 50%
Grade 5	Math Science Spanish Language Arts 50%	Social Studies English Language Arts Encore 50%

Student Placement

Who is eligible to enroll in the Dual Language program?

Given the sequential nature of the program and its alignment with instructional program requirements, students typically enter the Dual Language program at kindergarten or first grade. Priority is given to applicants who reside in the school attendance zone. Any student seeking admission to the Dual Language Program during grades 2-5 will be assessed to ensure the student can fully access and participate in the appropriate grade level Dual Language curriculum. Interested families are encouraged to attend the Spring Kindergarten Open House at Mount Vernon or John Adams to learn more.

How can my child apply?

Student placement in the Dual Language Program is determined by a combination of factors, including the student's attendance zone, grade and program capacity. In addition, the program design requires a balanced enrollment of students from homes in which English is spoken and homes in which Spanish is spoken.

Mount Vernon Community School

Mount Vernon offers a whole-school Dual Language program. All entering kindergarten and first grade students in the Mount Vernon attendance zone are automatically enrolled in the Dual Language program. Students entering grades 2-5 will be assessed to ensure the student can fully access and participate in the appropriate grade level Dual Language curriculum.

John Adams Elementary School

John Adams offers both a Dual Language option and a traditional program. Families interested in the Dual Language Program for their student may apply when they register for school. Admittance to the program is subject to approval at the school level.

Programmatic transfers

Slots for students who live outside the attendance zone of Mount Vernon or John Adams are limited. Schools will receive transfers from outside the attendance zone only if space is available for that year and grade level. Families must request a programmatic transfer if they are interested in applying to the Dual Language program, however there is no guarantee of admission. Programmatic transfers are approved by the Superintendent or authorized designee.

All students must be registered in their boundary school before alternative student placement can be made. In addition to the programmatic transfer request, John Adams requires students to complete an application.

If the number of students seeking programmatic transfers to the Dual Language Program exceeds the available spaces, then after July 1, all of the students with new programmatic transfer Applications will enter a lottery for random selection. Siblings of students who have received programmatic transfers will be admitted if they meet dual language eligibility requirements.

Transportation is provided for families approved for an administrative transfer to the Dual Language Program. (See School Board Policy JC-R/JCD-R for more information about programmatic transfers.)

Is the Dual Language program appropriate for my child with disabilities?

Dual Language is an inclusive program for students with a range of learning needs. Research indicates that most students with disabilities can benefit from participation in a dual language program. Students with disabilities who participated in dual language programs, on average, outperformed their peers with disabilities who were not in such programs (Myers, 2011; Thomas & Collier, 2012). Individual Education Plans take precedence over all program placement/withdrawal decisions. It is recommended that prior to enrollment, parents of students with disabilities consult with the school administration to discuss their child's individual needs and the appropriateness of the program for their child.

What if we wish to opt out?

Students who do not wish to enroll in the Dual Language program may participate in the traditional curriculum program if available at the school. If the school is dual language only, students may request a programmatic transfer to the school closest to the student's residence with capacity at that grade level.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the benefits of a dual language program?

Research shows numerous benefits for students who participate in dual language, including:

- **Educational:** Students who learn literacy in one language can transfer those skills to their other language.
- **Cognitive:** Students who understand two languages show more cognitive flexibility, creative thinking and problem solving abilities compared to monolingual students of the same age.
- **Socio-cultural:** Understanding another language and interacting with students from diverse backgrounds promotes cultural awareness, greater understanding and tolerance.
- **Economic:** Knowing two or more languages enhances employment opportunities when students enter the work force.

How will the teacher help my child learn and understand in a second language?



The best way to acquire a second language is through meaningful and authentic experiences. Academic content instruction provides this meaningful context, and forms a strong basis for the power of dual language education. Your child's teacher will use a variety of strategies to help students understand oral and written language without the need of translation. Translating, or switching from one language to the other during instruction, is not helpful because students tend to "wait" to hear the instruction in their stronger language. This impedes opportunities to acquire the second

language. Therefore teachers and visitors to the classroom are strongly encouraged to adhere to the target language during instructional time.

What will a typical school day look like?

Your child will be assigned to either a self-contained bilingual teacher (same teacher all day) or to two different teachers, one for Spanish and one for English. Throughout the day, in each

language, your child will learn new vocabulary related to the academic subjects being learned. If your child struggles to say something in their new language, the teacher will do lots of modeling and provide plenty of practice. Your child will learn language as the class sings songs, reads books, draws, labels, plays games, works on projects, carries out experiments, and speaks and writes about what they are learning. Your child will work with children who speak Spanish at home, as well as children who speak English or other languages at home. Because every day includes time in your child's home language and time in the other language, she or he will have chances to be an "expert" and other chances to learn from others.

What is expected of students in a dual language program?

Students will be expected to learn the same academic content as any other ACPS student. In addition, they are responsible for:

- Participating actively in learning their two languages
- Showing effective effort through participation during class activities, including class work, team work, and independent work in Spanish
- Demonstrating critical thinking, decision making, and problem solving competencies in response to authentic scenarios and simulations common to the content of the course
- Revisiting work when standards and expectations are not achieved
- Playing an active role in monitoring their own progress, including recording formative and summative assessment data in their binders
- Demonstrating efficacy and responsibility, continually affirming their active and direct role in their learning process
- Demonstrating respect for the teacher and classmates, including demonstrating respect for others' cultures and traditions

How will my child be assessed?

Dual Language students participate in the same Virginia Standards of Learning (SOLs) assessments and other school and district-wide tests taken by students throughout the division. In addition, Dual Language students will be assessed in the language of instruction (i.e., content areas taught in Spanish will be assessed in Spanish and those taught in English will be assessed in English) using a variety of classroom-based and commercially available assessments.

How will my child be graded?

Similar to all ACPS students, progress reports will reflect student performance in each subject area (e.g., Math, Science, Social Studies, and English Language Arts). In addition, K-2 Dual Language students receive a supplemental progress report in Spanish Language Arts.

Help! I don't speak the language! How can I support my child?

You can help your child by:

- Encouraging friendships with students who speak the other language.
- Understanding it takes time to learn a second language. Be patient, and encourage your child to persist.
- Asking your child to explain what he or she is learning and doing. Your child should do this in the home language.
- Developing a working relationship with your child's teacher.
- Providing a quiet work space for your child so that he/she can work without outside interruptions.



- Reading and speaking to your child frequently in your home language.
- Some parents may be interested in learning the second language. This is great, and shows your child that you value language learning. However, parents are not expected to model the other language if they are not yet proficient in it. Children will benefit more when their parents talk to them in their stronger language. This will develop a strong foundation in the home language, thereby preparing them to acquire their second language.

What about homework?

Homework will consist of practice and extension of the instruction given during the school day, and is given in the language of instruction. For example, if the student receives Science content in Spanish, then the Science



homework must be completed in Spanish. It is the responsibility of teachers to ensure that students understand the homework assignments so that they can be completed

independently at home. Students are responsible for completing the assignment independently, in the language of instruction. To ensure students continue to develop each of their languages, parents/guardians are discouraged from translating homework. When a student is experiencing difficulty with homework assignments, the student should attempt to complete the assignment to the best of her/his ability. Parents should communicate difficulties directly to the teacher.

Hot Tip

Ask your child's teacher to match your child with a homework buddy – another student your child can call on to help clarify an assignment.

What else can I do to support my child at home?

- Make a good-faith commitment to continue in the Dual Language program at least through the end of Grade 5.
- Ask questions and monitor your child's learning in Spanish and all subject areas, including overseeing out-of-class work, on-task behavior, and the student's demonstration of understanding.
- Check your child's backpack daily for messages from your child's teacher.
- When issues or questions emerge concerning your child's progress and how to assist your child, please contact your child's teacher first.
- Take an active role in your child's learning experience.
- Watch the school calendar for open houses, parent forums and school events related to Dual Language.

What volunteer opportunities are available?

There is a wide variety of volunteer opportunities in which you may participate. If you have a particular area of expertise that you would like to share with the students, you may offer to come in to the school as a guest speaker. If you would like to join one of the outings or field trips, you may sign up as a chaperone. If interested in volunteering your time, or if you would simply like to speak with the teacher, contact your teacher by voice mail or by email. We thank you and look forward to seeing you at our upcoming dual language and school-wide events.

What if my child is struggling in the dual language program?

Research indicates it takes at least five to 10 years to become biliterate. While every case is different, students who participate all the way through to the end of elementary school (and ideally throughout secondary school) are usually glad they stuck with it.

If parents have concerns about possible learning issues beyond the expected challenges associated with learning a second language, the following steps will be taken:

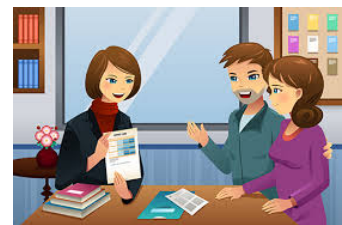
- The parent(s) and teacher(s) will meet to discuss concerns. The student may also be asked to attend. Interventions will be planned.
- After interventions have been implemented parent(s) must meet with building principal and/or dual language coach and teacher(s) to discuss progress and next steps.
- If interventions fail to improve the situation and the difficulty is believed the child cannot benefit from further participation, the family may choose to formally withdraw the child from the Dual Language program. It is recommended that this occur at the end of the academic year.
- Parents who wish to withdraw their child will be asked to complete a **Request for Withdrawal** form.
- Students who withdraw from the program will be unable to re-enter.

We speak a language other than Spanish or English at home. Can our child benefit?

Yes! The Dual Language program is a great place for students from all language backgrounds, because every teacher has been trained to use strategies that support second (or third) language learning.

What should I expect at a parent-teacher conference?

Twice each school year, you will have a chance to meet with your child's teacher to discuss your child's progress in the Dual Language program. Just as in any other parent-teacher conference, you will learn about your child's progress in each subject area. In addition, you can ask about your child's progress in their second language. You can help the teacher by sharing information about anything going on at home that may affect your child's learning (such as a new baby, a divorce or family health issues). If your child has two teachers (one for each language) you might meet with both teachers, or with just one of them. In the latter case, be sure to ask how your child is doing in the other teacher's class.



Before the conference, talk to your child about how he or she feels about school and whether there is anything your child wants you to talk about with the teacher. If you speak a language other than English and your child's teacher does not speak your home language, you may request an interpreter.

Make a list of questions before you go. For example:

- What are my child's strengths and weaknesses?
- Is my child making progress in English? Does s/he enjoy learning English?
- Is my child making progress in Spanish? Does s/he enjoy learning Spanish?

- Does my child hand homework in on time?
- Does my child participate in class?
- Does my child seem happy at school?
- What can I do at home to help?

How long will it take my child to learn the second language?

In the dual language program, your child will be learning the target language through the academic subject areas (e.g., math, science, social studies and language arts). This provides a meaningful context and a purpose for learning language. Just like young children learning their first language, students learning their second language usually follow a series of predictable stages.

Students encountering a second language for the first time may experience a “silent period” that lasts anywhere from one day to six months or more. During this time, they are acquiring receptive understanding, and should not be forced to speak. Most students understand more language than they can produce. Even as they develop proficiency, children may be reluctant to “perform” in their second language for adults at home. As they acquire spoken and written language, they will continue to rely on their first language when searching for words, and their grammar and pronunciation may not yet sound native-like. Typically, students move from being able to say simple, concrete words and memorized phrases to engaging in longer conversations with more accuracy and confidence.

While individual children vary, students in dual language programs would generally be expected to attain the Novice Mid to Novice High stage by the end of second grade, and the Intermediate Low to Intermediate Mid stage by the end of elementary school (see the chart below). When they reach the secondary level, most dual language students will be ready for more advanced language study.

The stages of language acquisition described on the next page provide a framework for understanding how students typically progress. However, language learning is an on-going, fluid process that differs for every student. Students may move between stages of language acquisition, depending on the linguistic and cognitive demands of the situation.

Stages of Second Language Acquisition²

STAGE		GENERAL BEHAVIORS OF STUDENTS
NOVICE	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ May go through a silent period ▪ Can point to objects, act, nod, or use gestures ▪ Can say yes or no
	Mid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Can produce isolated words and short, memorized phrases ▪ Relies on context clues to understand ▪ May speak hesitantly
	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Can engage in basic dialogue about familiar topics ▪ Uses memorized phrases to ask and answer simple questions ▪ Pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary are heavily influenced by the first language
INTERMEDIATE	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Can engage in short conversations about familiar topics ▪ Can respond using simple sentences ▪ Makes frequent grammatical errors that often interfere with meaning
	Mid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Can engage in simple conversations about concrete topics ▪ Can respond to direct questions and requests for information ▪ May pause frequently while searching for vocabulary and appropriate grammatical structures
	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Engages with confidence in simple interactions about familiar topics ▪ Begins to produce longer responses, but may switch languages when struggling for words ▪ Can state opinions and original thoughts ▪ Makes frequent grammatical errors that sometimes interfere with meaning
ADVANCED		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Can converse fluently about a variety of social and academic topics ▪ Understands grade-level classroom instruction ▪ Vocabulary is less extensive than a native speaker's ▪ Continues to make non-native grammatical errors that do not interfere with meaning

² Adapted from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) scale.

How can I learn more about Dual Language?

- Visit the ACPS Dual Language website:
<http://www.acps.k12.va.us/dual-language/>
- Questions other parents have posed about dual language are answered here:
http://www.cal.org/twi/toolkit/PI/P_QA/parent_qs.htm.
- This website has resources in English and Spanish about how parents can help their children in school: www.colorincolorado.org
- Practical advice for parents on raising multilingual children can be found here:
<http://multilingualparenting.com/>.

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School Year 20__-__

Application to the Dual Language Program

Date of application: ____/____/____ Entering Grade: K 1 2 3 4 5
MM DD YYYY

Child's Name: _____ Date of birth: ____/____/____
Last First MM DD YYYY

Address: _____
Street City State Zip

Daytime Telephone: _____

Home School: John Adams
 Mount Vernon
 Other (out of zone): _____
 Preferred Dual Language location (select one): John Adams Mount Vernon

OUT OF SCHOOL ZONE APPLICANTS MUST SUBMIT A PROGRAMMATIC TRANSFER REQUEST ALONG WITH THIS APPLICATION.

What is the student's primary language (the language most frequently spoken with the child at home)?

What additional language(s) are spoken with the child at home?

- | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> English | <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish | <input type="checkbox"/> English | <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish | <input type="checkbox"/> None |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Amharic | <input type="checkbox"/> Arabic | <input type="checkbox"/> Amharic | <input type="checkbox"/> Arabic | |

Other: _____ Other: _____

Has this child previously been enrolled in Spanish-language academic instruction (e.g., a dual language or bilingual program in the U.S. or a school in a Spanish-speaking country?)

- No
 Yes

Name of School _____ State/Province _____ Country _____

Dates: from _____ to _____ Grade levels attended: PK K 1 2 3 4 5

List any siblings currently enrolled in the Dual Language Program at the school to which you are applying:

Name(s)	Grade Level(s) SY 20__-__

I am interested in applying to the Dual Language program for my child starting in **school year 20__-__**. If my child is accepted in the Dual Language program, given the nature of the development of a second language, our family is committed to supporting our child in the Dual Language Program at minimum through the end of Grade 5. Signing below indicates that I agree to this commitment.

 Parent/Guardian Name

 Signature

School Use Only

- ELL
- Sibling

Primary Language:

- Spanish
- English
- Other: _____

Late entry
Literate in Spanish Y N

Out of Zone
Administrative Transfer request submitted
Date: ___/___/___

Received by:

Date/Time:

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