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Benefits of Dual Immersion Programs on Elementary School Students

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Abstract

This senior capstone research project aims to share the benefits of dual immersion programs in elementary school years. Understanding what a dual immersion program is and knowing the different models within the program allow parents to select which program is best suited for their students. A key point in clarification is that a dual immersion program does not aim to replace an English, or standard, education program, but adds a target language to enhance the students learning. This study looks at the overall benefits that students can gain in elementary school, from kindergarten through fifth grade, sometimes through eighth grade. Through the use of literature review, teacher surveys, as well as personal experiences, the findings indicate that bilingualism, biliteracy, and multicultural competence are part of all important products of a dual immersion program.

Keywords: dual immersion; elementary school; enhance; learning

Benefits of Dual Immersion Programs for Elementary School Students

Introduction and Background

Imagine a program that could provide the best bilingual education for English Language Learner students combined with the best of foreign language programs (e.g., immersion programs) for native English-speaking children, making both groups bilingual, bi-literate, and academically successful in the same classroom environment (Lindholm-Leary). A Dual Immersion program is a non-traditional classroom in which students learn academic content simultaneously in two languages. While there are plenty of different languages that can be used as a target language in this form of education, Spanish is the most popular and is reflective of many of the communities in which it is taught. This program is not replacing English with another language but provides the students the opportunity to acquire a second language. It is an additive program in that a second language is acquired while maintaining the first language of the students. Depending upon their age, education, and developmental levels, English Language Learners (ELs) possess a wide range of language competencies in their primary language, which they use to develop English.

Dual immersion programs are designed to teach both students who are fluent in English and students who are fluent in another language so that both groups of students retain their home language and learn a second language. The most common type, and that which is referenced throughout this project, is the Two Way, or Bilingual, Immersion Program. The Two-Way system is language learning and academic instruction for native speakers of English and native speakers of another language. The goals of dual-language immersion programs are language proficiency and academic achievement in students' first and second languages and cross-cultural understanding. This program is typically found in kindergarten through grade eight but may be

offered through grade twelve (Multilingual Education, n.d.). There are no specific criteria for students except parental choice. There are also two models which are the extremes of a range through the program, known as a 90:10 model and a 50:50 model. In a 90:10 model, the amount of the target language decreases yearly as English increases until there is a 50:50 balance of the languages generally in grades four through six. A 50:50 model uses English and the target language for 50 percent of the time throughout the duration of the program (Multilingual FAQ, n.d.). Most schools start with a 90:10 model and work up to a 50:50 model later in the program.

While they can adapt to their communities there are specific things that all these programs are required to be successful and have a high rate of effectiveness. If they are not able to receive the proper resources to meet certain qualifications, the program will unlikely benefit students in the long run. The main focus of dual immersion programs is to develop biliteracy, bilingualism, and multicultural competence (Multilingual FAQ, n.d.). Research shows how students' education in the non-traditional pathway is enhanced compared to the standard method. There appear to be some specific academic and linguistic benefits to be gained by offering bilingual instruction to classrooms with similar shares of English native and those of other native language speakers. Many teachers see how beneficial dual immersion programs are to their students and express their love of doing it. Many teachers notice the opportunity for fairness that two-way immersion education can provide as a major benefit. Students are more eager, motivated, and compassionate when learning in this model as well as picking up the English language quicker.

Growing up, I attended an elementary school that offered a dual immersion program. I can remember learning the alphabet in English and Spanish as well as numbers, months, days of the week, etc. I was learning simultaneously in both English and Spanish while some of the

others in my grade were going through the traditional, English-only pathway. Learning two languages at once was normal for me growing up, especially in the town I grew up in. It wasn't until I got into high school and college that I would talk to my peers about my experience in elementary school and they had never heard anything about dual immersion programs. I felt like how we were learning was reflective of the community we were a part of. I loved the idea of learning both English and Spanish in school because it made learning so much more engaging and being able to communicate with our teachers in both languages helped build a better connection. We were constantly code-switching between both languages throughout the day. I remember always alternating with which subjects we would be learning in Spanish. For example, in fourth grade, we learned math in English, and then in fifth grade, we learned math in English. You would assume that switching the language of the subject would be difficult but it wasn't because it was normal for us. It was also a great way for us to be able to better understand and communicate with peers, family members, and community members. During my education here at California State University Monterey Bay, I have seen a lot of the long-term academic benefits of participating in this program. I was interested in conducting research that looks at these benefits from the perspective of researchers and Teachers.

The primary research question I propose to answer is: How do dual immersion programs benefit elementary school students? The related questions are as follows: What are dual immersion programs? What is the goal of a dual immersion program? How have they evolved? And how many types of dual immersion programs are there to offer to elementary school students? What does research say about the benefits of dual immersion for elementary students? How do teachers implement dual immersion programs in the classroom? How do teachers know that dual immersion programs benefit elementary school students? To what extent? Are there

resources available for teachers to implement successful dual immersion programs for elementary school students? (What resources are needed for teachers to implement successful dual immersion programs for elementary school students?). These questions bring together my two forms of research and attempt to answer the primary research question in a more detailed manner.

Literature Review

Based on my findings after reviewing the literature, I was able to find out the benefits of dual immersion programs for elementary school students. I was also able to find out how many elementary schools implement the program and what resources are available to do so. This literature review focuses more on answering many of the secondary research questions. Dual immersion programs have overall benefits for students' education and may help them later on in their lives. Based on the school districts, many elementary schools will implement the programs differently depending on which dual immersion program they use. They way also use different resources based on what is available to them.

Benefits

The purpose of the article, *Multilingual education. Multilingual Education - Resources* (CA Dept of Education). (2023). is to inform readers of the benefits of implementing these programs in schools. The research in this article mainly focuses on how multilingualism provides educational, cognitive, sociocultural, and economic benefits for those students who attain fluency in more than one language. Cognitive benefits that have come from and continue to come from dual immersion programs are increased executive function: attentional control, task switching (mental flexibility), may delay the onset of age-related cognitive decline and the onset of illnesses such as Alzheimer's disease, and increased intellectual flexibility (Multilingual

Education, 2023). The article continues to discuss the educational benefits of implementing dual immersion programs. It explains how comparable or higher achievement of students in dual language programs is compared to students in English-only programs. Improved learning outcomes in various subjects and associated with increased high school graduation rates among children of immigrants. This leads to increased levels of creativity. The programs promote higher levels of abstract thought and reasoning and engender enhanced metalinguistic awareness to support the learning of languages in the future. Social cultural benefits are also discussed in this article explaining how students gain a greater understanding of other world cultures, increase empathy development, enhance the connection to heritage cultures, promote global awareness, reduce discrimination, improve self-esteem, and strengthen cross-group relationships (Multilingual Education, 2023). With this, there are also economic benefits such as greater job opportunities in multiple public and private sectors, greater business opportunities, raised occupational status, and earning potential, and language skills are in high demand for employment with the Federal Government. This is very important when discussing the overall benefits of dual immersion programs because it is more than just learning more than one language at a time but it helps students further their overall education.

The purpose of Lozano (n.d.) *Dual language learners (dills). Early Childhood Education*. (n.d.) is to inform readers of the benefits of dual immersion programs by advocating how many students live in homes where a language other than English is spoken. This short article notes how research overwhelmingly shows that speaking more than one language is not only associated with an increased ability to concentrate, solve problems, and focus, bilingual children outperform monolingual children in measures of literacy and math. The article makes it very clear that incorporating ways that teachers can support the learning and development of dual

language learners is not a choice, but a necessity (Dual language learners (dlls) n.d). Educating dual language learners (DLLs) and English learners (ELs) effectively is a national challenge with consequences both for individuals and for American society. Despite their linguistic, cognitive, and social potential, many ELs—who account for more than 9 percent of enrollment in grades K-12 in U.S. schools—are struggling to meet the requirements for academic success, and their prospects for success in postsecondary education and in the workforce are jeopardized as a result. Research overwhelmingly shows that speaking more than one language is not only associated with an increased ability to concentrate, solve problems, and focus, bilingual children outperform monolingual children in measures of literacy and math (Dual language learners (dlls) n.d).

Stavelly (2023). How well do dual-immersion programs serve English learners?. EdSource. compares data between an elementary school that has implemented dual immersion programs and one that has not for grades 3rd-6th. Students in dual-immersion programs tend to have better reading and writing skills in their home languages than those who have been taught only in English. In California, 747 schools had dual-language immersion programs in 2019, according to the California Department of Education. Languages taught include Spanish, Arabic, Hmong, Korean, Mandarin, Vietnamese, and many others. This is important because we want to see the data showing that these programs truly work for our students. The article looks into data from the Dolores Huerta International Academy and the number of students who were once English learners reading and writing at grade level increases in each grade at the school, surpassing the statewide numbers in fourth grade. In sixth grade, 42.85% of students who were once English learners met or exceeded standards in English language arts, higher than the statewide rate of 34.66% (Stavelly, 2023). It also shows data that explains how just 12.5% of

English learners in third grade at the school were reading and writing at grade level in 2022, according to their scores on Smarter Balanced, the state's standardized test. That's lower than the statewide rate of 16.8% (Stavely, 2023). This is important because these programs sometimes take longer to get students proficient in English, but several studies show that by the end of elementary school, they have at least the same number of students proficient in English as programs that teach students only in English. Longer-term bilingual programs that continue into middle or high school often have better achievement.

Implementation

Moving onto the implementation of dual immersion programs, Gomez, M. (n.d.). *Improving educational opportunities for all students*. Dual Immersion explains what schools need to do in order to have success. An essential characteristic that needs to be implemented for success is strong leadership and administrative support from School Board and District administration, site Administration, and resource personnel. The schools will also need qualified instructional personnel, they must know: academic content and curriculum, theories and strategies for the development of bi-literacy, and dual immersion models. They also must be culturally competent and native-like proficient in languages of instruction. There needs to be a focus on academic achievement, language taught within the context of academic content, curriculum based on state/district standards, and the development of high-level language skills in both languages. The presentation continues to explain how there is a need for a positive school instructional climate, high expectations for all students, and a school that values languages and culture. There also needs to be room for opportunities for collaborative groupings for facilitation of student interaction and language use and faculty committed to equity and trained in multicultural understanding (Gomez, n.d.).

In addition to the implementation of dual immersion programs for elementary schools, Noori, & Noori, (2023). *Educating bilingual learners in school. Strong Schools* does a great job explaining how teachers should modify language and use sheltered instruction and scaffolding strategies to provide “comprehensible input” to language learners, while also providing challenging academic content for both native speakers and language learners. The article stresses the importance of having leadership and the success of the bilingual education program can be facilitated and accelerated with help from central administration. In the implementation of the program, a clear structure of accountability for administrators, teachers, parents, and students is present on effective campuses. Administrators are aware of their obligations and tasks in monitoring the academic progress of students. Teachers are aware that one of their responsibilities is to keep track of the benchmarks that students must meet within a specific period of time (Noori & Noori, 2023). One thing that stood out to me in this article is that teachers are required to analyze the information, actions, and tactics they employ throughout a specific time. Based on this knowledge, decisions must be made regarding how to modify the instruction. Teachers develop a dependence on this framework to guide their decision-making on instruction (Noori & Noori, 2023). In dual immersion education, the regular curriculum is taught to some extent in the target language, which can also be called Content-Based Foreign Language Teaching. This is important because despite receiving specialized teaching, bilingual students should still be able to engage in essential academic activities.

Resources Available

Lindholm-Leary,(2015). *Two-Way/ Dual Language Education: Then and Now*. speaks on the resources that are available for schools that implement dual immersion programs. The article expresses how the support for dual immersion programs is not always from funding but is

provided by a variety of local, state, and national professional organizations (or school districts or county offices of education) that provide conferences or workshops. Elementary schools need school-community-business partnerships from pre-K through college to support children and their families at all levels of education, to provide program alignment, and also community opportunities to use the languages being learned. They also need materials for classrooms, libraries, and homes in the various languages that are offered. Expansion efforts in two-way/dual language require more teachers and administrators who are trained in content, in the two-way/dual language model, and who have full bilingual/bi-literate proficiencies (Lindholm-Leary, 2015). The article then explains how there's a need for parents to become advocates for their children and communities as well, both native English speakers and target language speakers.

Lastly, *Dual language immersion grant (DLIG)*. Dual Language Immersion Grant (DLIG) - Resources (CA Dept of Education, 2023) explains how the mission of Global California 2030 is to equip our students with world language skills to succeed in the global economy and to fully engage with the diverse mixture of cultures and languages found in California and throughout the world. The purpose of this grant is to expand or establish new DLI programs that provide integrated language learning and academic instruction for native speakers of English, and native speakers of another language (Dual language immersion grant (DLIG) 2023). This grant allows elementary and high schools to achieve high academic achievement, first and second-language proficiency, and cross-cultural understanding. The article then explains how Assembly Bill 130, Chapter 44, Section 158, Statutes of 2021, provides funding over a period of three fiscal years, for the DLIG program to assist eligible entities in expanding current or establishing new DLI programs. Expansion includes adding grades or classes. Revitalizing an existing program is not and was not in the definition of expanding or establishing a new

program. Other language acquisition programs such as one-way bilingual, developmental bilingual, transitional, or other programs were not eligible for this grant (Dual language immersion grant (DLIG) 2023). The funds from this grant are used for activities that directly support the development of DLI programs through the following allowable activities: purchase of instructional materials and resources, development and implementation of professional learning for teachers and school administrators, teacher recruitment, development of curriculum and instructional materials, and family and student outreach. This is important because it expresses how there are funding opportunities for schools to apply for to sufficiently serve/teach their bilingual students.

Methods and Procedures

Participants

The participants of my research were teachers within three different dual-immersion programs. I reached out to Washington Elementary School (my hometown where I participated in the program), Georgia Brown Elementary School (located in Paso Robles, CA), and the Dual Language Academy of the Monterey Peninsula. One thing to notice is that these two elementary schools are where the majority of the population in either the area (city or town) or the school itself is Hispanic/Latinx. The survey consisted of teachers who are working at a school that offers the program, as some schools have both dual immersion and traditional schooling occurring at the same time. The results of the survey were anonymous, and some were not completed so personal or identifiable information is unknown. One thing to note is that the majority of the teachers who participated in the survey have been teaching at a school that offers the program for more than 5 years. Each expressed their individual experiences and what they see has been beneficial to the students.

Materials

The most important tool I used for this project was my computer. I used it to do my Literature Review, or research using peer-reviewed scholarly articles, reach out to schools and their staff, and create an anonymous survey. I used Google Forms for the survey and to record the responses. I wrote questions and used the long response option to allow them to write as much or as little as they felt necessary for the question. To begin I asked them how long they worked at an elementary school that offered dual immersion, then followed up with how long they taught dual immersion. This helped me distinguish those who taught in the program and for how long from those who did not teach in the program. I then followed up with what they thought the overall goal of implementing the program was to get a better understanding of their thoughts on the program. To better understand the program I asked how dual immersion benefits the students in and out of school. By doing this it allowed me to see a broader picture of the benefits the program has to offer. I then continued to ask questions about the benefits of teaching dual immersion as early as elementary school. Another question that I asked is if the students in the program get confused with learning two different languages at the same time. I also asked what resources they have that allow them to implement the program. By asking this question it allowed me to see what different resources the schools use and how they are beneficial. Finally, I asked how they implement dual immersion programs in an everyday school setting.

Procedures

In order for me to gain a better understanding of my topic I reviewed many different articles to help me answer my primary and secondary research questions. I also read many peer-reviewed articles that all helped me conduct a Literature Review. My secondary research questions were based on the types of dual immersion programs available, the overall benefits of

the programs as well as how it is integrated into schools. I was able to find out that there are four main types of dual immersion programs offered in elementary schools. Each program differs from which types of students they enroll and which is the most popular. I then went into more depth on which one of these programs, out of the four, is the most beneficial and effective for the students overall. Something that stood out to me was that each program has a different level of effectiveness at different levels of the student's education. By researching this I was able to find out the background information on what dual immersion programs are and how they are beneficial.

To further my research and understanding of the topic I looked at references on the articles I read to look more into the topics that were still a little shallow. This allowed me to find even more information that would help me answer my research questions. I found research regarding the effects of dual immersion programs. I also found out how these programs are implemented in an everyday classroom setting. Something that stood out to me during this process is that I learned how many schools needed to meet certain criteria before 2016 to have dual immersion programs in their schools. In order to keep the programs alive and effective, the qualification of teachers as well as administrative leadership and support needed to be as available as possible. Availability of these resources depends on the community surrounding the school and thus affects how many schools can implement an effective program.

I then focused my research on the elementary schools in California that offer the program. To find what these programs looked like in action I found active programs in the state and did some research on which models they used as well as their mission statements and goals. I chose which schools I wanted to look at and then created an anonymous survey for the teachers involved in the program to take. I sent the survey to 3 different schools in different areas of

California; Northern, Central Coast, and Central Valley. The questions were written to evoke information that best suited the research I was conducting as well as enough information to add some context to each reply (See Appendix A~ Survey Questions to Teachers). The survey included 9 questions (See Appendix) and each response was varied from a sentence to a short paragraph. I first went over the responses individually to get a better understanding of how the teacher viewed the programs and the benefits of them. I later went over the responses as a whole to see similarities and differences between the responses corresponding to the areas in which the schools are located.

By having researched articles and survey questions, I was then able to compare the two. When comparing them I noticed how many of the benefits from the articles seemed to line up with the teacher's responses. I also began to go more in-depth with the cognitive and social benefits that dual immersion brings to the student's lives. The teacher's responses were very insightful on the idea of having to learn two languages simultaneously while also learning course content. Many of the teachers were very open about their experiences while teaching dual immersion and gave many good examples of the resources available for them to use.

Results

General Understanding

Dual immersion is a program offered in elementary schools to enhance students' language and education. The goals of dual-language immersion programs are to support bilingualism, biliteracy, and multicultural competence (Gomez, n.d). Research overwhelmingly shows that speaking more than one language is not only associated with an increased ability to concentrate, solve problems, and focus, bilingual children outperform monolingual children in measures of literacy and math (Dual language learners (dlls)). Dual immersion has so many benefits and is

not just about learning or developing a second language. Dual-language immersion programs do not replace English with another language, but provide the students the opportunity to acquire a second language. Dual-language immersion programs are additive programs in that a second language is acquired while maintaining the first language of the students (Multilingual FAQ 2023). There are 4 different types of dual immersion programs which differ depending on the school they are enrolled in. One-Way immersion provides instruction in English and another language for non-speakers of the other language, with the goals of language proficiency and academic achievement in English and the other language, and cross-cultural understanding. This program is typically found in kindergarten through grade eight. Developmental Bilingual provides instruction for English learners utilizing English and students' native language for literacy and academic instruction, with the goals of language proficiency and academic achievement in students' first and second languages. This program is typically found in kindergarten through grade eight. Foreign Language Elementary Experience provides instruction for non-native speakers of the target language, with the goals of exposure, enrichment, and language experience. Typically during a designated period of the school day or after-school program (usually a few times a week) providing basic exposure to a language. This program is typically found in kindergarten through grade eight. The most popular immersion program is the Two-Way Immersion is language learning and academic instruction for native speakers of English and native speakers of another language. The goals of dual-language immersion programs are language proficiency and academic achievement in students' first and second languages and cross-cultural understanding. This program is typically found in kindergarten through grade eight but may be offered through grade twelve. The Two-Way Immersion program is branched off into different types of programs ranging from 90:10 to 50:50. The first number

refers to the amount of instructional time initially spent for instruction in the target or non-English language in kindergarten. The second number refers to English (Multilingual FAQ 2023). In a 90:10 model, the amount of the target language decreases yearly as English increases until there is a 50:50 balance of the languages generally in grades four through six. A 50:50 model uses English and the target language for 50 percent of the time throughout the duration of the program (Gomez, n.d).

The rationale for these programs comes in part from research on language acquisition in "one-way" immersion contexts, first developed in Canada in the 1960s and later established in the United States, which indicated that languages are best learned as a medium of content rather than as the focus of instruction (Potowski, 2004). Beginning in the 1980's and 1990 the United States government began to provide considerable support for the expansion of bilingual programs in a variety of ways that had significant impacts on two-way/dual language programs. The government wanted to develop an effective program for those who were failing to learn English proficiently and were underachieving. This also led to a want for a more effective foreign language program for native English-speaking students.

Dual immersion programs were supported in five different ways: 1) Research/resource centers were established that provided technical assistance to schools offering bilingual instruction; 2) Federal Title VII funding provided universities with scholarship funds for potential bilingual teachers and with greater incentive to improve their bilingual teacher credentialing and training programs; 3) Title VII funds were established to help schools plan and implement new programs or to improve older programs; 4) there were Title VII Academic Excellence and Dissemination competitive grants awarded to exceptional two-way/dual language programs, which enabled these schools to provide technical assistance to new programs; and 5)

Research grants were available to researchers interested in studying issues of importance for the greater educational success of ELL students (Lindholm-Leary, 2015).

In addition, in those early years (the 1980s– 1990s), various states, especially California, also provided funding or other technical assistance to improve two-way/dual language instruction and programming, which enabled many schools to develop, implement and evaluate the success of their two-way/dual language program. Research conducted in the year 2000 showed that 24 out of the 50 states had Dual Immersion programs running in their schools' systems. These programs could be found in “large urban schools, inner-city schools, rich and middle-class suburban schools, and small rural schools” (Lindholm-Leary, 2000). From the first few schools that were selected, a state-wide initiative was begun with many more two-way/dual language programs. Now there are some 200+ programs in the State of California.

The English-Only Movement (Proposition 227) took hold in 1998, impacting California and several other states, trying hard to dismantle all types of bilingual programs. Districts can get around the new law through waivers from parents requesting that their children be enrolled in bilingual programs (Winter & staff, 2020). In 2016 State Legislature passes Multilingual Education for a 21st Century Economy Act mostly along party lines. The measure would repeal Proposition 227, allowing districts to implement bilingual programs without parents' waivers. Despite this roller coaster of support and challenges, two-way/dual language programs have survived and continue to expand. While most two-way/dual language programs include Spanish as the partner language, there is a growing demand for other languages as well, particularly in Mandarin; currently, Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese, Arabic, Russian, French, German, Portuguese, and Italian are other partner languages (Lindholm-Leary, 2015).

Over the past years, support for two-way/dual language education has changed dramatically. In California, 747 schools had dual-language immersion programs in 2019.

Survey Responses

Through the anonymous survey sent out to the three schools, we were able to see what teachers saw of their students and things that researchers could have missed. I first began to ask teachers how many years they had been teaching in an elementary school, which many ranged from 10-27 years (See Figure 1). I then continued to ask them how long they had been teaching dual immersion. For this question, the answers ranged from 2-27 years (See Figure 2). The reason for asking both questions is to see if there is a distinction between when they began teaching at elementary school and when they began teaching dual immersion. These questions helped me understand and comprehend their answers to the questions that followed.

How long have you been teaching at an elementary school that offers a dual immersion program?

11 responses



Figure 1: Time at an elementary school

How long have you been a dual immersion teacher at an elementary school?

11 responses



Figure 2: Time teaching dual immersion

Teachers were then asked to explain what they thought the goal of dual immersion programs was (See Figure 3). The answers to this question were similar in a way in the sense that they all believe it is to be bilingual, bilateral, and bicultural. These responses explain not only the overall goal but also that the teachers understand their responsibilities when it comes to teaching dual immersion.

What is the goal of dual immersion programs?

11 responses

To teach in Spanish and English and gain the knowledge and skills to fully function in both languages

To develop learners that are biliterate and bicultural and become more culturally aware

Academic achievement in both languages, bilingualism and biliteracy, sociocultural competence

To produce biliterate, bilingual learners. To increase fluency in both languages

The goal of dual immersion programs is to produce biliterate, bilingual individuals.

For all students to achieve academic success, become fully biliterate, and to be culturally competent.

I believe the ultimate goal of a dual immersion program is for learners to achieve language proficiency in their first and second language, academic success, as well as cultural enrichment.

Bilingual, Biliteral, and Bicultural!

The goal of a dual immersion is an additive program with the main goals being bilingualism, biliteracy, cultural awareness and sensitivity and academic excellence in two languages.

The goal of our dual immersion program is meeting the three pillars of Dual Language Education. Bilingual and Biliteracy, Grade level Achievement and Sociocultural Competence.

Our vision is that all students achieve bilingualism, biliteracy and sociocultural competence by providing rigorous standard-based instruction.

Figure 3: Goal of Dual Immersion

The following three questions were based on the benefits of dual immersion. I asked teachers how dual immersion benefits elementary school student's academic achievement (See Figure 4). I then followed by asking them about the benefits of dual immersion programs outside of school (See Figure 5). The third question was about the benefits of teaching dual immersion classes at the elementary school level (See Figure 6). These questions all relate to the main idea of this essay and demonstrate the teacher's perspectives on the benefits of dual immersion programs for elementary school students. The responses to these questions go along with the

research that I read about from articles explaining how multilingualism provides educational, cognitive, sociocultural, and economic benefits for those students who attain fluency in more than one language.

How does dual immersion benefit elementary school student's academic achievement?

11 responses

Dual seems to produce higher-level learners in comparison to English Only classes

Students in dual immersion programs tend to be adaptable and be malleable in their thinking and learning. By the time these learners are in 6th grade, they can outperform monolingual students academically.

Research says that students in dual language immersion will outperform students academically typically in middle school and high school

The rigor is difficult and can be beneficial to those learners able to internalize the 2 at the same time.

Dual immersion benefits learners' academic achievement by providing them the opportunity to learn or solidify a second language. It also provides the space for native speakers to learn the second language with ease and with role models.

Students struggle at the beginning of the immersion program, however, as they continue, connections in the brain increase due to learning in both languages. As a result, academic achievement increases; students are more flexible in their thinking and can learn more easily.

In my opinion, learners with actual dual language experience develop greater flexibility to cognitively use their languages for problem-solving.

It offers an amazing opportunity in both additional brain growth with the added language and cultural understanding of diversity.

Along with the proficiency in a second language, it teaches students problem solving, critical thinking skills and higher level thinking skills.

Dual immersion students develop greater cognitive flexibility, demonstrating increased attention control, better memory and superior problem-solving skills, as well as an enhanced understanding of their first language.

Since they are immersed in the Spanish language, children are continuously relating to both cultures. It builds flexibility in looking at situations from different perspectives. Non-natives continuously have to relate the language and culture to their English-speaking culture while natives have their culture validated. Both sets of students benefit from "seeing" the world from two viewpoints but also the continuous process of bridging both languages and cultures helps them excel in academics and social situations.

Figure 4: How does Dual Immersion Benefit Elementary Students

How do dual immersion programs benefit students outside of school?

11 responses

They are able to fully function in society in two languages. They have more opportunities.

Dual immersion programs allow students to bring their home language to other settings. The hope is that their skills in the target language can help them communicate with others around them at some level.

Increased sociocultural competence, economic benefits, ability to communicate with more people etc

When we have humans that are in the world who are able to communicate in more than 1 language we create more inclusion and knowledge.

When an individual know how to speak, read and write in another language, it increases the opportunities for job placement and advancement in their career.

Other than the above mentioned benefits, students are able to better participate in a multicultural society. They are bilingual and can communicate with a wide variety of people. In their future, they bring skills to the workplace that are highly valued.

I observed that bi-literate learners navigate more at ease with peers or the community. In my community, these learners are the translators for the family.

It increases their opportunities in the community, world and personal growth.

It teaches students perseverance, empathy for others and a world view.

Dual immersion programs benefit students outside of school by understanding the diverse cultures, and speaking a second language gives the students an opportunity for better jobs as they contribute to a global working community.

Immersion programs help non native students relate to the Spanish speaking community. For native students it is important for them to fit into their own community by knowing the language and their culture, especially for second generation and third generation children.

Figure 5: Benefits Outside of School

Why is it beneficial to teach dual immersion classes at the elementary school level?

11 responses

With a world of immense diversity, all learners need the opportunity to grow and learn.

Dual immersion classes help learners brains develop differently. Their cognitive abilities are heightened and their neural pathways allow for them to process information.

By teaching in a dual program you are supporting the best model to support students

When the basics are taught early higher level thinking can be taught in either language later in high school or college.

Personally, I love teaching in Spanish because it is my native tongue. I know first hand the hardship I endured learning English as a second language. I am a dual immersion teacher to ease my learners learning and help support them.

Young children have brains that are more flexible, so it is easier to learn a language. As well as this, young children have the ability to learn a language without an accent.

In primary years it's easier to receive and attain a new language.

The children have a malleable capacity to learn without boundaries!

Young students are able to acquire languages more readily than older students.

It is important to teach dual immersion classes at the elementary school level because students learn better through social interaction, songs, play, and their brain can absorb faster a

Children at this age are little sponges. It's easier for them to learn a new language at this age.

Figure 6: Benefits of Teaching at the Elementary Level

I continued by asking the teachers to explain whether or not learning two languages at once is confusing for the students (See Figure 7). The reason for asking this question is because it is a lot of people's argument when it comes to dual immersion. The teachers explained it was more of a misconception and that it led to many students code-switching.

Does learning 2 languages in elementary school confuse the students? If not, explain.

11 responses

It does not. They are able to still interchange between the two languages.

No-it can challenge some learners at the beginning but eventually benefit them. In fact, many countries around the world require their students to be fluent in two or more languages.

No this is a misconception

For those that can internalize both languages it does not. For those that already struggle learning in 1 language it can become overwhelming to learn 2.

I do not believe it does. Even learners who do not have language support at home have been very successful in acquiring a second language. What matters is the support and instruction the teacher provides in making connections between the two languages and the intentional daily practice provided.

Learning in 2 languages in elementary school, can at first be confusing, however children have such a great capacity for learning. Confusions get sorted out quickly. It does depend on teaching in a manner that students can access the learning. This involves using pictures and videos to support learning, as well as songs, chants and movement.

In third grade, I hear learners use a lot of code switching or translanguaging (using both languages when speaking) I don't think they are confused.

Obviously there are exceptions to the rule yet no, it does not confuse them. They are taught to read and write in Spanish, while building communities then bridge the languages. There are cognates that are automatic transfers. All the skills to read in one language are the same in both. The differences are directly taught to avoid confusion.

It can be confusing at times as there are false cognates and misunderstandings. However, those confusions are a part of learning any language. It also depends on the level of teaching and what strategies are implemented to reduce those confusions.

Learning 2 languages in elementary school does not confuse students, (although there might be exceptions). The students' cognitive development allows them to translanguange and make connections between both languages.

Not at all. The children soon begin to understand how both languages are similar and different but at the same time how they can build on each other. Being in a dual immersion program sort of gives the children a heads up again in academics and social situations.

Figure 7: Learning Two Languages

The following question was regarding the resources that are available for teachers and students that are used while implementing dual immersion programs (See Figure 8). Many teachers explained that they attended conferences offered by the California Association for Bilingual Educators (CABE). They also explained how there is a certain curriculum that is approved by the state as well as textbooks and online resources. The answers to this question

were very insightful because when doing online research there wasn't much information about the resources available.

What resources are available for implementing the dual immersion classes?

11 responses

History and ELA is provided in Spanish.

Many learning facilitators head over to CAFE to gather resources and ideas. There is also a Dual Immersion conference each year and there is a book that lists out best practices.

A variety I would be happy to talk to you about them, which would be more efficient than typing them here

Resources exist but more must be made by the classroom teacher.

CAFE, California Association for Bilingual Educators offers a yearly conference with tons of information and resources. The Department of Education also has resources online. They published a book titled, Guiding Principles for Dual Language Education. Finally there are tons of resources online that you can find by simply doing a Google search.

Resources include required state approved curriculum (based on English curriculum) as well as supplemental curriculum and strategies specific to teaching in the second language.

At this time our district offers Spanish guided reading, history, and science resources in Spanish.

San Diego county has valuable translations of standards of identifications of transference or direct teach components for success in both languages.

There are of course the guiding principals for dual language instruction, Biliteracy books and seminars, CAFE, ATDLE conferences, school visits etc.

There are many resources available for implementing the dual immersion classes, for example the curriculum that alignes with the standards, books, and professional development workshops for educators.

We have core curriculum that is adopted. California State Standards are, of course, the backbone of what we teach. We also have had training in GLAD and Kagan Strategies, which support second language and foster accountability. Our school has also had training in Professional Learning Communities where we look at data to ensure the success of all of our students.

Figure 8: Resources

The final question that I asked was on how dual immersion is implemented in an everyday school setting (See Figure 9). This question had many different responses and variety drastically because I received responses from three different elementary schools all from different districts. Their responses were insightful because they demonstrated how different

schools use different methods when implementing dual immersion. Another thing to keep in mind with these responses is that some elementary schools teach k-6, while others may teach K-8 as well as not knowing what grade level these teachers are teaching.

How do you implement dual immersion in everyday school settings?

11 responses

Dual immersion in Lindsay is very different than in other districts because of our performance based system, so the way it is implemented varies drastically from classroom to classroom. This is due because the implementation is tailored to what learners in that class need.

I do not understand this question what do you mean by everyday school settings ?

It is daily instruction in the core topics and follow through at home.

It begins with a thought out plan, adhering to a schedule where you will dedicate x amount of time to the second language and having consistency throughout the year. Lots of language experiences with realia and visuals to help the acquisition of the language is a must as well. Music, poems, chants and other text with rhythm, rhyme, or catchy phrasing will also help. Share the cultures that speak the language by inviting special guests. There are so many ways that a language can come to life.

I am currently a literacy coach in a dual immersion program. I demonstrate lessons, train teachers and work with small groups of students who are learning in 2 languages.

In our learning environment, we have an allotted amount (1 1/2 hours)of SLA time each day.

That is a big question! In class, the day is organized by subject area and by language with a bridging period to connect the languages. Different subjects are taught in one or the other language. In the school community, we have staff that offer one or the other language which supports community building with languages being the bridge.

I use a variety of GLAD, SADIE, Thinking Maps, Dictation, and Vocabulary Development strategies on a daily basis. There are so many ways we promote language learning every day.

In our dual immersion program for second grade we have a 90-10 model. 90% of the day is in Spanish and 10% is in English, that includes designated and integrated ELD time.

In first grade, for our program, the children are immersed in Spanish 90% of their day, 10% is in English. Reading Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies Units are all taught in Spanish.

Figure 9: Implementation

Discussion

After looking at research and personal observations by teachers, there are many benefits to implementing dual immersion programs in elementary schools. Students can become biliterate, bilingual, and gain multicultural competence. This allows them to approach school subjects from multiple views and languages. They are given multiple voices to use academically

instead of just one. It is a huge boost to self-esteem and helps students remain connected to their own culture even while they experience a new one. The process of becoming bilingual through dual immersion education empowers students. As they strengthen their voice and identity in their first language, they also develop their voice in the second language. Academically, these students stand apart because not only are they achieving grade-level standards, but they can do so in two languages. They also use the language to develop relationships with peers and teachers.

By learning two languages, students are then able to communicate with those around them and in their community. Many dual immersion programs are reflective of where students live, so knowing both languages will help them break down any previous language barriers that may have divided their community. Language allows us to understand each other in everyday interactions but also gives us insights about the culture of a country and its people. Educating students to be more culturally aware through dual language programs has the additional benefit of teaching them about global leadership. It exposes students to other cultures outside of their own experiences and helps them to become more curious and empathetic about the wider world and people from different backgrounds. Knowing two or more languages can help students in their future careers, personal lives, and overall enhance their communication skills.

Culturally, students can become more connected with their or others' backgrounds. Language is at the very core of our identity. It's how we relate to our past, our family, our culture, and our upbringing. It's important to remember that while dual language programs teach students a new language, they do so while building upon their native one. They are not only exposed to the culture but exposed to those who practice it, making it more personal. I went through a dual immersion program from grades K-8 and it allowed me to become more connected with my community and family's culture. I was able to speak to many family

members who didn't speak English, as well as being able to help other non-English speakers in places like work, school, stores, etc. This then allowed me to ask more questions about my cultural background, given that my grandparents only spoke Spanish.

Finally, dual language programs are vastly different from the methods by which a student would normally acquire a new language. Students are not taking a class specifically to learn a new language in small increments. Instead, they master that language while learning science, math, social studies, and language arts at the same time. They also use the language to develop relationships with peers and teachers. In other words, students use language in relevant and real-world ways. For example, in a dual-language classroom, students might engage in a hands-on science lesson in the target language. In this way, learning becomes even more purposeful and relevant to students. They will become more invested and motivated to achieve academically while learning a new language at the same time. When comparing this to the interview done above, many teachers feel the same way about the programs. The research also follows this by explaining that students enrolled in dual immersion programs have greater cognitive flexibility, demonstrating increased attention control, better memory, and superior problem-solving skills, as well as an enhanced understanding of their first language.

Problems and Limitations

Over the course of obtaining data, I came across two significant problems. There were some limitations to carrying out this senior capstone research project, such as time constraints to interview more teachers in public schools. At times, it is not easy to interview with teachers (See Appendix 1~ Survey Questions to Teachers). I was only able to get responses from 11 teachers by ways of teacher surveys when my goal was 30. I then realized that around this time many schools are doing their state testing and elementary teachers may not have had the time to answer

some questions. The outcomes of the surveys and interviews could be affected by the way that questions were formulated. There was also some confusion with the questions (See Figure 9). The teachers who responded were also not all from the same school district which could also have given them different responses when it came to the resources available (See Figure 8) and the implementations of their dual immersion programs (See Figure 9). The schools that I interviewed all incorporate Spanish for their dual immersion programs which could have a form of bias in the sense that other schools may incorporate a different language. Also finding articles with relevant dates was complicated. Many articles were relevant to my research but they were older than 10 years. I feel like this may have been impacted by data because times have changed and the dual immersion programs have evolved over time.

Recommendations

While many people may argue that learning one language is challenging enough, I urge people to consider the benefits that implementing dual immersion programs in elementary schools. The benefits of these programs and the outcomes for the students exposed to them are far-reaching. As stated in the literature review, research, and teacher interviews dual immersion programs benefit students' overall life. Language and culture are inextricably connected. Learning a language gives the student a “key” to the culture of the people who speak that language. It should be taught through a cultural lens because this allows students to view the world openly and gain an understanding of other cultures at a deeper level. Ensuring that you also have the support of your community, school district, parents, and staff is important to keep the program running smoothly. It helps engage students in learning about another culture through their language and presence. Respect between cultures would be stronger because students learned the value of each.

Conclusion

Dual immersion programs have become more popular over the years and it is important to remember the overall goal of the program. Implementing this program will have educational, cognitive, sociocultural, and economic benefits for those students who attain fluency in more than one language. The program has since grown and emphasizes the value of many cultures and languages depending on the target language used. Providing an environment that not only allows for non-native English speakers to succeed but teaches their language and culture with meaning creates a more open-minded community of learners and teachers. Dual immersion programs have also gained more interest in communities that are filled with a majority of a different culture besides English. The programs promote higher levels of abstract thought and reasoning and engender enhanced metalinguistic awareness to support the learning of languages in the future. It is also important to remember that to be enrolled in dual immersion programs you need to have the approval of your parents/guardians and they can pull you out of the program whenever they please.

This senior capstone research project reveals that there are significant benefits to dual immersion programs. It also reveals what is needed in order to make it successful. Schools need support for dual immersion programs not always from funding but provided by a variety of local, state, and national professional organizations (or school districts or county offices of education) that provide conferences or workshops (Lindholm-Leary, K. 2015). These programs are being implemented in elementary schools so the elementary students are successful in being effective. There needs to be a focus on academic achievement, language taught within the context of academic content, curriculum based on state/district standards, and the development of high-level language skills in both languages.

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Appendix A

Survey questions for elementary school teachers who are a part of the dual immersion program

1. How long have you been a dual immersion teacher at an elementary school?
2. How long have you been teaching at an elementary school that offers a dual immersion program?
3. What is the goal of dual immersion programs?
4. How does dual immersion benefit elementary school student's academic achievement?
5. Why is it beneficial to teach dual immersion classes at the elementary school level?
6. How do dual immersion programs benefit students outside of school?
7. Does learning 2 languages in elementary school confuse the students?
8. What resources are available for implementing the dual immersion classes?
9. How do you implement dual immersion in everyday school settings?