

Dual Language Immersion sub-subcommittee
Final Recommendations to the APS School Board
February 27, 2024

Recommendation #1: **APS allocates funding to hire one Spanish reading specialist for each DLI elementary school to support student literacy in Spanish.**

Need: Research has shown that English Learners develop English literacy faster and with greater proficiency in Dual Language Immersion (DLI) programs, where they develop strong literacy skills in both their native language and English, than they do in other English Learner program models. English Learners in DLI programs attain grade-level proficiency at a higher rate than English Learners in monolingual programs, closing the achievement gap relative to their native-English-speaking peers (see Appendix C and D for research on benefits to EL students and data on achievement gap closure for APS EL students). The DLI visioning Task Force recommended that Spanish reading specialists be hired at both DLI elementary schools to support Spanish literacy development in the full early immersion 80/20 model program.

Historically, APS DLI elementary schools have had reading specialists to support the instruction of English Language Arts. However, DLI elementary schools have not had the necessary resources or staff to deliver high quality literacy support in Spanish. This has undermined the development of biliteracy (the ability to read and write in two languages), especially for English Learner students. Ensuring that EL students are bilingual and biliterate (fluent in reading, writing and speaking) would result in those students graduating from APS with an employment advantage.

Solution: The DLI sub-subcommittee recommends hiring reading specialists who can support literacy in Spanish. Reading specialists are trained professionals who work in all aspects of student literacy. Through roles as coaches, literacy specialists, reading interventionists, and tutors, reading specialists support the development of reading and writing for all students, and particularly for those students needing targeted literacy support.

Budgetary Implications and/or Implementation Needs: The budgetary estimate for each reading specialist is \$100,000 for each elementary school with an elementary DLI program. For the 2024-25 school year, APS would require two FTE Spanish reading specialists for \$200,000.

Strategic Plan Alignment: Funding these positions aligns with APS's strategic plan in the following way:

Core Values: excellence, equity and inclusivity.

Goal: Student success – Standardized English reading tests have shown that English Learners who participate in two-way bilingual education programs outpace English Learners enrolled in other EL program models

Strategies:

Student Success:

- Deliver curriculum through innovative and relevant instruction that is differentiated to meet the diverse needs of each student. (S-SS-2)
- Provide learning opportunities in a variety of settings, times, and formats that include opportunities for students to align knowledge, skills, and personal interests with career and higher educational opportunities including internships and externships. (S-SS-3)

Committee vote: 7 in favor, 0 opposed

Staff response: The Office of English Learners worked in collaboration with the Dual Language Immersion Sub-Sub Committee to develop the recommendations. Staff are in agreement with this recommendation as DLI teachers need the support of a Spanish reading specialist who can share the responsibility for assessing students' Spanish reading and writing abilities, identifying deficiencies, and creating reading intervention plans and strategies for students selected for additional reading instruction.

Recommendation #2: That APS researches and enacts a plan to improve hiring and retention practices for bilingual and biliterate staff for the DLI program

Background: Dual Language Immersion elementary schools present a unique instructional environment in which children learn core subject areas in Spanish (e.g., math, science) as well as Spanish Language Arts. A successful DLI program relies on qualified staff to teach and to develop teaching materials and the curriculum that are suitable to the optimal bilingual education (Grade-level content materials and textbooks may need to be translated if not available in Spanish). Nevertheless, APS does not have a specific strategy to hire and retain such qualified staff specific to the DLI program.

Need:

According to Kennedy (2013)¹, dual language programs need two components to recruit bilingual staff: (1) a clearly articulated and implemented recruiting plan that relies on a variety of sources (e.g., international recruits, partnerships with local colleges and universities, grow-your-own programs, high school dual language student pipeline projects) and (2) a recruiting process that is conducted through a collaboration of school leadership staff and district administration staff (human resources) to ensure that appropriate strategies for outreach, screening, and incentivizing (e.g., bilingual teacher stipends) are utilized.

APS does not have a strategy nor an incentive structure to attract and retain high quality bilingual and biliteracy staff. Furthermore, finding qualified staff to teach at the DLI program is challenging since in the state of Virginia, DLI teachers must hold an elementary education license and be a native or near-native speaker of the partner language. Therefore, there is a great need to establish a clear articulated plan to recruit DLI staff and develop an appropriate incentive structure to retain such personnel.

Solution: That APS Human Resources department with the Office of English Learners and APS Dual Immersion schools work together in developing and implementing a plan for recruitment and retention that is aligned with program goals, takes program sustainability and longevity into account, and is systematically coordinated with district-level staff recruitment.

The plan should include partnerships with local universities to create or strengthen teacher workforce pipelines, or to sponsor in-house “grow your own” alternative certification programs targeting paraprofessionals, thus creating a sustained supply of well-prepared teachers.

¹ Kennedy, B. (2013). A qualitative case study of the bilingual teacher shortage in one Texas school district (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3606445)

The plan should also consider exploring the Embassy of Spain teacher visitor program, looking into sponsoring visitor teachers from Spanish-speaking countries through working visas and developing a paraprofessional pathway in which current assistant teachers that are acquiring the experience in our own programs can grow and become classroom teachers.

Tentative timeline:

Fall 2024

- APS enters a Memorandum of Understanding between APS and Participate Learning.
- Under this MOU, Participate recruits, screens, and cultivates a pool of qualified, experienced educators from abroad, and sponsors their J-1 cultural exchange visas.

Spring 2025

- APS pays Participate a fee per teacher hired from their prescreened pool.

Summer 2025

- Once hired, these teachers can remain with APS for a maximum of five years before returning to their country of origin.

Budgetary Implications and/or Implementation Needs: Human resources, DLI and school staff time to explore the needs and options available to address hiring and retention. APS could also hire a specialized company to perform this job (e.g., Global Educational Concepts, <https://gecexchanges.com/teach-usa/>, Cordell Hull Foundation for International Education <https://www.cordell-hull.org/>).

Strategic Plan Alignment: Researching and exploring how to improve hiring and retention practices aligns with APS's strategic plan in the following way:

Core Values: excellence and inclusivity.

Goal: engaged workforce and student success

Strategies:

Engaged Workforce:

- Recruit, retain, and advance high-quality employees. (S-EW-1)

Student Success:

- Deliver curriculum through innovative and relevant instruction that is differentiated to meet the diverse needs of each student. (S-SS-2)

- Provide learning opportunities in a variety of settings, times, and formats that include opportunities for students to align knowledge, skills, and personal interests with career and higher educational opportunities including internships and externships. (S-SS-3)

Committee vote: 7 in favor, 0 opposed

Staff response: The Office of English Learners worked in collaboration with the Dual Language Immersion Sub-Sub Committee to develop the recommendations. Staff are in agreement with this recommendation and are planning to meet with APS Human Resources to collaborate on a plan to recruit bilingual staff.

Additional area of focus for DLI: **APS should establish a plan to monitor Dual Language Immersion student enrollment and attrition**

Background: To ensure we are continually improving the DLI program in APS, it is important to understand the composition of our student body as well as the DLI program attrition. Although APS runs a lottery to accept into the program Spanish speaking students and English speaking students, it is not clear when students register what their language background is.

Need: The DLI program serves Native Spanish speakers, native English-speakers and bilingual children. The needs of the children with this diverse language background differs greatly. The program also serves a wide population of students with different learning needs including children who need special education services and advanced learning opportunities. APS does not have a system in which it can distinguish and account for different students' needs based on language background, nor does it have data reflecting why people decide to leave the program. Anecdotally, students leave because their learning needs are not met at either end of the spectrum and/or because of the distance to attend an immersion school, yet we don't have clear data that can inform the gaps of the program.

Methodology: Potential research questions; methodology for getting more information from the community; what we know now about what APS is doing to address this problem; approach to identifying solutions

Potential Solution:

The Program Evaluation Plan would include data related to student enrollment and attrition. APS, via immersion school registrars and staff, would track student demographic data and performance for the duration of students' enrollment in the program and in APS (should a student transfer out of the DLI program). Student data could be disaggregated by years in the program, home language profile, and, for English learners, by reclassification status. This data should also enable APS to monitor special education (IEPs) and gifted identification outcomes relative to district norms.

Initial Budgetary Implications or Implementation Needs:

Collecting data about enrollment and attrition, including which students leave the program and why, will require a survey instrument that can be easily implemented at the school level.

Committee vote: 7 in favor, 0 opposed

Staff response: The Office of English Learners worked in collaboration with the Dual Language Immersion Sub-Sub Committee to develop the recommendations. Staff are in agreement with this additional area of focus.

Appendix A Committee Members

Chair: Paula Cordero Salas

Vice Chair: Rachel Berkey

Secretary: Lizzette Carrk

Members: Chrissy Bistline-Bonilla
Margot Dickey
Erin Freas-Smith
Beverly Kilmer
Megan Krug
Anjali Martinez
Ivanelisy Mejias
Michelle Rebosio

Staff liaison: Wendy Bermudez, Dual Language Immersion Program Coordinator

Appendix B

Dual Language Immersion Program Framework

Dual Language Immersion Program Framework:

https://www.apsva.us/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/APS-Dual-Language-Immersion-Program-Framework_FINAL.pdf

Appendix C

Research on Benefits to English Learners and achievement gap closure

-Howard, E. R., Lindholm-Leary, K. J., Rogers, D., Olague, N., Medina, J., Kennedy, B., Sugarman, J., & Christian, D. (2018). *Guiding Principles for Dual Language Education* (3rd ed.). Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.

(<https://www.cal.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/GuidingPrinciplesforDualLanguageEducation3rdeditionREV.pdf>)

Examples of research cited in document above:

August, D., McCardle, P., & Shanahan, T. (Eds.). (2014). Developing literacy in English language learners: Findings from a review of the experimental research. *School Psychology Review*, 43(4), 490–498.

August, D., & Shanahan, T. (Eds.). (2006). *Developing literacy in second-language learners: Report of the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Genesee, F., Lindholm-Leary, K. J., Saunders, W., & Christian, D. (2006). *Educating English language learners*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Lindholm-Leary, K., & Genesee, F. (2010). Alternative educational programs for English language learners. In California Department of Education (Eds.), *Improving education for English learners: Research-based approaches* (pp. 323–382). Sacramento: CDE Press

-Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) (2020) [Dual Language Immersion Education: Supporting K-12 Implementation in Virginia](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/32897/638047354329500000) p. 12
(<https://www.doe.virginia.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/32897/638047354329500000>)

Appendix D

Data on APS EL performance in middle school immersion vs non-immersion students

	EL status as of grade 5 in 2016	Non-Immersion		Dual Language Immersion # Students		Difference from non DLI
		# Students	Proficient or Advanced	# Students	Proficient or Advanced	
Reading Grade 5	Non-EL	1224	94%	116	97%	+3%
	EL	374	73%	55	67%	-6%
Reading Grade 8	Non-EL	1102	92%	109	96%	+4%
	EL	338	64%	49	76%	+12%

By 8th grade EL students in the APS Dual Language Immersion program perform better than their EL peers in non-DLI program. This data reflects outcome with the partial immersion program. The Full immersion program (80/20) which is rolling out will help to close the achievement gap sooner and for that reading specialists are key for the successful implementation of the program.

Source:

[https://go.boarddocs.com/vsba/arlington/Board.nsf/files/CAUTS978BB24/\\$file/H-1%20DLI%20Visioning%20Process-%20Presentation%20455.pdf](https://go.boarddocs.com/vsba/arlington/Board.nsf/files/CAUTS978BB24/$file/H-1%20DLI%20Visioning%20Process-%20Presentation%20455.pdf)