

The Two Way Language Immersion Program at Southwest

Our program is based upon research showing that students are not only capable of learning in two languages at once, but actually excel under these conditions. The program is known as “two-way” or “dual language” because some students are learning English for the first time, while others are learning Spanish. It is called “immersion” because during a portion of each day students are completely immersed in the target language of that time. In other words, during Spanish time, all teaching and learning happens only in Spanish, and during English time, only in English.

In our program, about half of the students speak English at home, and half speak Spanish. For students who enter school speaking a language other than English, two-way immersion programs have been shown to be the most effective way to promote growth in both English and other academic areas. For students who are English-dominant, the program provides enrichment by producing bilingualism and biliteracy without subtracting anything from the regular curriculum. Research shows that when programs are fully implemented, over time students score as well as or better than their peers in other programs on English tests.

Enrollment in this program is by choice. Interested parents fill out the application form in the kindergarten registration packet, and a lottery is used to select students in mid-July.

Our program uses a 90:10 Spanish language immersion model. This means that beginning in kindergarten, students will be immersed for 90% of the day in Spanish, and 10% in English. The percentage of Spanish used in the classroom decreases in each grade level, eventually becoming 50%/50% in fourth grade. The 90:10 model has been shown to create higher levels of bilingualism.

Children at Southwest who are not selected in the program lottery still have opportunities to learn about Spanish language and Spanish-speaking cultures through schoolwide cultural events and special Spanish classes, taught by our dual-language teachers. We also invite all our parents to participate in our PAL program, that pairs English-speaking and Spanish-speaking adults so that both can learn from each other.

For specific research studies visit the Center for Applied Linguistics FAQs at <http://www.cal.org/twi/>. To learn more about our program, contact Laurel Stolte, Program Coordinator, at laurel.stolte@dpsnc.net or 919-560-3972.



Program Goals

Upon completion of our program, our students will demonstrate....

High Academic Achievement

Mastery of grade-level standards in all academic areas

Bilingualism and Biliteracy

Proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing in both Spanish and English

Cross-Cultural Thoughtfulness

Respect and appreciation of the diversity of other people and their cultures, as well as their own

Cooperative Problem-Solving

Effective participation and leadership within a diverse group