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The Impact of Dual Language Programs in Elementary Schools

An Honors College Project Presented to
the Faculty of the Undergraduate
College of Education
James Madison University

In partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Bachelors of Science

by Melanie Rose Callihan
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Accepted by the faculty of the College of Education, James Madison University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Honors College.

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Abstract

The presence of dual language programs in Elementary schools is becoming increasingly popular across the United States. The purpose of this project was to evaluate the intent of such programs, the successful implementation of the programs, and the outcomes these programs produce. This was done through a literature review and research. The research was done on the current Dual Language Program that has been implemented in the Harrisonburg City Public schools. This study found that typically these programs are implemented to support populations of students in schools who are English language learners. In order to implement such a program there needs to be buy in from the school administration, staff, and the community at large. These programs have seen high academic results, often on par with or above those of students in a traditional classroom. Thus they have a positive impact on the community, the school, the English language learners, and the students in the program that speak English who are learning the target language.

Introduction

Language immersion programs have steadily been becoming more prevalent in elementary schools across the United States (Lachance, 2017). In the 2008 to 2009 school year about a quarter of all US elementary schools offered instruction in a world language. Yet, ten years earlier almost a third of elementary schools offered a language other than English to its students (Elementary World, 2008). The decline has been to be due to monetary and budgeting conflicts and finding qualified educators to teach in the second language. In recent studies there have been both cognitive benefits and academic gains from students that start a language immersion program in an early grade. (Elementary World, 2008). With this new research these sorts of program are slowly coming back into elementary schools. In Virginia alone there are a

number of counties who have implemented a language immersion program. The purpose of this project is to evaluate the importance of language immersion programs in elementary schools, the benefits and academic achievements, and how the schools are building valuable and effective programs.

Literature Review

Teaching Foreign Language in Schools

The question of why and when to teach language in schools has been circulating since the early 1900's. Originally the main languages taught to students in school were Greek and Latin. Modern languages slowly began to make their way into instruction at universities, with Greek and Latin falling behind. Language instruction soon gained a strong foothold with languages such as German, French, Spanish, and Portuguese becoming increasingly popular. In 1947 and 1948 the United States reached a peak in language instruction. A survey was sent out in the District of Colombia in 1952 gauging the public's interest in language being taught to their children in schools. The survey received 22,628 requests in favor of teaching their children a language. There had been a stigma for a long time that there was no need for language instruction in such young grades (Cioffari, 1954). The Xenophobia that came along with World War I only increased this stigma. The teaching of foreign languages in elementary schools in a number of states was outlawed and it was made clear that the United States had one and only one official language (Brown, 1994). Yet, the results of this DC survey, an increase in troops being deployed, and new realizations that foreign language study was typically begun after the optimum age, since traditionally it was begun in high school, said differently. As World War II began, Americans unable to communicate in a language other than English found themselves at a great disadvantage (Brown, 1994). With these revelations it was apparent that there were benefits

to beginning language instruction at the elementary level. Success there will lead to increased enrollment in language study at all grade levels (Cioffari, 1954).

The importance of starting language education in elementary schools has been known for a long time; and the United States was not the first to catch on. In the 1990's less than twenty five percent of children had the opportunity to study another language in elementary schools. Even then, twice as many private school students than public school students studied a language (Brown, 1994). In 1987 Connecticut conducted a study and discovered that students who began language study before the fourth grade did significantly better in the critical areas of speaking, listening, reading, and writing than those who began instruction in the seventh grade or later. During this time national, state, and local standards were beginning to be developed for language programs in elementary schools. There was a boom in language instruction programs in the 1960's and then after that a steady decline. Programs were frequently unable to be effectively assessed and there was little national funding. Then there became a renewed interest in the early 1980s. Today there are a number of different types of language immersion programs in elementary schools in the United States (Brown, 1994).

Language Immersion Programs

Immersion simply means a program in which the usual curriculum activities are conducted in a second language which is the medium of instruction rather than the object of instruction. These sorts of programs can be implemented at any age. Children pick up languages with an ease that adults do not. With this information elementary schools have started implementing language immersion programs in early grades, often Kindergarten (Anderson & Rhodes 1983). Districts and individual schools have typically adopted an immersion program for one of three main reasons. The first is as linguistic, cultural, and general educational enrichment;

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the second is as magnet schools to bring about a more balanced ratio of ethnolinguistic groups, and finally as a means of achieving some degree of two-way bilingualism in communities with large populations of non-English speaking residents. These programs aim to develop full bilingual proficiency. The programs in the United States were originally modeled off of the French language immersion programs in Canada that first began in 1965. Where by 1983, they were implemented in every province and territory (Genesse, 1985).

There are two main types of immersion programs: full and partial. In a full language immersion program the second language is used to teach during the entire school day during the first two or three years of the program. After a few years English is slowly introduced into the curriculum, until by the sixth or seventh year in the program students will be instructed in English about half the day. In a partial immersion program the second language is used to teach for only part of the day. Typically students receive instruction in English and instruction in the second language for half of the day each. The second language could also be used to teach for less than half the day. It varies depending on the program the school has utilized, but typically the basic concept and methodology remain the same. While students are being instructed in the second language that is the absolute only language that they will hear from the teacher. All conversation and instruction is done in that second language. Students in these programs begin by answering the teacher in English, yet as they continue in the program and their language skills begin to evolve they are to begin responding and speaking in the second language. Typically students are comfortable in these programs as they are leaning about topics they understand and would be learning about anyway. The curriculum is essentially the same in an immersion program as it would be in a school without such a program. Students have reading, social studies, science, language arts, mathematics, and electives such as art and physical education. The goal is

that by the end of these programs students will have completed the regular elementary curriculum and also have sufficient language skills to be able to take a subject content class in either language, English or the second language learned in the immersion program (Anderson & Rhodes, 1983). Content is never repeated or translated throughout the day, this ensures that the amount of content being studied does not decrease (DeJesús, 2008).

These programs have also experienced a degree of high parent involvement. Research conducted on programs in Milwaukee, San Diego, and Cincinnati showed that children of all kinds are enrolling in immersion programs. Only a very small percentage of the students in the programs came from a bilingual household. The diverse students in these programs are the results of involved parents who are interested in this method of education for their children. These programs are drawing children from multiple racial and ethnicity groups, geographical sectors, and socioeconomic groups (Anderson & Rhodes, 1983).

Academic Achievement

The achievement results of dual language programs have been evaluated by over twenty five years of data in multiple longitudinal studies (DeJesús, 2008). It has been shown that these sorts of programs can indeed close the achievement gap among students, increasing academic performance among majority and minority language students. Immersion programs produce extremely high levels of foreign language proficiency. Early language instruction has also been shown to benefit students cognitively and academically.

Students at a young age are developmentally more receptive to learning a second language. While learning a second language students tend to become more cognitively aware of language and speech patterns and rules. In studying a foreign language, students develop new perspectives and understanding about the vocabulary and structure in their own language

(Stewart, 2005). They are constantly comparing new words and vocabulary structures to those of their native language, forcing them to think about why certain structures work the way that they do.

One study looked at the relationship between elementary foreign language instruction and scores on tests designed to measure cognitive and metacognitive processes. It included 67 sixth graders, divided into four groups. These groups differed in length of time that they had been in the foreign language program and one control group who had no instruction in the second language. The analysis found that students who had been a part of the language program scored high on tasks involving evaluation, the highest cognitive skill according to Bloom's taxonomy. The students who had studied the second language the longest performed highest (Elementary World, 2014).

In a second study, third grade students were randomly assigned to receive thirty minutes of Spanish instruction three times a week for one semester. Students in these courses scored significantly higher than the group that did not receive their mathematics instruction in Spanish. In a third study, a state wide study in Louisiana, third, fourth, and fifth grade students who participated in thirty minutes of foreign language study a day received significantly higher scores on the Basic Skills Language Arts Test. By fifth grade, the students receiving this instruction also had much higher scores in mathematics (Elementary World, 2014).

These studies show that students who begin to learn another language in childhood score better on measures of cognitive functioning than do their monolingual peers. Students in these programs are also on par with or outperforming their peers on standardized achievement tests (Met, 1991). In a full language immersion program, by the end of grade four students are performing equivalently with their non-immersion peers in English Language skills. By the end

of fifth grade, students in the program are often outperforming those not in it on reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge. Compared with students who have had a traditional program in the second language, students in the immersion program consistently outperform the others in second language skills and proficiency. On standardized tests in English, science, social studies, and mathematics the immersion students who had been taught that content in the second language perform just as well as the students who were taught the content in English (Anderson & Rhodes, 1983).

Multiple studies of language immersion programs have shown that students have had no trouble assimilating new academic knowledge even if they were taught it in a second language. Scores in mathematics in particular have been significantly higher among students in a language program. Students have also been evaluated to have attained functional proficiency in their native language and the second language that they are being instructed in. Their second language reading skills vary from one year below grade level to above average or grade level. Variations in students grade level, ability, socioeconomic status, and other factors may account for these differences (Genesee 1985).

In a study done in elementary schools in the Chicago area, similar results were seen. Researchers studied the results of a two national standardized tests in reading and mathematics. Results were looked at from students in third, fourth, and fifth grade among students who were in the dual language program and those who were not. Majority language students, those who speak English natively, in the program scored significantly higher on both tests than majority language students who were not in the program (Marian, Shook, Schroeder, 2013). Similar results were also seen for minority language students, those who natively speak Spanish, when compared to their Spanish speaking peers who were not a part of the program. They typically performed on

par, or above, their counterparts (Marian, Shook, Schroeder, 2013). Charts from the study can be found in Appendix E.

These programs must go one for four or more years in order for schools to start seeing results, since testing years are typically not until the third grade (DeJesús, 2008). By collecting data over the years, administrators can begin to see student's achievement as they are developing academic levels in the second language. By the third grade, or later, is typically when one will see students' in a dual language program begin to match or outperform their peers who are not a part of the program (DeJesús, 2008). In younger grades students will typically show similar achievement results, but studies have shown that by the sixth grade students in a language program are outperforming their peers who are not (Stewart, 2005).

Putting students in a dual language program also creates students who are high-order thinkers. Part of this is because in order for one to learn a second language, the student must employ incredible mental forces and constant concentration. They use what little words they hear or understand to begin to infer the meaning and context of every phrase. Whereas when they are learning in their native language, they can employ very little concentration and still understand. This level of concentration forces students into a heightened intellectual state, using constant attentiveness and inferencing (DeJesús, 2008).

Introducing a foreign language at such a young age has also been seen to help students develop an understanding of cultural awareness and other cultural perspectives (Stewart, 2005).

Cultural Competence and Awareness

Studies have also shown that on top of academic achievement, dual language programs also develops cross cultural understanding and appreciation among students (Billings, Martin-Beltran, & Hernandez, 2010). In our increasingly global world, it is important for students to be

able to understand and interact with people from different cultures and backgrounds than themselves. Dual language programs have shown that they can create this sort of understanding among students, as they are interacting and learning from students and teachers who are not from their own background (Barnett, Yrosz, Thomas, Jung, & Blanco, 2007). These programs have the potential to create citizens who are able to have successful global interactions in culture, politics, and economics (Barnett & et al, 2007).

Dual Language as an English Language Learner Program

Teaching English Language Learners has always been a challenge in most states, as having ELL students changes the classroom composition, but it has been even more so a challenge since the number of immigrant students in the United States has tripled since 1970 (Pena & Maxwell, 2015). The vast majority of ELL students currently are from Hispanic homes (Barnett, Yarosz, Thomas, Jung, & Blanco, 2007). The majority of ELL students currently receive instruction in English-only programs (Billings, Marin-Bertrand, & Hernandez, 2010). Yet, dual language programs have been shown to close the achievement gap between native speakers of English and students who are English language learners (ELL's) that is why in recent years it has become a popular approach to educating ELL students (DeJesús, 2008).

Often ELL students are given extra support through a pull out method. They are pulled from class, at different times throughout the day, to work one on one or in small groups with a specialist. A study was done with teachers across the United States who teach students who are English Language Learners. In this study more than twenty percent of the teachers rated insignificant time as one of the difficulties of teaching ELL students (Gandara, Maxwelll-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005). This was because their students spent so much time out of the classroom in

pull-out programs that it was impacting their classroom time. Whereas in a dual program, the need for students to be pulled out all day long is greatly diminished, if not eliminated altogether.

When students are pulled out they focus on areas they are struggling in, this could be extra support in math or extra language support. For ELL students who are in a dual language program they are able to get this extra support without having to be pulled from instructional time (Wilson, 2011). This is because schools are able to address the literacy needs of English learners within the classroom, as they are receiving instruction in their native language and in English. Teaching in their native language validates and supports their first language, which not only helps increase academic achievement, but makes students feel more comfortable in the classroom (Pena & Maxwell, 2015).

Typically when these programs are used as a support for ELL students, the cohorts are made up of half students who are native English speakers and half of students who are native in the second language used for instruction (Wilson, 2011). This is incredibly important because not only are the students learning from their teachers, they are also learning from their peers (Bilings, Martin-Beltran, & Hernandez, 2010). In the portion of the day that students are being taught in English, students who are native English speakers are modeling for their counterparts. On the other hand, during the part of the day that is not taught in English, the other half of the cohort is modeling the second language for the English speaking students.

When children learn their native language they are not learning it initially in a classroom setting, through grammar structures and vocabulary instructions. They are learning it in their daily lives. Language is learned through observation, mimicking, interactions, communication, play, and other such instances. Putting ELL students in a dual language program gives them a greater opportunity to learn English in a more natural setting. They learn English from their

teacher, the students around them, and other interactions throughout the day. Yet they also have the opportunity throughout the day to learn content in their native language.

In programs where ELL students are in an English-only program, the importance of their native language is being diminished, making the program much less effective (Pena & Maxwell, 2015). Since students are being supported throughout the day in both languages in a dual program, studies have shown these programs begin to close the achievement gap between ELL students and native speakers of English (Billings, Martin-Beltran, & Hernandez, 2010). A recent study showed that proficiency in student's native language, strengthens second language acquisition (Barnett, Yarosz, Thomas, Jung, & Blanco, 2007).

The study was done a group of preschoolers who were randomly assigned to be a part of a dual language program, where students were being instructed in Spanish and English. In 2007, Hispanic children accounted for twenty percent of all children ages five and under, thirty percent of Head Start programs, and twenty-five percent of all preschool children (Barnett & et al, 2007). By continuing student's Spanish instruction and gaining first language proficiency, it strengthened second language acquisition.

Dual language programs have been effective for instructing English Language Learners. The programs support student's native language development without sacrificing gains in their English language development (Barnett & et al, 2007).

Programs in Areas with Low Diversity

Yet, since studies have shown that students are not only learning from the teacher, but also from each other, the question remains whether or not a program like this can be successfully implemented in an area with low diversity (Wilson, 2011). If there are not enough students who speak the second language being taught in, I wonder if it is still possible for the program to still

be successfully implemented. The question also remains whether or not the program will still produce high achievement results. The purpose of the program would no longer be to support English Language Learners, its main goal would be to produce bilingual and biliterate students.

Implementation

In order for a program like this to become successful, the way that it is implemented and retained is incredibly important. One of the most important facts in getting a program like this started is having a principal heading the program who is highly committed (Alanis & Rodriguez, 2008). The principal needs to foster an attitude of high academic expectations and a proactive school climate before it is even implemented (Alanis & Rodriguez, 2008). They also need to identify barriers that could potentially hinder the success of the program, so there is a plan in place to address those barriers (Michael, 2015).

In order to address certain barriers that may come up, it is important for central office, the administration, and other stakeholders in the program to come up with a vision and set of goals to guide the implementation of the program and instruction within the program. In order to reinforce those goals and mission, it is essential to have strong leaders who are well-informed and proactive (Michael, 2015). It is also important to view the program as an enrichment program, something that is beneficial for the school and for the students, since the program is creating a group of students who will become bilingual and biliterate (Murphy, 2016).

Another factor that is incredibly instrumental in a successful implementation of a dual language program is parent and community involvement. Teachers, parents, and the community will have a strong voice in the implementation of the program (Alanis & Rodriguez, 2008). They will help create a vision statement and set goals for the program, a lot of these programs begin because it was something parents in the community pushed for. They have a favorable attitude

toward bilingualism and language minority students and want to aid in creating a clear mission and be highly involved (Michael, 2015).

Administration and Educators

The administration and principals are two key parts to implementing and retaining a dual language program and there are certain things that each can do to help ensure that the program is successful. Without support from the administration and teachers in the school to implement a program like this, it will not be successful. Starting a program like this is a collaborative effort (Westerberg & Davison, 2016).

There was research done in 2012 that the administration of dual language programs need to have a certain specialized skill set. They found that there are five main goals administration needs to be able to carry out in order to carry out a program such as this. Before the program is implemented they need to be able to articulate the vision of the program and gain commitment from all stakeholders. They also need to be able to cope with resistance, since implementing a program like this is such a large change. Two more things the study found was that the administration needs to be able to work with the media and find ways to enhance the schools image through the program. Finally they need to be able to use the political process to support the budget and the needs of the program (Monroy, 2012).

The principal also needs to be highly knowledgeable about program. That way they are able to clearly articulate the goals of the program to teachers and the community. Although they not only need to be knowledgeable about their own program, but also current research and theory on immersion education and first and second language acquisition (Romero-Johnson, 2011). This will allow the administration to build a network to support the academic, social, and political mission of the school and the program (Monroy, 2012).

Something else that is necessary for the administration to be well versed in doing is being able to recognize diversity and meet the needs of diverse learners. In order to do this they must create a school climate that is proactive and expect high academic achievement from all students (Romero-Johnson, 2011). In order to mold an inclusive school culture and promote inclusive teaching practices and learning, administration needs to build meaningful connections between the school and the community (Monroy, 2012).

It was also studied whether or not it was necessary for the principal to be fluent in the second language being taught in that is not English. Studies have found that it is not necessary for the principal to be proficient, in fact in most dual language programs the principal is not proficient in the target language (Romero-Johnson, 2011). It is seen as an asset though. If the principal is proficient in the target language that allows them to give the teachers of the second language greater instructional leadership and makes the teacher evaluations easier and more meaningful.

Another set of people, in addition to administration, who are instrumental to the successful implementation and retainment of a dual enrollment program in an elementary school is the teachers. The teachers must also be committed to the goals and mission of the program, just as the administration and the community. That means that they must be dedicated to the goal of bilingualism and biliteracy for their students (Romero-Johnson, 2011). In order to be dedicated to this goal, it is essential that teachers are well-versed in multi-cultural education and sensitive to the needs of the minority student population.

It is also important for teachers to be able to collaborate in order to be an educator in a dual language program. They are working closely with at least one other teacher, since the Spanish and English teacher will be educating the same students throughout the day. This means

that they are sharing planning, instruction, and parent communication (Westerberg & Davison, 2016). They are also collaborating with the rest of the team on their grade level, the administration, and the community to ensure that everyone is on the same page concerning the goals of the program (Romero-Johnson, 2011).

On top of collaborating with others to ensure the goals of the program are being met, teachers must continue to develop their own dual language practices (Romero-Johnson, 2011). This includes learning from other teachers around them and potentially visiting other schools to observe their dual language educators. It also involves staying up to date on current research and theory in dual language immersion education (Romero-Johnson, 2011).

The teacher who is teaching in the second language, the target language, which is not English must also be proficient in that language. They do not need to be native speakers of the language, but they must be certified as proficient in the language (Walker and Tedick, 2000). This means that they need to understand both the social and academic aspects of the language. In order to understand that they must be familiar with the host countries educational practices and cultural priorities (Westerberg & Davison, 2016). This will help them have an understanding of the second language acquisition principles (Lachance, 2017).

It is also important for teachers to only speak in the language that they are teaching in, whether that is English or the target language (Li, Steele, Slater, Bacon, Miller, & RAND, 2016). When students are first starting out in the program it can be confusing and frustrating for them, which makes the teacher want to say whatever concept they are teaching in both languages to ensure that the students understand. It is essential that the teacher only speak in the language they are instructing in, the students will eventually begin to understand. This also makes it difficult for teachers to find a balance between teaching language and content. They must determine what

the students know, have already learned, and can do with the curriculum in the target language (Walker and Tedick, 2016).

There is currently a shortage of dual language teachers (Lachance, 2017). This is because there are no professional programs currently that exist for immersion teachers (Walker and Tedick, 2016). This makes it increasingly difficult to schools to find teachers who are qualified and who have the language skills to teach in a dual language immersion classroom. Yet teachers are essential to successfully implementing and continuing such a program (Monroy, 2012).

Research

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to gage why Harrisonburg City Public Schools initiated a dual language immersion program across the city. The research done evaluated what aspects of the program have been effective and what kinds of results the schools are seeing from the program. The research gathered was then evaluated to see if it aligned with the findings of the literature review.

Main Research Questions

1. What is the purpose of implementing a language immersion program in Harrisonburg City Schools?
2. What results and outcomes are the schools seeing from their evaluation of the program?

Methodology

A survey was conducted to gather information on language immersion programs in Virginia elementary schools. While this type of research has been done before, I wanted to see how the programs in Virginia relate to the research and literature that has already been done on

dual language programs. Also, I wanted to evaluate what kind of results these programs are seeing, if they are successful and if they are, what proponents of the program are contributing to this. There are five schools in Harrisonburg Virginia who currently have a Spanish language immersion program, it is district wide. The grades that Spanish is being taught in varies from school to school. I interviewed the principal, or vice principal, in four of these schools to gather information on their language programs. An email was first sent to the principals of these schools explain what the survey is and the purpose to see if they, or potentially the vice principal, had any intent of participating in an interview. If they agreed to an interview a list of the questions was then emailed to them and a date to do the interview was decided on together.

Other than these six schools, there are at least twenty three other schools in Virginia that have implemented a language immersion program. As these schools are too far to travel to in order to conduct an interview, a survey was sent out instead. An email was sent to principals, vice principals, or teachers in these schools which contains an overview of the study and its purpose and the exact same questions that will be asked in the interviews. Participation in the survey is completely optional. Any information gathered was to be utilized.

Potential benefits to participating in this study would be an increased knowledge of the public on the purpose and importance of language immersion program. Information discovered through this study can also benefit the area of research as a whole. The purpose and benefits of language immersion programs will be better understood and the results found in this survey could be used to improve other immersion programs.

This study collected qualitative data which was analyzed using the constant comparison method. The results of this research are be incorporated into this thesis on language immersion

programs and was shared at the honors symposium at James Madison University in the spring of 2018.

Results

Participants

The participants of this study were four principals and one vice principal in the Harrisonburg City public school system. All participant and school names have been given pseudonyms to contain confidentiality.

Interview Overview

Each of the participants were asked a series of questions, contained in appendix A, to gain information about the language immersion program in their specific school. Their responses were recorded and then analyzed.

Data Process

There were no responses to the survey sent out. The responses and information from the interviews was analyzed to look for common themes that related to the research questions.

Findings and Discussion

Harrisonburg City Schools are made up of a diverse range of students. In each of the four schools studied, as shown in the chart below, over fifty percent of the students come from a diverse background. The majority of those students of a diverse background being Hispanic. The schools each also had a number of students, three percent or more from some other background that was not Caucasian, Hispanic, or African American.

A number of students in the area also come from poverty. Thirty seven percent, or higher, of students are part of, eligible for, the free and reduced lunch program, also known as the National School Lunch Program. This program allows schools to get subsidies and donated

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commodities from the U.S. Department of Agriculture for each meal they serve. It means though that is the school participates they must follow a National nutrition guidelines and offer free or reduced-price lunches to children who are eligible. Students are determined to be eligible not based on household income criteria (Virginia Department of Education, 2018).

	School A	School B	School C	School D
Total Enrollment	455	371	780	499
School Breakdown by Ethnicity	White: 30.5% Hispanic: 58.7% Asian: 1% African American: 7.5% Other: 2.6%	White: 42.6% Hispanic: 41.8% Asian: 2.7% African American: 8.9% Other: 3.8%	White: 27.4% Hispanic: 55.9% Asian: 2.6% African American: 8.6% Other: 5.5%	White: 37.1% Hispanic: 51% Asian: 1% African American: 6.2% Other: 5%
Percent of English Language Learners	60%	41%	37%	49%
Percent of students in free and reduced lunch program	62%	37%	46%	43%

Statistics from the Virginia Department of Education

Harrisonburg City Schools first implemented the program in 2009 and the first cohort is now in the seventh grade. Appendix C shows a brief history of the program in Harrisonburg. The chart below shows which grades each of the four schools currently hold the program in, since

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they each started the program in a different year. Appendix B also briefly gives a curriculum articulation plan, showing what subjects are taught in English for each grade and which are taught in Spanish.

	School A	School B	School C	School D
Year language immersion program started in the school	2016	2017	2009	2014
Grades language immersion program is currently implemented in	Kindergarten 1 st	Kindergarten	Kindergarten 1 st 2 nd 3 rd 4 th 5 th	Kindergarten 1 st 2 nd 3 rd

Statistics and data collected from interviews

The way the program works is that there is a lottery system for parents to enroll their child in the program. They fill out an application, then all of the names are entered into a computer system which randomly generates a list of names. The principals at each school then call the families to inform them that they are in the program. Once the program totals out the rest of the families are called to be informed that they are on the waitlist. Also, if a student in the program has siblings, their siblings are automatically enrolled into the program once they start kindergarten.

The program is made up of cohorts of students, typically they are no larger than twenty-one students. Half of the students in the cohort are English speakers and the other half of the

students are Spanish speakers. Currently there are no more than two cohorts in any grade level at any of the schools. The students then move with their cohort from grade level to grade level. They do try and mix up the students from year to year though, so that if there are forty-two in the program split up by twenty students in each class, meaning twenty-one start their day with the Spanish teacher while the other twenty-one students start their day with the English teacher, they may mix them up so that not all of those same twenty-one students are in the same class the next year.

Each of the four principals were asked a series of questions to gauge how their program is organized, evaluated, and what benefits they are seeing from the program. Five common themes emulated from the interviews.

The first theme that emerged was that one of the biggest pushes to start the program and get it in all of the Harrisonburg Schools was the families of the students and the community. Harrisonburg is a community with an immense amount of Spanish speaking families, so when this program was first introduced they were quick to encourage it and push it. One principal stated that they wanted to start the program earlier at their school, but were having trouble finding a dual language teacher. Yet, since the community was pushing for the program in more of the schools they brought over a teacher from another school to get it started. One principal stated:

Like I said it's a really exciting program and I think parents, once they got the first program started at [the first school], I think parents were the ones that really kind of pushed it, wanting it in all of the elementary schools. So right now it's in all of them except for [one]...and parents are offered the opportunity to be placed in a lottery at another school.

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Another theme that emerged was that all the principals agreed that the program was begun as a support for their English Language Learner (ELL) population. While the program benefits both the English speaking students and the Spanish speaking students, the Spanish students are benefitting the most from the program. This is because research shows that if students build their language skills in their primary language, the second language will follow. Meaning that building the ELL student's social and academic language through the dual language program, thus makes their English acquisition stronger. So in the younger grades, Kindergarten, first, and second, students are getting literacy instruction in Spanish. Most of the principals commented on this:

What they found in the research [they] had done on this program, which the reason we started it was to support our English Language Learners, especially native Spanish speakers, that is they can build their literacy skills in their native language first than that transfer happens a little bit easier.

The thing I like the most about the dual language program is I believe it's really for our English Language Learners, because if you look at the research so much of it shows that their trajectory if they are in a dual language program is just so much greater academically, the language that they are going to build. So, to me it's supporting our English language learners and then it's just got that extra added benefit that some of our English speakers then also get to become bilingual.

It was for English Language Learners because the research shows if you are literate in your first language the second language comes very quickly and we've seen that with

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numerous kids here of different cultures. Our Arabic students if they're literate in that first language, that second language comes very quickly.

I hate making blanket statements because every child is different, but it was originally intended for our ESL students and for our Hispanic students but the growth of both our English and Spanish students is a very positive thing.

A third theme that emerged was that students will struggle in the program at the beginning, especially English speaking students. They will be confused and exhausted because they are spending half of their day hearing and trying to comprehend and decode a completely foreign language. This can make parents want to pull their children out of the program early. So, when parents fill out an application for enroll their children into the program the administration emphasizes that the families are making a commitment to sticking out the program and not pulling their children out of it or moving away from the district if they do not have to. If parents do express that they want to pull their child out of the program because their child is struggling, the administration will look at the circumstances, but they will encourage them to push through. A lot of the principals commented on this:

We also have a lot of parents after the kindergarten and first grade year try to [pull them out of the program], because it is a struggle. But we encourage them that the struggle is a good thing and we've seen that by third and fourth grade they're really bridging between the two languages. We encourage them to persevere through it and most of them do. But it is hard.

So it starts out rocky sometimes and that will stress parents out, the English speaking families will be like my child's not learning and were like just the let program do its thing and you'll find that they'll be strong in both. So most kids end up above grade level by the time that...it levels out like third or fourth grade.

I tell them your children may be coming home in tears, your kids may be tired. So the parents that have had kids in the program they say oh yeah this is normal, parents have to be willing to work through that and that is why I say that it is a family commitment.

Something else that came up a few times in the interviews was that the principals believed the program was creating a more culturally aware and culturally sensitive environment within the school. Since Harrisonburg is such a diverse area most students are already used to being around different languages and cultures. Yet, this program brought that into the school and made it a norm for the student's peers to potentially be speaking in a different language that was not English. There were a few comments about this in the interviews:

I think that they're such a diverse group of kids that [mixed cultures is] their normal.

That's one thing I truly love about Harrisonburg City Schools is that it's truly a representation of what our world looks like. So there is truly that respect for each other because that is who you are, that's one thing I really like about it.

I think it creates more of a culturally sensitive environment. You know were trying to incorporate more Spanish throughout the school, not only Spanish but other languages as well. So that students are seeing all of the different languages up. So that just makes a

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really inviting environment for everyone. I think it's been great too because, I think for some of our younger students in the program, they realize how difficult it is to learn a second language. That was kind of the case when we had a Spanish class, it was nice because for some of our students, who are only English speakers they, realized how hard it is to learn another language. Like what their peers sitting next to them are going through all day long, so I think that's been another added bonus.

It's also helped with just school community because everybody is more aware of different cultures and everyone it's not different to be speaking Spanish and it just kind of build the diversity and everyone getting along.

A final common theme that came up in the interviews, which could potentially be seen as something about the program that is not necessarily positive, is the amount of time that the cohorts of students are spending together. They essentially are spending all day long in school together from kindergarten through the twelfth grade. While this can be positive, since it creates a community among the students, it can also potentially be negative. A few all of the principals said something about this in their interview:

Well right now it's kindergarten through seventh, but when they get into twelfth grade they would've been with the same...so I think that can be good and maybe bad. Because it's just like you know with your family, because that's really what they're becoming, like a family and your family can be great and other times you can really not get along with your family. So I think it kind of creates that situation.

The kids spend a lot of time together and as with some children the more time together is not necessarily a good thing so we try to split that up in the sense once we see that some kids may not be working as well together as they do other years.

I can't say that I see anything not being effective, I think one of the, and I'm not going to say it's a downfall, but it is definitely as I stated in the beginning the kids are together a lot. So we encourage parents to when they're outside of school don't have them on the same soccer team, don't have them, because they are together a lot. And I mean a majority of the kids get a long and everything's great, but sometimes it is like anything else too much of a good thing.

Conclusion

The results of this study confirmed that the dual language immersion program model is one of the best out there to education English Language Learners. It strengthens their language skills and proficiency in their first language, which then transfers over for second language acquisition. The program has been highly effective and highly supported by the community in the Harrisonburg City school system.

While I was not given any specific testing data, the administrators that participated in the interviews stated that their students in the dual program are passing or pass-advancing on the SOL tests. Students are also fully speaking in Spanish and English typically by the third grade, but definitely by fourth and fifth grade. By thinking about two languages all day long, students are also building their cognitive skills.

Overall this program is seen as an asset to both the Spanish speaking students and the English speaking students. They are creating a whole cohort of students who are becoming

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bilingual and biliterate. This is creating culturally aware students and will allow them to communicate with more people in their future.

Appendix

Appendix A

List of Survey and Interview Questions:

1. What is the name of the institution?
2. What is the grade range in this school?
3. How many students attend this school?
4. What is the ethnical breakup of the student population in this school?
5. How many different languages are spoken among the students in this school?
6. What percentage of students are part of a free or reduced lunch program?
7. What percentage of students live below the poverty line?
8. What kind of language immersion program does this school use?
 - a. Full, partial, dual, FLEX, etc
9. In what year did this program first begin?
10. What second language is being taught?
11. How many students are part of this language immersion program?
12. What kind of funding do you have for the program?
13. How large is your budget for the program?
14. What grades are used in the language program?
15. Why did this school incorporate a language program?
16. What short term and long term goals do you have for the program?
17. What benefits did this school see to having a language program?
18. What hardships have you experienced with this program?
19. How is the program taught?
 - a. In what subjects do the students receive education in English vs the second language being used?
 - b. How many hours a week are students receiving instruction in the second language? Are they receiving it every day?
20. What percentage of students in the program were already proficient in both of the languages being taught before starting?
21. What kinds of differences are seen in test scores and evaluations among students who are part of the program versus students who are not?
 - a. Which subjects are showing the most discrepancies?
22. How is the effectiveness of the language immersion program being evaluated?
 - a. What has been effective?
 - b. What has not been effective?
 - c. What would you like to change?

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Appendix B

Harrisonburg City Dual Language K-12 Curriculum Articulation Plan (revised September 2016)

	K-2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9-12
ENG	-Integrated Language Arts (Int. LA) -Math	-Int. LA -Calendar Math -Science	-Int. LA -Math	-Int. LA -Calendar Math -Science	-Language Arts -Math	-Language Arts -Social Studies -Science	-Language Arts -Math	At least 2 (out of 8) courses in Spanish each year
SPAN	-Integrated Language Arts -Calendar Math	-Int. LA -Math -Social Studies	-Int. LA -Science -Virginia Studies	-Int. LA -Math -Social Studies	-Language Arts -Social Studies -Science	-Language Arts -Math	-Language Arts -Social Studies -Science	
Bridging built in regularly between languages								

(Garcia, A. & Carnock, J., 2016)

Appendix C

Brief History of HCPS Dual Language (adapted to conceal confidentiality)

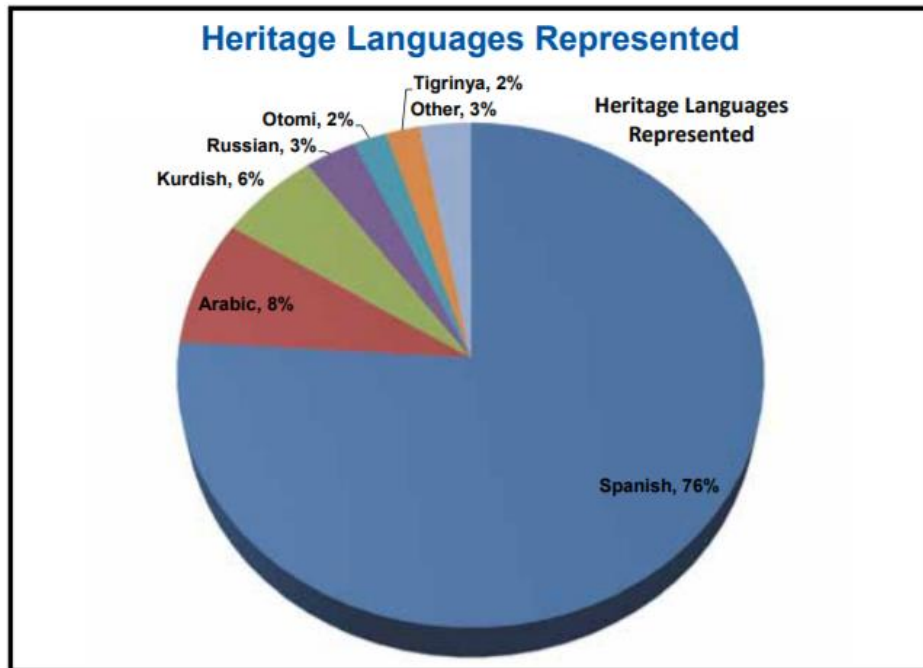
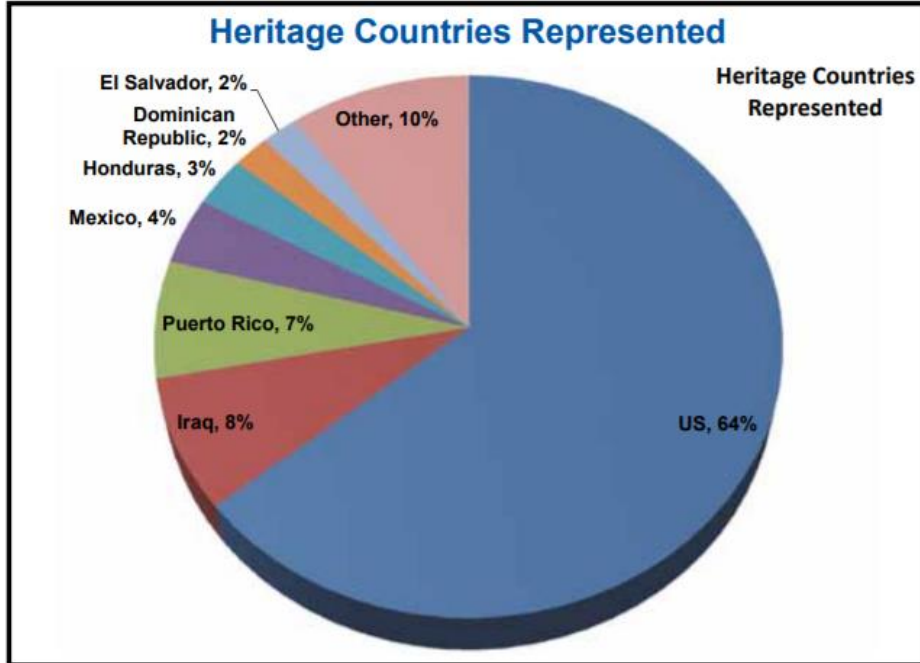
Date	Event	Number of Students Division Wide
August 2010	First program opens	40
August 2013	Second program in launched	200
August 2014	Third program is launched	320
September 2014	Team identifies top priorities for being similar across the division	
January 2015	Team identifies “hopes for Dual Language in five years”	
August 2015	Oldest cohort moves up to the middle school	440
Fall 2015	Team develops “Spanish literacy assessment plan” for the division	
Spring 2016	Team adopts “Dual Language Articulation Plan” for division	
Sumer 2016	First time ever of cross-school portfolio evaluations and common letters procedure for kindergarten entry	

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August 2016	Fourth program launched	600
October 2016	Grade-level teams from across schools begin using collaborative days to plan together	
October 2016	Dual Language among HCPS's excellent programs for ELs featured in New America report	
August 2017	Second program moved to a new elementary school and relaunched at the original school	800
Future History		
August 2019	Oldest cohort will move to the high school	1200

Appendix D

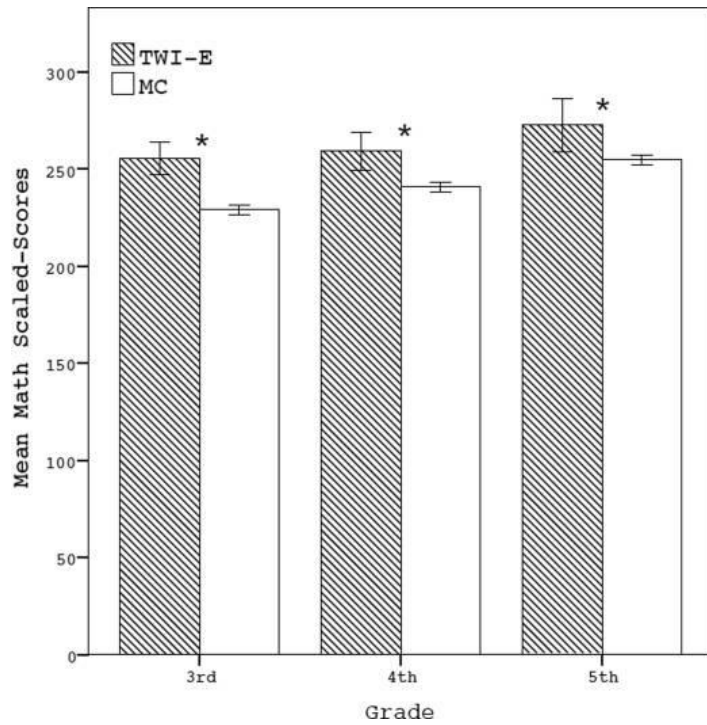
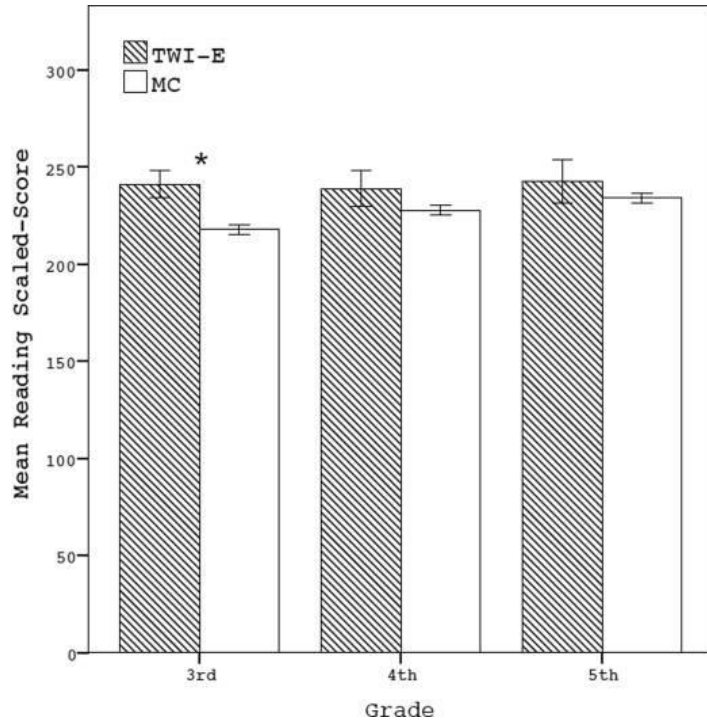
Harrisonburg City Schools' Diversity (Enrollment Statistics May 2010)



(Eye, B., McGrath, L., & Oxley, K., 2013)

Appendix E

Academic Achievement results from a two-way (dual language) immersion study



(Marian, Shook, Schroeder, 2013)

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