

## Benefits

Brain research has found that the brain has extensive capacity to learn multiple languages at young ages. It also confirms that learning two languages benefits the brain through the development of greater brain tissue density in areas related to language, memory, and attention.

## Program Goals

- ◆ Learn grade-level content & skills while “adding/developing” their second language vocabulary, fluency and comprehension.
- ◆ Become bilingual and biliterate students
- ◆ Develop high levels of proficiency in a second language while making expected progress in their first language
- ◆ Achieve academic performance at or above grade level
- ◆ Obtain high levels of proficiency in understanding, speaking, reading and writing in their first and second languages.

## What is Dual Language Education?

Dual language education is the best educational model to produce graduates who cannot only speak in two languages, but also read and write at grade level or above in both of their languages. Here are some features:

- ◇ Families must choose to be in the program. Students need the support of their families to succeed in such a challenging program. Their family does not have to be bilingual in order for the student to succeed and become fully bilingual.
- ◇ Languages are not taught in a separate class. Instead, students are immersed in each language for half of the day as they study the same subjects as all students at the school.
- ◇ The teacher does not translate for the students. Children have a natural language learning capacity and using a second language to learn interesting things in school is a natural way to pick up that language. When a teacher translates for students, they often tune out the second language, waiting for the easier translation, and it becomes more difficult to acquire the language.



### Beulah Elementary Dual Language Theme School

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## Dual Language Program

Developing Bilingual,  
Bicultural  
and Biliterate Students



## Does Dual Language Education Work?

Yes! The first dual language programs began in Canada (French & English) and Florida (Spanish & English) over 30 years ago. Since then, this dynamic model has spread around the world, wherever there are parents and teachers who want their children to become both academically and thoroughly bilingual and bicultural.

The average student who enters a dual language program at kindergarten or first grade speaking only English will graduate achieving at or above national averages on English language standardized tests, and at or slightly below grade level in Spanish.

It takes most people 5-7 years to become fully fluent in a second language. What this means for us in a dual language program is that the first 2-3 years are the most challenging. All language learners go through a silent period, where they take in their new language but can't yet speak it themselves. This is followed by a long 'early production' period, where the person understands much more than they can express.

Families and beginning teachers often worry during the first few years of a child's dual language education that the child is falling behind in their native language and not really picking up the second language. Just like a toddler learning to speak, this silent period is natural and necessary for the student. Once the child is ready, they will interact with their peers and teachers in both of their languages.

## How does it work?

Dual language education takes advantage of children's natural language learning abilities. Instead of teaching a language, we teach through language. Teachers use special techniques called 'sheltered instruction' to help those children who are working in their second language.

In a two way dual language classroom, the teacher is not the only model for each language. The students are also models for each other. Each student spends half their day learning in their native language and the other half of their day learning in their second language while they get help from other students as they learn.

## How long does it take?

It takes most people 5-7 years to become fully fluent in a second language, and children are not different. The fact that children often pick up 'playground' or social language quickly has led to the false belief that it only takes a year to become fluent in another language. What we want and expect of our dual language students is the ability to not just speak informally, but read, write and study at high levels in both languages. This is what takes 5-7 years, and why we require a long term commitment for our families.



## What does all this mean for families?

At Beulah, we expect all students, families and teachers to work together to make the student successful at school. In the dual language program we face more challenges. Parents say that the first couple of years are the most difficult, as the child goes through the 'silent period' and seems to be really struggling with school. It is also hard for parents when their child brings homework to do in a second language that the parents don't know. This is what we ask of families:

- Be serious about the long-term commitment, and be patient. The full benefits of dual language education blossom after 4-5 years, and keep growing.
- Support your child in this great challenge. As you know, you are your child's greatest teacher and role model. As they work their hardest to learn in two languages, they need to know that their bilingualism and school achievement are important to you.
- Attend the orientation and further education sessions for families.
- If possible, attend second language classes for adults.

