

What is Dual Language Education?

Dual language education is the best educational model to produce graduates who can not only speak in two languages, but read and write at grade level or above in *both* Spanish and English. Here are some features:

- Families must choose to be in the program. Students need the full support of their families to succeed in such a challenging program. Their family does not have to be bilingual, though, in order for the student to succeed and become fully bilingual.
- Languages are not taught like in a Spanish or French 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 at 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 never learn the second language well.

At Susie Rayos Marmon Elementary, we have a 50/50 'two-way' dual language program in K, 1st & 2nd grade: 50% of the day is spent studying in Spanish and 50% in English, and the language learning is going two ways: Spanish speakers are learning English and their subject areas, and English speakers are learning Spanish and their subject areas.

Susie Rayos
Marmon Elementary

Quick Q & A

(See inside for more info)

Does it work?

Yes, definitely! Dual language program graduates generally achieve at or above grade level in two languages. These incredible benefits aren't seen until several years are spent in the program. That's why we ask families who enter the dual language program to stick with it for 5-6 years.

What's it like at Susie Rayos Marmon?

Students spend half their day studying in Spanish and half in English. Their subjects are exactly the same as other students at their grade level.

But don't they fall behind if they're not already bilingual?

No, that's the beauty of it. Teachers use a variety of methods called 'sheltering techniques' to help children understand who are working in their second language. Again, the children aren't able to show all that they're learning until they begin to master their second language, which takes several years.

Read on to learn more!

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Susie Rayos Marmon Elementary Two-Way Dual Language Program*

- What is it?
- Is it for you?
- How do you apply?

* Dual Language education has other names, including Bilingual Immersion. It is not just another name for bilingual education, but is a specific, successful model of bilingual education



? 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 successful 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, though, 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.



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? How does it work?

Dual language education takes advantage of children's natural language learning abilities. Instead of 'teaching a language,' we 'teach through a 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 through their native language and being a language model for other students, and half their day learning through their second language and getting 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 no different. The fact that children often pick up 'playground' or social language quickly has led to the false belief that it only takes about 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 their languages. *This is what takes 5-7 years, and is why we require a long-term commitment from our families.*

? Is the dual language curriculum different from the other classes?

No. Every teacher must follow the curriculum guidelines for every subject as set forth in the APS Standards. The only difference in the dual language classrooms is that the teacher and students are doing all of this in two languages.

? What does all this mean for families?

At Susie Rayos Marmon, 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 at school. It's 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 a 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, held in the spring and fall.

? How do we apply?

We are in the process of phasing in the dual language program. Currently we are enrolling students in Kindergarten & 1st grade. In our 2nd grade program, 1st grade students will be moving up. If you are interested in enrolling your child in the dual language program you can visit our main office, call, or email administration. Once you apply, you may be interviewed by administration to make sure this option is the best 'fit' for your child. We also have to make sure that our classrooms have a good mix of Spanish- and English- speaking children.

? Is there more information?

To find out more, call or visit the principal, Maria Barraza or assistant principal Rebekah Floryance at 831-5400. We can answer questions, give you articles to read, arrange for you to visit classrooms or meet parents in the program, or suggest websites to help you learn more about dual language education. Call now!