Estrellas
Two-Way Immersion Program

Professional Development Laboratory School

In the fall of 2002, Clear Creek Independent School District and the University of Houston-Clear Lake (UHCL) opened the Professional Development Laboratory School (PDSL) at McWhirter Elementary School. The PDSL goals are to teach children based on sound educational practices, to provide professional development to both UHCL students and the McWhirter faculty as part of their school day, and to encourage participation of the community in a variety of learning opportunities.

As a part of this effort, methods courses are taught on the campus of McWhirter, which allows UHCL students a chance to work in the classrooms to gain experience. Professional development classes are conducted during the school day and after school, every other Wednesday, for the McWhirter faculty. UHCL professors often participate in these sessions, giving the faculty of McWhirter the most current techniques and teaching strategies.

Two-Way Immersion Defined

Two-way immersion, also referred to as dual language, is an educational model in which both native English speakers and native speakers of another language receive instruction together in both languages to promote second language acquisition, high academic achievement, and cross-cultural understanding for all students. Language learning takes place primarily through content instruction. Linguistic proficiency in both languages is developed as students develop their knowledge of subject matter through performing academic tasks.

Benefits of Two-Way Immersion Programs

The benefits of two-way immersion are numerous. Research conducted concerning two-way immersion has reflected positive results for the participating students. Some of the benefits of two-way immersion include:

☆ Bilingualism
☆ Intellectual growth
☆ Increase in self-esteem
☆ Listening skills increase
☆ Future marketability increased
☆ Appreciation for other languages and cultures
☆ Better performance on standardized tests (2002 Collier-Thomas study)
☆ Development of language and cognitive skills
☆ Interpersonal communication enhanced
☆ Enhances empathy and social relations
☆ Flexible thinking develops
PATTERNS OF K-12 ENGLISH LEARNERS' LONG-TERM ACHIEVEMENT IN NCEs ON STANDARDIZED TESTS IN ENGLISH READING COMPARED ACROSS SIX PROGRAM MODELS

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(Results aggregated from a series of 4-8 year longitudinal studies from well-implemented, mature programs in five school districts)

Program 1: Two-way developmental bilingual education (BE)
Program 2: One-way developmental BE, including ESL taught through academic content
Program 3: Transitional BE, including ESL taught through academic content
Program 4: Transitional BE, including ESL, both taught traditionally
Program 5: ESL taught through academic content using current approaches
Program 6: ESL pullout--taught traditionally
Estrellas Purpose Statement

By the end of fifth grade all students in the Estrellas Program will be bilingual, biliterate, and bicultural.

Funding for the Estrellas Program

The Professional Development Laboratory School at McWhirter Elementary received a FLAP (Foreign Language Assistance Program) grant in the form of $496,373 to be used to begin the Estrellas Program. This funding was designated for use during the first three years of implementation of the two-way immersion program. The program is now funded by the district.

Estrellas Program – The 90/10 Model

There are various models of two-way immersion education. The Estrellas Program utilizes the 90/10 model. These numbers represent the percent of time each language is used in the classroom by the teacher. Students may respond in either language in the early grade levels. As students’ proficiency in the second language increases, the students are encouraged to respond in the new language. The 90/10 model in the Estrellas Program is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percent Spanish</th>
<th>Percent English</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kinder</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
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<td>4th</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![The 90/10 Model](image)
Grade Levels Included in the Program

During the 2004-2005 school year, two kindergarten classes implemented the Estrellas Program. Each subsequent school year, two classes were added to the program. The TWI program continues at Clear Creek Intermediate School. A draft of a high school plan has been created.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Year</th>
<th>Grade Level Added to Program</th>
<th>School Year</th>
<th>Grade Level Added to Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004-2005</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>2009-2010</td>
<td>Kindergarten First</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Second First Second Third</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fourth Fifth Sixth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-2006</td>
<td>Kindergarten First</td>
<td>2009-2010</td>
<td>Kindergarten First</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First</td>
<td></td>
<td>Second First Second Third</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fourth Fifth Sixth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-2007</td>
<td>Kindergarten First</td>
<td>2011-2012</td>
<td>Kindergarten First</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First Second</td>
<td></td>
<td>Second First Second Third</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fourth Fifth Sixth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-2008</td>
<td>Kindergarten First</td>
<td>2012-2013</td>
<td>Kindergarten First</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First Second Third</td>
<td></td>
<td>Second First Second Third</td>
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<td>Fourth Fifth Sixth</td>
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<td>First Second Third</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Fourth</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Curriculum and Standards

Students participating in the Estrellas Program are instructed using the Clear Creek ISD (CCISD) curriculum following state guidelines (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills), and are held to the same standards as all other CCISD students. High expectations are held for every student, and teachers in the Estrellas Program strive to ensure that each child reaches his or her potential as a learner.

Assessment

Students in the Estrellas Program are assessed using the same assessment measures as all CCISD students. The assessment goal of the program is for all children to be prepared to succeed on the Spanish TAKS by 3rd grade and English TAKS by 5th grade. Parents receive progress reports, report cards, and communication through parent-teacher conferences, newsletters, letters, and phone calls updating them on their child’s progress. In addition, students’ linguistic progress is assessed annually.

Your child is a good candidate for the program if he or she:

- Is highly verbal and developmentally on target in his or her native language.
- Expresses an interest in different people, places, and things.
- Is interested in learning a second language.

The program is a good fit for families that:

- Support learning a second language.
- Value other cultures.
- Participate in their children’s educational process.

Applying to the Estrellas Program

Kindergarten students and parents interested in enrolling in the Estrellas Program will need to complete an application. Once the school has received the application, students will be contacted to complete the process and will be administered an oral language assessment. In addition, parents are strongly encouraged to attend the TWI Program Orientation.

Students whose parents sign the Estrellas Compact Commitment and whose oral language proficiency test results are indicate that the student is a Proficient Speaker will be identified as “Estrellas Ready.” A public lottery system will then be used to determine which students will actually enroll in the program and which students will be placed on a waiting list.
Commitment to the Estrellas Program

Just as young children learning their first language often become frustrated with their inability to communicate, it is important to remember that children learning a second language may feel frustration. Support and encouragement are the keys to overcoming this frustration. It is important to make the decision to commit to your child remaining in the Estrellas Program throughout the elementary grades before enrolling.

Steps to Enrolling Your Child

Children who are eligible to begin kindergarten as defined by Education Code 29.151 (5 years old prior to September 1) may apply to the Estrellas Program.

1. Complete an application and return it via fax or mail to:
   McWhirter PDLS  
   Attn. Cynthia Suarez  
   Fax: 281-284-4805
   300 Pennsylvania  
   Webster, TX 77598

2. You will be contacted to schedule a date and time for your child to receive an oral language assessment, and for you and your child to participate in an orientation.

3. Parents must sign an Estrellas Compact Commitment in order for their child to be eligible for the Estrellas Program.

4. Students whose oral language test results indicate that the child is a Proficient Speaker and whose parents have signed the Estrellas Compact Commitment will be identified as “Estrellas Ready.” A public drawing system will then be used to determine which students enroll in the program.

5. All applicants will be contacted and informed of their child’s status in the program.

6. If your child is accepted in the Estrellas Program, and your attendance school zone is not McWhirter Elementary, an intra-district transfer form will need to be completed.

*Please note that, in accordance with CCISD policy, a student transfer may be revoked whenever the principal establishes that a student:

   1. Has been truant;
   2. Fails to maintain satisfactory conduct;
   3. Fails to maintain passing grades; or
   4. Fails to be punctual.
*Any student in the Estrellas Program who does not maintain satisfactory attendance, receives failing grades, or chooses not to follow CCISD’s code of student conduct will be reassigned to a general education or bilingual classroom at their home campus.

Frequently Asked Questions
Two-Way Immersion

1. **What is Two-way immersion?**
   Two-way immersion is an educational model that integrates native English speakers and native speakers of another language for all or most of the day, with the goals of promoting high academic achievement, first- and second-language development and cross-cultural understanding for all students. In two-way immersion programs, language learning takes place primarily through content instruction. Academic subjects are taught to all students through both English and the non-English language. As students and teachers work together to perform academic tasks, the students’ language abilities are developed, along with their knowledge of content area subject matter.

2. **Will a second language interfere with my child’s English ability?**
   In most cases, learning another language enhances a child’s English ability. Children can learn much about English by learning the structure of another language. Common vocabulary also helps children learn the meaning of new words in English. Experimental studies have shown that no long-term delay in native English language development occurs in children participating in second language classes, even in full immersion programs.

   In fact, children enrolled in foreign language programs score statistically higher on standardized tests conducted in English. A number of reports have demonstrated that children who have learned a second language earn higher SAT scores, particularly on the verbal section of the test. One study showed that, by the fifth grade of an immersion program, students outperformed all comparison groups and remained high academic achievers throughout their schooling.

3. **Will my child fall behind if he/she learns two languages?**
   Concepts learned in either language become a part of the child’s general knowledge. On some tests, such as English vocabulary, immersion students score higher than students in regular English programs.
4. If my child is enrolled in a language program at school, what can I do to help?
   Most importantly, encourage your child’s interest in the language and in other cultures. Show him/her that you value the ability to speak a second language. Attend cultural events that feature music, dance, or food from other countries where the language is spoken. If possible, provide some books, videos, or other materials in the second language.

5. Will my child learn the same things as students in regular classes?
   Yes, the CCISD curriculum must follow the guidelines for the State of Texas. Materials in two-way immersion classes cover the same basic program, as do regular English classes; students work toward the same academic goals regardless of the language of instruction.

6. How can we manage if no one in our family speaks Spanish?
   That is not a difficulty. The school realizes that many parents are monolingual and will answer your questions/concerns in English.

7. If we move to another area, will my child fit into a regular English classroom?
   If you move before first grade, or after second grade, there will be few, if any difficulties. Now that two-way immersion programs exist in many school districts, you may be able to find one in your new neighborhood.

8. Will my child take the TAKS test in English or in Spanish?
   The goal is for all children to be able to take the TAKS test in Spanish by the third grade. A committee will review each child’s performance and make a determination of which test would be most appropriate.

9. What type of accent will my child have?
   Standard Spanish structures and vocabulary are taught. A variety of accents exist in all language; during a school career, a child will be exposed to teachers and students from various parts of the world that are models of well-spoken Spanish.

10. How can I evaluate my child’s progress if no one speaks Spanish at home?
    In addition to the report card, there is also communication with parents through newsletters, parent-teacher conferences, special notices, and phone calls. Parents are also welcome to visit immersion classes and assist with lessons.
What our Parents Say about The Estrellas Program

Our child has been rapidly developing the Spanish language and has picked up pronunciation remarkably well.

He does not seem to feel any barriers to communication with the Spanish-speaking.

She loves classmates the most among all things in school.

She enjoys it and has new words to “teach” us every day.

When she hears Spanish on the radio or television, she often tells us what she thinks it meant.

My child uses words from his “new” language interspersed in his regular/old language. He also sings songs in his new language and likes to get Spanish books from the library (which Mom & Dad can’t read!).

I think my child is making exceptional progress and he is enjoying his classes/teachers more than I had anticipated. He’s more outgoing than before and not as reserved as I had anticipated he would be (at school).

I have not found that her skills in English have been affected in a negative way. I see her working hard to determine if what she sees is in Spanish or English and what rules, if you will, she needs to follow in order to understand what she is seeing.

I am amazed at how quickly she has picked Spanish up and how comfortable she is in using it. She’s very eager to teach myself and her sibling all that she is taught.

There has been no loss of English comprehension. Her ability to understand what she reads has continued to grow.

*My child* writes notes to family members (“I luf you”) in English and can sound out basic 3 and 4 letter words.

She’s writing a lot of words in Spanish. (Ella escribe muchas frases en español.)

I’ve noted that my son is talking more with his friends. (He notado que mi hijo se comunica más con sus amigos.)

He’s changed in that before he didn’t know how to work as a team and now he does know how to help and how to help himself. (El ha cambiado en forma de que antes no sabía cómo era estar en equipo y ahora sabe cómo ayudar y ayudarse a sí mismo.)

My daughter knows a lot. Every day I’m surprised by everything she knows. Thanks for teaching my daughter so much. (Por supuesto mi hija sabe mucho. Me sorprende cada día con todo lo que sabe y gracias por enseñarle tanto a la niña).

Thank you for your efforts and the great influence in my child’s life.
Resources

Please note that dual language is a term that is also used to refer to two-way immersion education.
www.alianza.pvusd.net/what_immersion.html
www.ed.gov/pubs/ToolsforSchools/2way.html
www.languagemagazine.com
www.nethelp.no/cindy/res1.html
http://www.cal.org/topics/fl/immersion.html
http://crede.berkeley.edu/research/l1aa/1.1_final.html
http://www.texastwoway.org/

Designing and Implementing Two-Way Bilingual Programs; A Step-by-Step Guide for Administrators, Teachers, and Parents (2003), Margarita Espino Calderón & Liliana Minaya-Rowe


Dual Language: Teaching and Learning in Two Languages (2004), Sonia White Soltero

Raising Bilingual Children: A Parent’s Guide (2003), Carey Myles