



Dual Language Immersion Playbooks: INTRODUCTION

December 2024



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Introduction

High-quality dual language immersion (DLI) programs can be a key lever to provide every student with a pathway to multilingualism. DLI programs provide content and language instruction in both English and a partner language, the most common being Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, and French.¹ These programs typically start in kindergarten or first grade and can continue into middle and high school. In the elementary grades, between 50% and 90% of the day is taught in the partner language, depending on the program model and grade level. DLI programs support native English speakers as they develop proficiency in the partner language and English learners (ELs)² as they develop proficiency in English and the partner language, which may also be their home/heritage language.

DLI programs are especially critical for ELs.³ During the 2021–22 school year, there were 5.3 million students identified as EL, comprising 10.6 percent of the entire student population.⁴ To succeed in school, it is important for ELs to have access to both English language and grade-level content learning. Unfortunately, not all ELs are well supported in schools, leading to disparities in academic outcomes, like math,⁵ compared to students who were never identified as an EL. DLI programs are a method to harness EL students' assets as they achieve academic excellence, language proficiency, and global engagement.

There is growing evidence that DLI programs are associated with improvements in language proficiency and academic outcomes of students, especially ELs.⁶ Students in DLI programs often outperform their peers in English-only settings on standardized tests in both language arts and math.⁷ Other benefits include bilingualism and biliteracy; improvements in English language development;⁸ increased student self-confidence;⁹ as well as increased long-term earnings.^{10,11} As such, an increasing number of states, districts, schools, and communities are seeking to establish, expand, or improve their DLI programs. To do so, interest holders need access to promising and other evidence-based practices in DLI programs to inform their efforts.

The Dual Language Immersion Playbooks (DLI Playbooks) provide a roadmap for the creation,

design and adoption of policies, processes, programs, and practices that state educational agencies (SEAs), local educational agencies (LEAs), schools, as well as families and communities need to support and implement high-quality and inclusive DLI programs. The DLI Playbooks summarize what we know about emerging evidence-based practices, and include examples from states, districts, schools, universities, and non-profit organizations, highlighting successful planning, collaboration and strategies for effective implementation, funding, staffing, and community involvement. The contents of these playbooks are based on the 2024 Dual Language Immersion Project (DLI Project).

DLI Project

To learn more about promising and other evidence-based DLI practices and programs, the U.S. Department of Education (the Department) collected information from WestEd and the Regions 2, 6, 14, and 15 [Comprehensive Centers](#) and the five SEAs: California, New York, North Carolina, Texas and Utah. These states were selected because they have the highest number of DLI programs, more than 200 DLI programs in each state.¹² The DLI Project started with a literature scan that was used to create a set of considerations and guiding questions to identify the policies, processes, programs, and practices that can lead to high-quality and inclusive DLI programs.¹³ Focusing on the key questions and considerations, each SEA identified “bright spots”—public schools with high-quality research-based programs, high student attendance, and high parent engagement—to be visited. As they were selecting their DLI bright spots, SEAs were encouraged to consider staffing, professional development, program vision and goals, curriculum and assessments, instructional techniques, composition of students, processes to increase access to ELs, program implementation policies, SEA and LEA level policies, and student outcomes.

The DLI Project provided rich examples and insights into DLI practices based on literature and research as well as site visits at 19 public schools. In addition, the Department facilitated round table discussions attended by site leaders, district leaders, state

representatives, school board members, parents and care givers, and community members. Several themes emerged from the literature scan, visits, and round table discussions, including the importance of family and community partnerships, policies to promote and sustain DLI, funding, staffing and educator preparation, EL participation, and scalability and sustainability of programs. Feedback from these site visits and round table conversations informed the development of these playbooks so that they can be utilized by DLI interest holders—SEAs, LEAs, schools, families, and communities—when designing, implementing, sustaining, and scaling DLI programs.

DLI Playbooks

The Playbooks support a cohesive vision and goals for DLI programs across the country, ensuring they are well-resourced and accessible to all students, particularly ELs. These playbooks are designed to support states, districts, schools, families and communities in promoting multilingualism and ensuring ELs have equitable access to DLI programs.

The DLI Policy Playbook supports DLI interest holders as they develop, advocate for, and implement comprehensive policies to support DLI programs, ensure equitable access for ELs and create pathways for all students to become multilingual. SEAs can develop policies that take action and message multilingualism as an asset and invest in expanding DLI programs. LEAs can leverage federal and state policies, research, data, and the [Seal of Biliteracy](#), to provide consistent resources,

and prioritize enrollment for EL students and other underrepresented groups of learners (i.e., special education, indigenous students, linguistic, racial and economic) in DLI programs. Schools can develop cohesive visions for DLI, ensure equitable access, and engage with diverse communities. Families and communities can advocate and support DLI in early learning and collaborate with state and local leaders to ensure high-quality DLI programs for all students.

The DLI Foundational Conditions Playbook provides comprehensive guidelines to establish evidence-based and equitable DLI programs. SEAs can promote multilingualism, provide technical assistance, grant/funding opportunities, and ensure equitable access to DLI programs. LEAs can establish support structures and systems, prioritize enrollment of ELs, build educator capacity, and secure funding for DLI programs. Schools can advocate for resources, create awareness for students and families, develop high-quality bilingual curricula, and ensure diverse enrollment in DLI programs.

Families and communities also play a crucial role in understanding and advocating for DLI, participating in program implementation and support, and ensuring equitable access. The intentional and collaborative approach set out in the playbooks aims to enhance the sustainability and scalability of those programs across different levels of the education system.

The DLI Family and Community Engagement Playbook outlines different roles in promoting family and community engagement in DLI programs. SEAs can develop policies, processes, programs and practices that ensure resources promote family engagement and provide guidance on fostering parent and family involvement in DLI programs. LEAs can ensure authentic engagement by increasing family partnerships and providing professional learning opportunities and resources to educators and schools. Schools can involve families in decision-making and offer opportunities for meaningful interaction and network building. Families and communities can help create awareness, message and advocate for DLI access in early education, out-of-school time, and summer learning and community-based organizations can provide resources for parent networks and education.

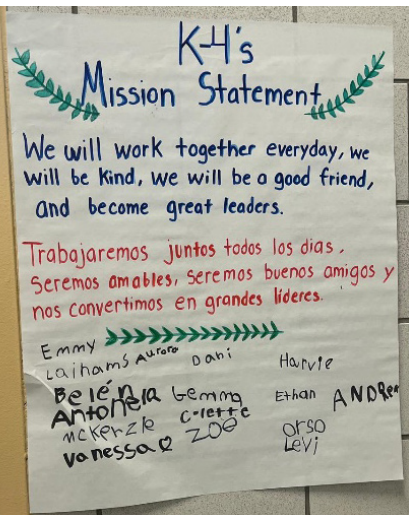


Figure 1. Example of Mission Statement from Graciela Garcia Elementary School at Pharr-San Juan Alamo ISD (PSJA ISD).



Figure 2. Ranulfo Marquez, Assistant Superintendent for Academics, Dr. Raquel Garcia, Principal PSJA Memorial Early College High School, Dr. Alejandro Elias, Superintendent at PSJA ISD, Olivia Martinez, PSJA English Language and Biliteracy Director, students from Early Memorial College High School, Montserrat Garibay, Assistant Deputy Secretary, Beatriz Ceja, Deputy Assistant Secretary, OELA, Melissa Castillo, Office of the Secretary, U.S. Department of Education.

The **DLI Staffing Playbook** supports DLI interest holders as they increase the number of prepared bilingual/multilingual educators to expand access to DLI programs. SEAs can support the recruitment and retention of qualified bilingual/multilingual educators by examining and adjusting licensure systems, partnering with teacher preparation programs, and providing consistent funding and technical assistance. LEAs can establish bilingual teacher/leader pathways, create “grow-your-own” programs, and build partnerships with the SEA, colleges and universities.

Schools can improve working conditions, educator support systems and invest in professional learning to recruit and retain highly qualified bilingual/multilingual personnel. Families and communities can identify and cultivate the importance of being bilingual and biliterate, serve as potential educators, support alternative pathways for bilingual educators, and provide professional growth opportunities.

The chart below summarizes the DLI practices SEAs chose to highlight during the DLI site visits.

State	Program Type(s) Visited	Highlighted Features that Support DLI*	Examples
California	Varied program types across the state, with visits to two-way dual language programs with varying partner language time allocations.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding: The Dual Language Immersion Grant provides funding to districts to expand or establish new DLI programs Family and community engagement: Resources that inform parents about multilingual education and bilingual programs are available Curriculum & assessments: State assessment that measures Spanish literacy
New York	Varied program types across the state, with visits to one-way and two-way dual language programs.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation: In some districts, there are DLI enrollment policies for integrating newcomer students and ensuring access to programs Staffing: International educator licensing pathways Family and community engagement: At the district level, actively including families and community in the planning for DLI program implementation, curriculum, and other aspects
North Carolina	One-way and two-way dual language programs, including programs described as full immersion, continuing immersion, and indigenous immersion.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation: The Dual Language/Immersion in North Carolina Committee, a K-20 group representing DLI programs from across the state, advises on policy and implementation questions Professional learning: Annual DLI Seminar for Administrators and Teachers, which includes DLI school site visits
Texas	Varied program types across the state, with visits to one-way and two-way dual language programs.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation: The Texas Effective Dual Language Immersion Framework's (TxEDLIF's) Rubric outlines different levels of dual language implementation, and offers a tool for programs to self-assess their effectiveness. Curriculum & assessments: Assessment language guidelines for DLI students. Use of biliterate assessments.
Utah	The statewide DLI program is a 50:50 two-teacher model, including a secondary pathway with bridge courses for postsecondary credit.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding: House Bill 161 – Legislation for ongoing funding for Utah DLI program Professional learning: Requirement for DLI teachers to participate in all DLI state-sponsored PD days, and Annual Utah Dual Immersion Institute (AUDII) for first- and second-year teachers Instructional techniques: Utah DLI Instructional Framework and the use of an observation protocol to assess fidelity

- Staffing
- Professional learning
- Implementation policies (enrollment, prioritization of ELs)
- Curriculum, assessment
- Instructional techniques
- Funding
- Family and community engagement

**This list is not comprehensive of all that states do to support Dual Language Immersion programs, but it is representative of some of the best practices states chose to highlight during the DLI Project.*

Endnotes

- ¹ American Councils Research Center. (2021). *2021 Canvass of dual language and immersion (DLI) programs in US public schools*. American Councils for International Education. https://www.americancouncils.org/sites/default/files/documents/pages/2021-10/Canvass%20DLI%20-%20October%202021-2_ac.pdf.
- ² According to section 8101(20) of the ESEA, an EL is defined as “an individual— (A) who is aged 3 through 21; (B) who is enrolled or preparing to enroll in an elementary school or secondary school; (C)(i) who was not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English; (ii)(I) who is a Native American or Alaska Native, or a native resident of the outlying areas; and (II) who comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on the individual’s level of English language proficiency; or (iii) who is migratory, whose native language is a language other than English, and who comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant; and (D) whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the individual— (i) the ability to meet the challenging State academic standards; (ii) the ability to successfully achieve in classrooms where the language of instruction is English; or (iii) the opportunity to participate fully in society.” <https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/documents/essa-act-of-1965.pdf>.
- ³ Porter, L., Vazquez Cano, M., Umansky, I. (2023). *Bilingual education and America’s future: Evidence and pathways*. Los Angeles, CA: The Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles, UCLA. <https://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/language-minority-students/bilingual-education-and-americas-future-evidence-and-pathways>.
- ⁴ National Center for Education Statistics. (2024). English Learners in Public Schools. *Condition of Education*. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. Retrieved October 16, 2024, from <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cgf>.
- ⁵ National Center for Education Statistics. (2023). Mathematics Performance. *Condition of Education*. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. Retrieved October 16, 2024, from <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cnc>.
- ⁶ Steele, J. L., Slater, R. O., Zamarro, G., Miller, T., Li, J., Burkhauser, S., & Bacon, M. (2017). Effects of dual-language immersion programs on student achievement: Evidence from lottery data. *American Educational Research Journal*, 54(1), 282S–306S.
- ⁷ Morales, C. (2024). Dual language immersion programs and student achievement in early elementary grades. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 0(0). <https://doi.org/10.3102/01623737241228829>.
- ⁸ Steele, J. L., Slater, R. O., Zamarro, G., Miller, T., Li, J., Burkhauser, S., & Bacon, M. (2017). Effects of dual-language immersion programs on student achievement: Evidence from lottery data. *American Educational Research Journal*, 54(1), 282S–306S.
- ⁹ Block, N., & Vidaurre, L. (2019). Comparing attitudes of first-grade dual language immersion versus mainstream English students. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 42(2), 129–149.
- ¹⁰ Agirdag, O. (2014). The long-term effects of bilingualism on children of immigration: Student bilingualism and future earnings. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 17(4), 449–464.
- ¹¹ Rumbaut, R. (2014). English plus: Exploring the socio-economic benefits of bilingualism in Southern California. In R. Callahan & P. Gándara (Eds.). *The bilingual advantage: Language literacy and the US labor market*, (pp.1-27), Bristol, United Kingdom: Multilingual Matters.
- ¹² American Councils Research Center. (2021). *2021 Canvass of dual language and immersion (DLI) programs in US public schools*. American Councils for International Education. https://www.americancouncils.org/sites/default/files/documents/pages/2021-10/Canvass%20DLI%20-%20October%202021-2_ac.pdf.
- ¹³ Region 15 Comprehensive Center. (2024). *Literature Scan on Dual Language Immersion Programs*. Comprehensive Center Network, Region 15 Comprehensive Center. https://www.wested.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Brief_Dual-Language-Immersion-Research_Current-Research-ADA-FINAL.pdf.

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