

BOARD BRIEF

Date: December 16, 2022

BOARD INFORMATION: X

MEETING PREPARATION:

FROM: Jennifer Hamilton, Dual Language Coordinator

THROUGH: Bethany Nickerson, Ed.D., Executive Director, Office of English Learner Services
Wendy Gonzalez, Ed.D., Chief of Teaching, Learning, and Leadership
Melanie Kay-Wyatt, Ed.D., Interim Superintendent of Schools

TO: The Honorable Meagan L. Alderton, Chair, and
Members of the Alexandria City School Board

TOPIC: Update on Dual Language Program

ACPS 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL:

Goal 2: Instructional Excellence

SY 2022-2023 FOCUS AREA:

Continuous Improvement in KPI Disparities

FY 2023 BUDGET PRIORITY:

K-4 Literacy

SUMMARY:

The ACPS Dual Language Program (DLP) was last evaluated in 2014, the findings of which informed a redesign of the program. Over the last eight years, the field of dual language education has continued to evolve and expand in its application of recent language education research to dual language contexts. With the synthesis of current research, both new and revised guidelines for the implementation of effective dual language programs have been shared. In light of this information, programmatic data, and stakeholder feedback, changes to the elementary DLP model and language allocation plan are recommended.

BACKGROUND:

In the 2014-2015 school year, after undergoing an extensive program evaluation, the ACPS DLP implemented refined program models grounded in bilingual education research and theory, and better aligned to the *Guiding Principles for Dual Language Education* (2nd edition, 2007). Since then, the elementary dual language program models and language allocation plans have remained static, with John Adams Elementary School (JAES) offering a 70:30 program model and Mount Vernon Community School (MVCS) offering a 50:50 model. In the 70:30 model, 70% of academic instruction is delivered in Spanish (i.e. Spanish language arts, science, social studies, math), with 30% in English (i.e., English language arts) in kindergarten and first grade, moving to a 50:50 model in grades two through five. In the 50:50 model, 50% of instruction is delivered in

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Spanish (i.e., Spanish language arts, science, math) and 50% of instruction is delivered in English (i.e., English language arts, social studies).

New research and revised *Guiding Principles* (2018) in the field of dual language education have underscored important findings and recommendations for implementing effective dual language programs, including:

- 1) Increasing the amount of Spanish instruction in the early grades improves long-term biliteracy and language development outcomes for students who are native Spanish-speakers, as well as students who are native speakers of English or another language.
- 2) Rotating the language of instruction for different content areas is an important practice to support biliteracy instruction and students' development of biliteracy skills.
- 3) Effective assessment practices in dual language programs at a minimum align the language of instruction to the language of assessment; ideally, students are assessed bilingually.

To better align the ACPS DLP to these research-based best practices, the following program refinements are recommended:

- 1) Transition MVCS to the same 70:30 model offered at JAES beginning with kindergarten in SY23-24, and rolling up to first grade in SY24-25.
- 2) Alternate the instruction of science and social studies in English and Spanish beginning in grade 5 with science delivered in English and social studies delivered in Spanish in SY23-24, rolling down to 3rd grade in SY24-25.

In order to facilitate a smooth transition, these changes will be communicated in collaboration with school leaders at JAES and MVCS to staff in December 2022, followed by family and community stakeholders in January 2023. Curriculum discussions have already been initiated with key Division stakeholders, with the bulk of curriculum writing work slated for completion in Spring and Summer 2023.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Interim Superintendent recommends that the School Board review the information in this memo and attachment.

IMPACT:

Making research-based refinements to the ACPS DLP will improve long-term student outcomes and enable the program to fulfill its mission of providing an enriched educational experience in which all students attain high levels of academic achievement, bilingualism and biliteracy, and sociocultural competence.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Elementary Dual Language Program Model and Language Allocation Plan Proposal

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