

BOARD BRIEF

Date: February 24, 2023

BOARD INFORMATION: X

MEETING PREPARATION:

FROM: Jennifer Hamilton, Dual Language Coordinator
Jane Richardson, Citywide Early Childhood Coordinator

THROUGH: Bethany Nickerson, Ed.D., Executive Director of English Learner Services
Carmen Sanders, Executive Director of Instructional Support
Wendy González, 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: Dual Language Pre-K Pilot

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:

As dual language (DL) programs continue to grow in US schools, more and more districts across the region and nation are expanding their programs to include our youngest learners. The ability to expand access to the ACPS Dual Language Program to include students in our pre-K classrooms represents a tremendous opportunity to improve long-term academic, linguistic, and social-emotional outcomes for emergent bilingual students. With staffing, curriculum, and instructional support readily available, planning considerations for the pilot are significantly reduced, and will focus on student enrollment and the purchase of supplementary materials.

BACKGROUND:

An extensive body of research has consistently demonstrated the positive impact of well-implemented early childhood education programs on the academic success of emergent bilingual students (The Brookings Institution, 2017). Research in the fields of early childhood and dual language education highlights a firm foundation of high-quality, shared best practices that, when combined, can significantly improve outcomes for multilingual learners (Howard et al., 2018; Robles & Pryor, 2014). The Dual Language and Early Childhood Programs jointly support the conversion of one existing ACPS pre-K classroom to dual language for SY23-24. This

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class will be housed at the Early Childhood Center (ECC), located in the facility shared with John Adams Elementary School (JAES). The Pre-K Dual Language Program will follow a 90:10 immersion model in which 90% of daily instruction is provided in Spanish (core content) and 10% is provided in English (encore subjects). As students continue in the ACPS Dual Language Program, they will move to a 70:30 model in kindergarten, which reduces to a 50:50 language allocation plan in second through fifth grade.

Planning and budgetary considerations include the following:

- 1) **Staffing:** The bilingual staff necessary to offer a DL pre-K class are available at the ECC.
- 2) **Curriculum and Materials:** The adopted pre-K curriculum is available in Spanish. Supplementary Spanish language resources can be purchased through the DL budget.
- 3) **Enrollment:** For the pilot, enrollment priority will be given to families who qualify to participate in VPI and are zoned to attend JAES in grades K-5, with a total of 16 seats available. Assuming the success of the pilot, future consideration must be given to:
 - a) Expansion of available kindergarten DL seats at JAES;
 - b) Expansion of available pre-K DL seats at the ECC; and
 - c) Expansion of VPI classrooms to neighborhoods on the east end of the city. Currently, ACPS does not offer VPI classrooms in the neighborhoods of Mount Vernon, Cora Kelly, Charles Barrett, George Mason, or Naomi Brooks, where there is a need for such support. Expanding the DL Pre-K Program to this area would allow ACPS to provide critical early childhood education access and resources for these families. In addition, many of the eligible students are from Spanish-speaking households, and would benefit greatly from a bilingual pre-K experience.

In order to facilitate a smooth enrollment experience, family interest in the Dual Language Program will be captured during the VPI registration process. If interest exceeds capacity, a lottery process will be employed to offer seats to interested families.

RECOMMENDATION:

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

IMPACT:

The decision to expand access to the ACPS Dual Language Program to our youngest learners will enable the Division to improve long-term academic, linguistic, and social-emotional outcomes for our emergent bilingual students in grades pre-K-12, and beyond.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Dual Language Pilot Pre-K Program Proposal

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