Dual language is one type of program model for providing a language instruction educational program for English learners. This program type also serves native English speakers. Read this brief overview to learn about key features of dual language programs as well as potential variations.

Foundational Principles

In a dual language program, language is viewed as a strength and asset to be leveraged – not a problem to be fixed. Students participating in a dual language program are emergent bilinguals who are both acquiring two languages and learning *in* two languages.

Dual Language Program Goals

For English learners, a dual language program provides an English language instruction educational program, while also developing their proficiency in their home language.

For all students, the goals are:

- To become bicultural, bilingual and biliterate in English and a second language; that is, to develop proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking in two languages as well as cross-cultural communication
- To meet or exceed grade-level academic content standards and benchmarks in all subject areas, as defined by the Common Core State Standards

Dual Language Program Models

Two-way immersion models have both students whose native language is not English and students whose native language is English. This model promotes the maintenance and development of students' first language and the acquisition of a second language. It may be referred to as 50-50 or 90-10, depending on how instructional time is in English and the partner language.

One-way immersion models have students from one language background learning in two languages. This model often develops when a school consists of mostly English learners from the same language background. It promotes home language development, maintenance, and language restoration, in addition to developing English as a second language. It can also occur when most or all of the students are native English speakers learning the partner language.

Enrollment and Trajectory

- Dual language programs must provide for the educational needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students, which includes English learners and all other students.
- Dual language programs generally begin in prekindergarten or kindergarten. Some programs continue biliterate, standard-based instruction through high school.

Curriculum and Instruction

Dual language programs teach grade-level content in the target language. In general, at least 50 percent of instructional time takes place in the partner language through the elementary school grades. Schools may distribute academic content instructional time between English and the partner language differently. For example, a school teaching science and social studies in Spanish and language arts and math in English. Or, a school may create units of learning where standards, skills and content taught in one language are reinforced in the other language. However, the same lessons should not be repeated in one language and then the other. Rather, teachers should help students make cross-linguistic connections.

Family and Community Engagement

Family and community engagement should be inclusive and representative of the language and culture of the students. Families can participate in developing, implementing, and evaluating the dual language program. In addition to translating documents for families for language access purposes, schools can develop documents and presentations in English and the partner language to promote the school biliteracy and bicultural goals.

References and Resources

- Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) http://www.cal.org/
- ¡Colorin Colorado! https://www.colorincolorado.org/
- Dual Language Education of New Mexico (DLeNM) https://www.dlenm.org/
- National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE) http://www.nabe.org/
- Office of the State Superintendent of Education https://osse.dc.gov/page/k-12-education
- U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/resources.html

For question or more information on dual language professional development and technical assistance, please contact Santiago Sanchez at Santiago.Sanchez@dc.gov.