

2018-01-01

# Dual Language Programs: The Most Beneficial Way To Teach ELL Students

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## Recommended Citation

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**DUAL LANGUAGE PROGRAMS:  
THE MOST BENEFICIAL WAY TO TEACH ELL  
STUDENTS**

**Honors Thesis**

**Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the Degree of World Languages and Cultures**

In the College Arts and Sciences  
at Salem State University

By

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Commonwealth Honors Program  
Salem State University  
2018

## ABSTRACT

This paper explores the benefits of teaching ELL (English Language Learners) students through Dual Language Programs. Dual Language is the instruction of course material in both the student's native tongue, and the language he or she is trying to learn. There is evidence that ELL students lack the confidence in their learning. Because of their linguistic reality they are often perceived as different from other learners, thus leading disappointing academic results. Examples of these results are: low achievement on test scores, increased dropout rates, low graduation rates, and inadequate reading and writing proficiency. This paper focuses on research that has proven that Dual Language Programs will boost test scores, reduce the dropout rate, raise the graduation percentage and enhance proficiency in reading and writing. The general argument is that long-term goals of developing the education of ELL students in the United States will improve with the implementation of Dual Language Programs. This paper exhibits how ELL students are marginalized and thus failed by the US education system. In other words, they are not given the opportunity to learn like their English-speaking classmates. The situation is such, that it could be said that these students are not prepared to succeed academically; and thus, lack the opportunities to move forward beyond school. Dual language programs would allow ELL students to grow in many ways not solely academically, but will be given the opportunity to shine and use their linguistic reality as a resource instead of a language barrier.

Massachusetts has approximately 57,000 English Language Learner (ELL) Students enrolled in their public schools and it is going to keep on growing (Mitchell). In Massachusetts there are 1,854 public schools. (Ballotpedia). In the United States on average 9.3% of students are English language learners (Condition of Education). ELL students should be taught in a dual language program rather than in a school that is English only. Students are unsuccessful in English only schools. ELL students are more advantaged when taught in a dual-language environment, than if they were taught in an English only environment. Students are performing better academically when there is instruction in both English and the foreign language. There are lower dropout rates and higher graduation rates (Matsol).

When looking at different statistics for ELL students, they are the lowest performing subgroup in Massachusetts schools by every measure. Especially when it comes to standardized testing like the MCAS (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System). According to Kara Mitchell, an advocate for MATSOL (Massachusetts Association of Teachers of Speakers of Other Languages), on both the Ela and math on the MCAS, in every grade level, in every year that the data is made available, the ELL students have the lowest scores of any group in Massachusetts. ELL students not only perform low on the MCAS, but they have significantly low graduation rates as well. The four-year graduation rate for ELL's is around 55% each year, while the student aggregate rate is around 80% each year. With the low graduation rates comes a high dropout rate. The dropout rate for ELLs hover around 25% each year where the student aggregate is around 10% each year. ELL students have the highest dropout rate of any subgroup in the

state. (Matsol) The reason for all of this is because of the programs that they are placing these students in. In Massachusetts the ELL students are placed in English immersion programs. English immersion is a technique for rapidly teaching English to ELL students. With the research that is out there it is safe to say that this is an inflexible approach to teaching the ELL students.

The ELL students should be seen as a benefit and not something that is extra work. This just goes to show how the ELL students are being overshadowed. There is clearly a problem with the way these students are being taught and there must be an approach to improve the way these students learn. One way to do this is to implement the dual language programs. ELL students should be seen as beneficial for knowing more than one language. There is a critical need for skilled speakers of languages other than English. According to research performed by Jackson and Malone, “As a result of 21st century economic globalization and international terrorism, it has never been more urgent to develop American citizens who fully understand and communicate effectively with people of other cultures.” (Jackson and Malone 2009). It is important for the ELL students to feel confident about their ability to speak two languages because the United States as a whole can benefit from them, especially in a time of need due to the fact that English is not the dominant language in the United States anymore. There are a lot of other languages being spoken in America and we need to be able to communicate.

The education of ELL students is one of the biggest issues facing U.S. educators. ELL students make up a great portion of the schools in the United States, and it is only going to keep growing. Dr. Fred Genesee discusses the statistics that are used to prove that English is not the only language that is spoken at home. It is predominantly the

native language of the family that is spoken. "...according to National Center for Educational Statistics, in 2007, about 10.8 million (or 20%) school-aged children in the U.S. spoke a language other than English at home. This situation is not likely to change because ELLs are currently the fastest growing population in U.S. schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004), with the number of ELLs expected to increase another 50% by 2025." (Genesee). With this increasing number it is hard to believe that the U.S. education system will not do anything to improve the way the education system teaches ELL students.

However, the number of ELL students is not the problem, it is beyond that. ELL students tend to fall behind their peers academically. Not only that, but the achievement gap increases the higher the grade level. This just goes to show that educators need all of the resources they can get. There have been significant efforts to offer alternative forms of education and incorporate home language into their academics. These programs were justified due to the threats of English-only programs. This is because ELL students have to learn simultaneously, "to learn academic English to high levels, master challenging academic skills and content taught through English, adopt new social skills that would permit them to integrate with their English-speaking classmates and teachers." (Genesee). This is a lot of pressure for a student who cannot communicate in a language because the student is expected to learn so much in a short period of time. The ELL students are not getting the same benefits in the classroom as everyone else.

There are ways to improve the education system for ELL students. A study done in 2007 by the Rennie Center, looked at three schools in Massachusetts having high levels of success. Their approach was to utilize native language instruction as well as

programmatic options beyond English immersion. The results of this study encourage flexibility and experimentation with innovative approaches to meet the needs of English Language Learners. (Rennie Center 2007). Kara Mitchell focuses on what a school needs in order to be successful,

“A positive school climate for ELL’s needs to be built by valuing and fostering the development of the home languages and cultures, knowing all students well, setting high expectations for ELL’s and providing the necessary supports in order to meet these expectations. Curriculum and materials need to be appropriate for the students as does instruction and assessment. The sought after outcomes for any program for ELL’s should be: high academic achievement, strong language development, sociocultural integration, and a positive family and community impact.” (Mitchell). The way the curriculum is set up right now is not like this at all. The students are not set up to succeed in their curriculum that they have now (Genesee). The schools are set up for the ELL students to fail. The school is not focused on the success and the resources that are needed to improve the education of ELL students. In order to have a positive school climate they need to follow the steps that Mitchell (above) is trying to implement.

Dual language education are academic programs or schools that are taught in two languages. The popularity decreased significantly due to legislative actions. The instruction is set up in a way so that English and the other language alternate. The benefits of the dual language program show how important it is for society to push for this type of education (edglossary). Dual Language programs can go one of two ways. It can either be divided 50:50 or 90:10. 50:50 is when they use each language 50% of the

time. 90:10 is when 90% of the language is the second language (the language that is the person's native language) and 10% is taught in English. (Lindholm-Leary).

Palmer describes what Dual language programs are and what its main objectives are "Dual-language education, also known as "Two-Way Immersion" (TWI), is an increasingly popular form of bilingual education in the United States in which English-speaking children and minority language speakers learn together in the same classroom, with the goals of bilingualism, biliteracy, cross-cultural understanding, and high academic achievement for all." (Palmer). The point is to get the students to talk in both languages. The importance is to master both languages rather than just one.

Figueroa focuses on what the dual language program is. Many of the schools in the United States contain an increasing number of ELL students which is why they have adapted to this program. However there are schools that implement the Dual Language Program because "...this model provides an outstanding opportunity for some or all students to develop skills authentically and in two languages and to improve their overall academic achievement by working cooperatively with others and by using both languages to learn academic content." (Figueroa). The ELL students that are involved in these Dual language programs change drastically when it comes to academics. Dual language programs are responsible for the success in these students.

The mastering of the native language and English can be more beneficial to the student. Once the student has mastered both languages, they are already at an advantage over the students who solely speak English. This is especially good for students when they enter higher grades and even when they graduate because they will have more opportunities than those who do not speak another language. (Palmer) This is true



because the United States is growing in diversity and there are many different languages spoken.

It has been proven that these Dual language programs are more beneficial than the English only programs. This is especially true for the long term. The test scores in reading and math were higher than those of that learned these topics in English only. The ELL students usually score at or well above grade level and performed at comparable to superior levels when exposed to this type of instruction. It has also been stated that ELL students in dual-language programs ended up being better readers. A school in White Plains N.Y. is obtaining results, “Among second graders in dual language classes, students are outperforming their peers on Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) tests, with 82% of second graders at or above grade level, compared to 70% for the students in English-only classrooms” (Wilson). There is evidence that displays the success of the students academically. The dual language program is helping the students when it comes to taking tests.

There are three major advantages to the Dual language programs. One advantage is that ELL students will develop proficiency orally, and in reading and writing. “This gives the student a chance to compare English with their own language. Which will allow the student to analyze and refine their language use” (Howard). Another advantage to dual language programs is that students will achieve more academically. The students are not only achieving at levels in math or reading in English, they can also achieve that in their foreign language. This can positively affect general academic performance. There has been research done on the dropout rates for ELL students. Researchers (Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Thomas and Collier, 2002) have found that the dropout rates decreased

when the students were enrolled in a dual language program than if they were enrolled in an English only program. Lindholm-Leary 2003 also found that “most dual language students expect to attend college. Thus not only do dual language programs appear to improve academic performance but they may also enhance job opportunities in the future” (Howard). Dual language programs are assisting in closing the achievement gaps between the ELL students and the other students. The dual language programs sets up a better future for the ELL students

The third advantage to dual language programs is attitudinal. Students in the dual language program develop positive attitudes towards themselves as learners. They also develop an appreciation towards students of different cultural backgrounds. Researchers found that these students were happier with the friend choices they made. This lead to the students feeling more comfortable speaking a second language with students of other ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The students are now comfortable enough to engage in a society that values bilingualism. One parent of a child in the dual language program stated, “My child has the opportunity to be bilingual, biliterate, and bicultural. There are social and cognitive benefits to bilingualism. He gains a second language, a broader vocabulary, and multiple views of the world” (Howard). The students are now more self-confident because they can function in a diverse world (boerne).

Quinn discusses how ELL students who are learning to speak English tend to have a higher dropout rate. With a four year statewide (Massachusetts) graduation rate totaling 57.5% compared to 83% of other students. The ELL students who do not speak English make up 7.7% of the public school population in Massachusetts. The difference in percentages between the two different types of students is 25.5%. However Dual

language programs have had a negative connotation attached to them. Representative Jeffrey Sanchez, a sponsor of the legislation to revamp Dual language education, argues that there is a bias towards immigration when trying to implement the Dual language programs into schools in Massachusetts. He says, “Here the larger picture of immigration is attached to anything that has to do with language, the legislation is about making sure children benefit in their own school systems.” (Quinn). The people against the Dual language programs are not looking at the evidence, they are simply using their personal opinion about immigration and its relation to language to make decisions for the ELL students in Massachusetts. They do not realize how much this would benefit the students, instead they are not providing them with the most beneficial source of education for them.

There are two bills that would help the ELL students better their education in Massachusetts. The bills are H749 and S225, they would increase teaching flexibility by offering more than just the basics of ESL programs. Bill S225 would improve the progress and the success of ELL students, “In school districts with English Language Learners students, the plan to improve student performance shall include a description of the educational program models and approaches to be provided by the school to ensure the progress of English Language Learner students in developing oral comprehension, speaking, reading and writing of English, and in meeting the academic standards and curriculum frameworks.” The legislation would also hold schools and staff responsible for meeting academic standards and state and federal curriculum frameworks by requiring student evaluations and checking their progress. This would also require individualized evaluation of successes and program extension if it is necessary. The

teachers and administration working with ELL students would be required to go through training courses and their involvement with parents would be increased. The amount of conferences and committees with parents would increase. These bills would allow everyone who is involved with the students to get the right amount of training in order to better their education. It is impossible to ignore the problem when it comes to the ELL programs that are implemented in schools without dual language programs.

A teacher that taught ELL students, Patricia Medeiros Landurand, talks about how students that are in the ELL programs are not confident about themselves and the work that they put in. She says, "... it was heartbreaking to hear stories of children who cried because they are required to take the MCAS test and they can't even read the question. What is even more devastating to me is that many of these students think they are stupid." (Quinn). It is disheartening to know that the children of the future are not given the same opportunities as others. This does not allow the ELL students to reach their highest potential. Looking at the diversity in the United States and looking at the education system that is implemented for the ELL students, it puts everyone in the United States at a disadvantage. This is because a lot of people will not be able to perform at their highest potential if need be. These people are stuck, they are not allowed to go anywhere else.

Research by Genesee suggests that there is evidence that cannot be ignored. There has been great success academically when the ELL students' home language is applied to their academics. According to the evidence it is beneficial for the students as they grow older. There was a study done on ELL students in dual language programs. Lindon and Aclan found a significant positive relationship between individual student's level of

bilingual proficiency and their achievement of math and reading in English. “Taken together, data from these various studies indicate that DLE programs are capable of promoting academic performance for students of different backgrounds, including those subpopulations identified as at risk for academic difficulty.” And the students that were classified as “high bilinguals” were able to retain grade level results by fourth grade in English reading and by fourth grade in English math. (Genesee).

When the ELL students used both languages in their schools, the bilingual children exhibit cognitive advantages in problem solving, than those of their monolingual peers. Genesee stated, “Extensive research, has found that children who are learning to read in a second language are able to transfer many skills and knowledge from their first language to facilitate their acquisition of reading skills in the second language.” (Genesee). What Genesee is stating, is that the mastery of one language can enhance your abilities academically in the second language. Genesee goes on to say, “The best evidence of this comes from studies showing that students with strong reading skills in the home language also have strong reading skills in their second language. Much of this work has been done on ELLs in the U.S.” (August & Shanahan, 2006; Riches & Genesee, 2006). It is important to incorporate the home language into the classroom of the ELL students because they are performing better in the reading skills that are needed to succeed in the United States. The evidence is proving that the Dual language programs are beneficial.

Davison focuses on how one language can support another. First language literacy skills promote the development of the second language literacy skills. The age group that this study focuses on students from Kindergarten to first grade enrolled in a Spanish-

English Bilingual immersion program that are receiving instruction on their literacy instruction in their native or first language. Davison argues that it is important for the student to have attained a certain level of literacy in their First language (L1) in order to obtain proficiency in their Second Language (L2). “For students who arrive at school with little or no exposure to literacy in their L1, initial literacy instruction in the L2 will likely be too demanding, as these students will not be able to draw on a well-developed reservoir of L1 linguistic skills” (Davison). The ELL students will be more successful in their classes if they have mastery of their first language. The mastery of their first language will give the students the knowledge they need to succeed in their second language. Then the ELL students will become more successful in their academics because they will be able to work like the rest of their peers.

This article specifically focuses on two way immersion programs (TWI). TWI is when the instruction is both in the L1 and the L2 languages. This seems to be quite an effective mode of instruction due to the fact that many schools that have adopted TWI have reached their instructional goals in the L1 and L2 languages. Most of the success is attributed to the support and maintenance of the first language. With two way immersion programs, most of the instruction is either 90/10 or 50/50. 90/10 is when 90% of the time the L1 language is used. And 10% of the L2 is used. With a 50/50 model, the L1 and L2 are used 50% of the time (Davison). “Ultimately, these programs provide a unique opportunity to examine the conditions under which cross-linguistic transfer may occur, and the initial language of instruction that might best promote this transfer.” The program differs depending on the school, but either way the dual language program is a great way to keep track of the progress of ELL students.

The study was conducted in an elementary school (grades K-2) where a 50/50 model was used. The assessment they used were literary subtests in English and then in Spanish. The students were first assessed in their dominant language and the next day in their second language. These subtests consisted of letter-word identification, reading fluency, passage comprehension, word attack, picture vocabulary, reading vocabulary, and sound awareness. Letter-word identification is being able to identify letters and pronouncing words correctly. Reading fluency requires the students to read simple sentences and decide if they are true or false. The student had three minutes to complete as many items as they could. Passage comprehension is when the student must match a pictographic representation of a word to the correct picture. Then to make it a little more difficult, the student must match a correct word or phrase to the correct picture. Lastly the student must insert a keyword that makes sense in the short passage provided. Word attack requires students to produce a correct sound for each corresponding letter. To make it a little more difficult the student has to correctly sound out a series of pseudo words that are phonetically consistent with English spelling rules. Picture Vocabulary requires the student to produce the correct label for each picture provided. Reading vocabulary requires the student to provide a synonym, antonym, or analogy for each item. Sound awareness test the students on their phonological awareness abilities, including rhyming, deletion, substitution, and reversal. The results were that the first language growth does predict gains in the second language (Davison). "For all language groups, and across most measures (constrained and unconstrained), large regression slopes and patterns of low p-values suggest that first-language growth predicts gains in the second language. TWI model specified that literacy instruction occur *only* in the first language

for all these students, while providing support for oral language development in the second language.” The results show that the home language will help the students succeed academically because they will have the ability to master their language and then have enough mastery in their own language to master the language of their peers.

Collier focuses on the importance of how two languages are better than one. Therefore, bilingual education is preferred. “Dual language programs help native and nonnative speakers of English speak two languages proficiently- and they do so in cost effective ways that lead to high academic achievement for all students” (Collier). The students and the next generation are predicting an interconnected world. This is so important because there are many language learners make up about 40% of our school aged students. There are businesses that seek people who are proficient in both English and another language. Students who graduate with monocultural perspectives will not be able to contribute to their societies because cross-cultural contact is at an all-time high due to the amount of the diversity in the United States.

The first experiment with dual language programs was in 1960’s in the United States and Canada. This was conducted on students from Kindergarten to the twelfth grade. They started them at such a young age (kindergarten) because it is a natural vehicle for proficiency development in the minority language. This specific experiment was focusing on using the minority language 90% of the day and the other 10% was in English. By grade six students have developed deep academic proficiency in both languages and can perform at or above grade level in both languages. There are claims that this mode of instruction can close the equity gap. When students do academic work in their primary language for about three years, they are able to demonstrate that they are



making more gains than the native English speaker. And after five or six years, the English Language learners whom are now proficient in English are achieving test scores that are at or above grade level in English.

Samina talks about her experiences with learning five different languages. As a young girl she knew the languages of Hindi, Urdu, Telegu, Arabic and English. When she moved to the United States at just seven years old she also learned Spanish. She felt quite comfortable in Spanish and English but she was starting to lose her other languages. Her view is that, “Connecting language to a life context is a key factor in successful language education. In the United States, programs that immerse students in one language for a period of time and then accompany the switch to a second language with clear differences in context—such as the day of the week or the academic content being studied—have been the most successful in terms of long-term language proficiency gains.” (Tabassum). This has helped her maintain the knowledge of these languages and has been beneficial to her. In order for the ELL students to be successful in learning English, they have to integrate their home language into the classroom as well. This is because the programs that integrate the both languages are most successful.

Latinos tend to perform far below their other peers from the start of Kindergarten. Latinos also make up the largest minority group in the United States. The Latino public-school population nearly doubled. The U.S. Census Bureau predicts that in the year 2021, one in every four students will be Latino. In 2008, Latinos were the least educated out of all major ethnic groups. (See figure 1.1 below) This results in Latinos being in the lower end of the achievement gap. However, there is a way to implement a program for high school students that focus on dropout prevention and college-going that have proven to

be valuable for Latino Youth. The Dual language programs have been “...found to produce superior fostering positive intergroup relations and increasing Latino students’ social capital, as the Latino students are fully integrated with their middle-class peers.” (Gandara). Gandara focuses on the effects of the U.S. education system on Latino Students. In order to change the way the achievement gap looks, there needs to be a change in the way things are being taught. Gandara admires the Dual language programs because all she has seen is success. Instead of the Latino students being behind, they have the same or more opportunities than their peers. And all the credit is due to the Dual language program.

**FIGURE 1. Bachelor’s Degree Completion by Ethnicity**

Ethnicity	Year				
	1975	1985	1995	2005	2008
White	24	24	29	34	37
Black	11	12	15	18	21
Latino	9	11	9	11	12

The figures represent the percentage of 25- to 29-year-olds in the United States who completed a bachelor’s degree or higher.

Source: *Current Population Survey (CPS), Annual Social and Economic Study Supplement, 1971–2005*, previously unpublished tabulation, November 2005, and *American Community Survey 2008*, by U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce.

In New York teachers are learning with how to deal with the increase of ELL Students. The teachers are struggling with providing these students with required services to help them grow not as only students, but individuals entering the real world. The number of Dual language programs is on the rise in New York City (40 schools) as districts aim to prepare multilingual students who will compete for jobs in the global

economy. Most of the Dual-language programs are in Spanish but it is also offered in Mandarin, French, Haitian Creole, Hebrew and Japanese. New York has had a difficulty educating ELL students and the Dual language program has helped them make progress and raise achievement. “Fewer than 5 percent of ELL students passed the state’s English/language arts exams in 2014” (Mitchell). However, since the dual language program has been implemented, “Martha Abbott, the executive director of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. ‘It’s proven that these programs can yield very good results.’ (Mitchell). About four years into this adjustment and the plan to keep Dual language programs is still in place. Infante, who is the associate commissioner for the office of bilingual education and foreign language services in the state education department, has declared that, “the district has made progress, but there’s definitely still work to be done.” (Mitchell). At Public school 16, an elementary (K-5) school in New York contains about 75% past or present English learners. School officials stated that on the state exams, the elementary students enrolled in the dual language courses outperformed their peers that were assigned to talented or gifted classes. Martha Jimenez, the school’s parent coordinator says, “The program is a source of pride.” (Mitchell). The students are proud that they can perform better than their English peers. It gives the students the confidence that is needed to succeed in school. They can finally prove that they can be just as successful.

The Dual Language program is so compelling because it is very successful for students and its findings have emerged from a variety of studies. The Dual language program was successful for different authors in different parts of the country, with different types of communities (rural, urban, and suburban) and socioeconomic

backgrounds and with students of different ethnic, linguistic, socioeconomic and special education needs. The author states, how successful the Dual language program is for ELL students “Furthermore, ELL students were as or more likely to be classified by state assessments as proficient in English if they were participating in DLE programs than if they were enrolled in English mainstream programs.” (Lindholm-Leary). The research that Lindholm-Leary has done just shows the advantages to this program and how it will help ELL students for their future when they start working in their careers.

Compared to English only programs, Dual language programs tend to be the best and most beneficial route for the ELL students. Recent research (Barnett, Yarosz, Thomas, Jung, & Blanco, 2007) has shown that ELL students in Dual language programs have made gains in English comparable to the ELL students in English only programs. Both ELL students and native English speakers tend to demonstrate significant growth in a language as a result of the dual language programs, creating children who are truly bilingual. Also, children in dual language programs can experience academic gains, including gains in early literacy skills, comparable to those of children in English only programs. (Ford). This proves that the ELL student will benefit more from the dual language programs rather than English only. There are so many advantages to the dual language program when it is compared to the English only. The point in education is to teach the students to become independent individuals. They are going to be more advanced and develop the skills they need a lot faster if they are enrolled in these dual language programs. The research proves how much the dual language programs help students gain academic success.

Dual language programs are suitable for children of all ages and it even starts to show when children start preschool. Bilingual children are at an advantage in developing early literacy skills. Many bilingual children have highly developed metalinguistic skills (Bialystok, 1997; Garcia, 2000). Moving between languages is thought to make students more adept to paying attention to sounds and patterns in a language, which is necessary to reading. They have the ability to learn how to read at an earlier age because they have the cognitive skill that the two languages provide for them. When it comes to the preparation of a second language the foundational literacy skills developed in one language often transfers to a second language (Durgunoglu, Nagy, & Hancin-Bhatt, 1993). As children continue to develop language and literacy skills in their first language, those skills provide a scaffold for developing those same skills in their second language. “For young children managing more than one language, academic skills are much more likely to develop and transfer between languages when environments provide access to knowledge through both languages in culturally relevant ways. Environments that do not provide this access can stifle cognitive development” (Garcia). In order for the student’s brain to develop cognitively, they need access to both of the languages they are learning, not just one. It is important they master their native language before they master another.

The Dual language programs have had a big part in increasing the number of students, especially ELL students. Chuck Ransom, superintendent of public schools in Woodburn, Ohio credits the Dual language program for their high graduation rate. The recent data shows that Woodburn’s class of 2014 accomplished the state’s best on time graduation rate for Latino students, 88 percent and the second highest for students who learned English as a second language, 87 percent. Of all of these students 88 percent of

the students are low income and they still graduated on time. (Hammond). Overall, Woodburn graduated 87 percent of its students on time. This has beat the rate of the state's average by 15 percent. The percentage of students who graduated on time is a significant amount. There were students who learned English as their second language and the dual language programs helped them graduate. Another accomplishment is "the lack of gap between Latino and white students and between low income and not low-income students stand out as a starting exception to patterns long engrained in Oregon and around the nation." (Hammond). In Woodburn the achievement gap is slowly closing because of the Dual language programs and the help it provides to the students to become successful.

Ransom was a bilingual teacher before he was superintendent and he claims, "...the district's switch from educating students in pull-out English as a second language classes to offering dual language instruction that includes lots of content taught in Spanish for Woodburn's majority Spanish-speaking student body has been key." (Hammond). Ransom has even said that the parents in the district really like the Dual language programs too. Ransom has had firsthand experience in working with the ELL students and he believes that the reason for all of the success is because of the Dual language program that he has implemented in the Woodburn public schools.

English language learners make up about 10% of the student population in public schools in the United States. With the amount of diversity in the United States, this number is only going to rise. A lot or most of the schools in the United States teach ELL students through sheltered instruction or English only, but that does not allow students to make consistent use of their primary language and learn more about their culture. Instead

they just bombard the children with vocabulary and grammar. This does not allow the students to become proficient in their own language. Once they become proficient in their own language, it will be a lot easier to learn English. (Getting Smart). “According to their report, the most effective method in the early years of dual language education is to have 90% of instructional time in the partner language and 10% in English (90:10). Within this structure, both English learners and English speakers first learn how to read” (Getting Smart). This gives the students the opportunity to master their own language before they can master the second language. When they master the second language, they will start to use it more often.

The majority of ELL students are native Spanish speakers, they make up about 51 percent of majority-minority neighborhoods and are the fastest growing demographic in the United States. Hispanic teenagers are also the highest percentage of students who have higher dropout rates, coming in at 14 percent. James Johnson compiled data and he believes, “that to be successful, these students require soft skills- cultural and linguistic literacy and preparation for the world we live in now.” (Getting Smart). Hispanic students are at very high risk for being unsuccessful when it comes to graduating high school and getting a job in the real world. There is a problem with the way the native language is not utilized in the classroom. The dual language program would incorporate the native language and they would allow them to master their native language. And once they master their native language they will have the ability to master English. Once they have the cognitive ability to master two languages they will have the opportunity to go into the real world and become successful. It is like a chain reaction and it all starts with the dual language program and being able to use the native language in the classroom.

ELL students do not benefit from the early exit approach. Once the teachers feel like the ELL students are proficient enough in the second language, they place them in a monolingual classroom. However, they never become proficient or master their native language. When the student does not fully understand their own language, it becomes more difficult for the student to succeed in any monolingual classes. “A child's primary language is used for content area instruction so that students do not fall behind their English-speaking peers in science, social studies, and mathematics while the second language is being developed” (Murphy). Research has shown the advantages to teaching students in their native language and English they will become bilingual and they will also succeed academically. Murphy states, “Instruction in the native language not only instills proficiency in that language, but also serves to promote conceptual development and academic understanding that can be transferred to the second language.” (Murphy). The development in one language advances and supports the ability to learn the second language.

This then gives the opportunity for the ELL students and the native English speakers to work together to build relationships and strengthen their languages, “In dual-language programs, rather than attempting to eliminate or downplay the first language, educators use it as a critical bridge to mastering the second language through the implementation of cognitive strategies already learned in the first language.” (Murphy). Researchers have proved over and over that dual language programs are essential and beneficial to ELL students because the two languages strengthen each other when the opportunity to learn both languages is given.



When both native English speakers and the ELL students are being challenged, it allows all the students to be on the same level. This means the teacher does not need to worry about time constraint as much as if they only had a number of students behind. Murphy talks about the ultimate goal of the dual language program, “The ultimate goal is to create a learning environment that promotes bilingual development in two languages and fosters positive attitudes for each language group and its surrounding culture.” (Murphy). In fact, being bilingual or learning two languages is a resource rather than a problem. And the main focus of the Dual language program appropriately promotes the right to learn one’s native language. The content of in both classes should be the exact same, the only thing that is changing is the language of instruction.

Children of Hispanic or Latino descent make up most of the ELL students in the United States. Right now, Hispanics and Latino students are way behind their white and Asian peers. They fall behind academically in reading and mathematics. Garcia has researched this epidemic and why the Hispanic and Latino students struggle so much and he has found, “...practices in the home and school greatly influence racial/ethnic and socioeconomic achievement gaps in early education. The home language environment plays a considerable role in school achievement.” (Garcia). If the home language plays a role in academic success, it is important that it be implemented in the school system when teaching the ELL students.

The low academic achievement rate can start as early as kindergarten. Garcia elaborates on how this achievement gap that starts in kindergarten can affect the ELL students in high school and college, “Academic achievement gaps for Hispanics- especially for those who enter school not speaking English-exist at the beginning of

kindergarten, solidify in grades 3-8, and result in significantly lower rates of high school completion and college attendance.” (Garcia). The school systems are determining the future for the ELL students by not allowing their native or home language allowed in the classroom when they put them in monolingual classrooms. The schools should embrace the languages that the students are able to speak and utilize it to help them become successful in world outside of school.

There are many things that can be done to improve these students’ academic success. There should be rich language environments. Teachers should encourage the students to talk as much as possible and to speak Spanish and English in the classroom to expose themselves to both languages. Research shows that bilingual approaches to curriculum and instruction are better rather than English only. Garcia talks about how being bilingual can help with cognitive development, “For young children managing more than one language, academic skills are much more likely to develop and transfer between languages when environments provide access to knowledge through both languages in culturally relevant ways. Environments that do not provide this access can stifle cognitive development.” ELL students should be able to learn two languages and master them, so they can be at the same level as their peers. Dual language programs also improve academic success. Integrating the ELL students with the English speakers in the same classroom allows ethnic and linguistic equity among the students. Instead of the Hispanic students being behind it is important that they are brought up to speed with their English speaking peers. This way they will be successful academically and socially.

ELL students are being left behind in the United States education system. They are not given the opportunity to learn like the rest of their peers. They are setup to not

succeed academically and they do not have the chance to move forward. The Dual language programs would allow students to grow in many ways other than academically. They are given the chance to shine and use their language barrier as a resource rather than the language barrier being a problem. When the ELL students study in schools with the Dual language program, they become more advantaged, they receive better test scores on standardized tests, there are lower dropout rates, and a higher graduation rate. The Dual language program helps the ELL students of the future that will be America's next generation.

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