

ASK GINGER AND WAYNE:

Hello to all you wonderful dual language educators! We have agreed to write a column for this website several times each year. We are writing informally in the style of newspapers that used to carry “advice columns” written by savvy advisers. So here is our first “Advice for dual language educators” column!

DUAL LANGUAGE AT THE MIDDLE SCHOOL: Some Important Reasons to Continue Your Successful Elementary Dual Language Program into Grades 6-8:

(Note: In this advice column below, we are using Spanish as an example of a partner language, but in these points you can substitute any other partner language—Korean, Arabic, Hindi, Russian, Mandarin,)

- (1) Middle schools can have lots of newly arriving Spanish-speaking immigrants and the Dual Language (DL) program is where they belong! They should continue their schooling in Spanish, to keep up or catch up with grade-level academic work. During their English time, assuming they are beginning ESL students, they should work with the ESL content teachers. When ready they can join bilingual/biliterate DL students in English language arts and other subjects in English, while continuing at least half of their coursework in Spanish. This strategy provides them the most efficient instructional use of their remaining years in school, by keeping them from falling behind in their content coursework and by building on their previous education and proficiency in Spanish.
- (2) In fact, DL at the middle school assists all DL students who still need to work on gap closure, including DL native English speakers from low socioeconomic backgrounds, as well as English learners who arrived in later grades or who missed some schooling during their elementary school years.
- (3) Cognitive development is a major outcome of a well-implemented DL program, and middle school academic work is cognitively complex and demanding. Middle school DL gives students the opportunity to further accelerate their cognitive development to meet secondary curricular challenges through both languages.
- (4) Middle school DL programs are not the same as elementary versions. For example, categories such as 90:10, 80:20, or 50:50 do not apply to secondary DL coursework. The secondary DL program is first defined by the number of courses offered in the partner language which includes core content coursework required for graduation.
- (5) Usually the courses offered in the partner language for DL 6th-7th-8th graders are one Spanish language arts class (taught at very high level, including Spanish AP courses) and one or two grade-level content courses in either math, science, or social studies taught by academically proficient Spanish-speaking teachers certified in the subjects being taught.
- (6) Bilingually schooled students are high achievers! Both Spanish-speaking and English-speaking DL students who have attended DL since K or 1st grade are typically at least one grade ahead of their non-DL peers by the middle school years, and sometimes two grades ahead. This is because fully academically proficient bilinguals outscore monolinguals on most tests in either language. Thus the DL program must continue the academic and cognitive challenge at secondary level, with stimulating, high-level courses.
- (7) Middle and high school students are in the process of becoming young adults, and the secondary DL program gives DL students opportunities to prove to themselves how their bilingual/multicultural capabilities

will be important to their adult lives. By building on and expanding their bilingual proficiency, content mastery, and cross-cultural understanding that was begun in elementary school, DL students in middle school begin to see how their DL education is relevant to their future. DL secondary students are preparing to function at high cognitive levels in their evolving bilingual/multicultural contexts as adults in their home communities and in professional contexts.

(8) DL middle school programs lead to higher graduation rates! No more middle school dropouts or serious misbehavior! DL high school graduates are outperforming all other students and after graduation leading successful lives, through continuing studies and using their proficient bilingualism in professional contexts.

Note: Be sure to get a copy of our latest book, *Transforming Secondary Education: Middle and High School Dual Language Programs*. In this book, 21 contributing authors with extensive secondary DL experience from 10 states have shared their expertise, their effective implementation strategies, and their passion about secondary dual language education. They have lots of important information to tell you!

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