

ASK GINGER AND WAYNE:

DUAL LANGUAGE AT THE HIGH SCHOOL: Some Important Reasons to Continue Your Successful PK-8 Dual Language Program for All Grades PK-12:

In our first column, we discussed the importance of continuing your dual language (DL) program into the middle school years. This column extends our discussion to the high school years.

(1) DL high school programs lead to **very high graduation rates** for English learners! Big reductions in dropouts and misbehavior! No more long-term English learners! For example, the Omaha, Nebraska, and Woodburn, Oregon, public school K-12 DL programs have demonstrated dramatically increased graduation rates (see Chapters 4 and 7 of our secondary DL book), as well as success with “growing their own” bilingual teachers among the graduates of their DL programs. Once the DL program was established, Woodburn’s graduation rate for English learners attending the Academy of International Studies increased in two years from 41 to 91% (p. 108). Omaha South High Magnet School DL faculty work intensively with students as needed, to graduate 100% of their DL students each year.

(2) An early decision in the planning stages of the high school DL program is to offer a significant number of courses in the non-English (partner) language, **including core content coursework required for graduation**. Many of these offerings should be **AP courses**, because DL students are high achievers, typically 1-2 grades ahead of their non-DL peers. If these courses are not offered in the partner language, the DL students will enroll in the English AP section instead, in order to accelerate their completion of university credits. This reduces DL program enrollment, so it is important to provide courses that the students request in the partner language. Do not worry that the state tests are in English. DL high school students can easily pass the test in English, even though the course is taught in the non-English language.

(3) This means that you should plan ahead for **bilingual/credentialed faculty** who are qualified to teach these AP courses in the partner language.

(4) Your high school DL students also will want opportunities for **electives** taught in the partner language. Plan this carefully with bilingually certified faculty who can offer these electives. DL courses taught in the partner language, both electives and core content AP courses, are popular with DL former English learners, and DL native English speakers—these DL students, whether of low-income or middle-income background, are high achievers!

(5) Similar to the middle school program, **newly arriving immigrants** who are on or close to grade level in the partner language are important enrollees in the DL courses. The DL program serves these students well, allowing them to continue receiving credits for graduation while they are developing their English skills through ESL content courses with the ESL faculty, who are also part of the DL program.

(6) High school students crave the opportunities to actually use their skills in “real world” contexts. The DL program can provide DL students with **internships** and “professional shadow” opportunities to work in a context **where their bilingualism is required**. For example, we know of DL high school students who have become certified translators for local medical services or for work with community agencies and businesses. Properly constructed and monitored, these programs can offer invaluable educational experiences for the students and worthwhile service to their communities.

(7) DL high school students are impressively articulate and capable. When their leadership is given a more formal role, they can provide very helpful advice to improve the DL program. As a **DL student advisory council**, they can mentor the younger DL students and help the faculty to understand students' needs (see Chapter 2 of our secondary book).

(8) Continuing the DL program all the way through all grades leads to high achievement and DL student attainment of the **Biliteracy Seal**, a credential that helps your students gain admission to four-year universities and higher salaries in their professional life. DL high school graduates' bilingual/intercultural/cross-disciplinary knowledge is developed in high school to adult levels, providing them with lifelong assets in their personal and professional lives.

(9) DL high schools attain higher test scores, higher ratings, and professional success for faculty and students!

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 DL education. They have lots of important information to tell you!

Virginia Collier and Wayne Thomas