REYNOLDS SCHOOL DISTRICT

Dual Language Action Plan

Introduction and Purpose

Reynolds School District (RSD) serves a linguistically diverse student population by supporting language learning and access to core content instruction through a variety of program models and instructional strategies. RSD acknowledges that dual language education is the most effective model for serving students identified as English learners, promoting both home language and English language development through grade-level content learning. For many years, Reynolds School District students have benefitted from a comprehensive dual language program at the elementary level, developed to serve students identified as English learners while offering enrichment for all students.

Reynolds School District first implemented its two-way dual language programming at Alder Elementary more than 25 years ago to support better outcomes for native Spanish-speaking students. Since then, RSD's dual language program at Alder Elementary has experienced a shift in student population, district resources, and community interest. As a result, the program has evolved into a one-way dual language program primarily serving students from Spanish-speaking homes in the community, most of whom are designated as English learners. Significant changes in school staff and district leadership have posed challenges to RSD's attempts to maintain the program as it was originally designed and support program refinement while adapting to the evolving needs of RSD's multilingual learners.

About this guide

In fall 2022, RSD began to develop guidance for improving its current dual language program to better support student outcomes, program access for the community at large, and program staff retention. The district's Department of Multilingual Education (DOME) director, supported by Education Northwest, facilitated a workgroup composed of a diverse group of RSD educators, DOME and content area teachers on special assignment, members of the Article 26b Committee, and K–12 school and district administrators. The purpose of the workgroup was to further develop and refine guidance for best practices and successful implementation of the dual language program.

The workgroup, in collaboration with Education Northwest, set out to accomplish two key goals centered on research, evidence-based practices, and the needs of RSD staff and students:

- Assess dual language program practices to incorporate current and relevant research-based pedagogy and strengthen program effectiveness to benefit students.

- Create dual language program guidance through the development of recommended action steps for implementation.

In preparation and to inform the process, Education Northwest reviewed existing dual language program documents, engaged in classroom observations of the dual language program, and collected staff, student, and community data. Facilitated by Education Northwest staff the dual language program workgroup reviewed current research, best practices, and the status of the dual language program. It then provided feedback and recommendations to refine program practices following the Center for Applied Linguistics Guiding Principles for Dual Language Education.

The purpose of this action plan is to address the varied and evolving needs of the multilingual learners served by the dual language program, support alignment and cohesion for the existing program, and guide RSD teachers, principals, and district staff members to best serve their students. The development of this action plan was a collaborative effort and is intended to serve educators, instructional staff members, and school and district administrators as an internal reference and resource to align educational responsibilities and practices for dual language programming and plan for future program development in the district.

Reynolds School District Beliefs

Reynolds School District Mission Statement

We lead with equity to educate and support all students to graduate with the skills and confidence to thrive.

Reynolds School District Vision Statement

As a community, we prepare lifelong learners to achieve their full potential in a complex and interconnected world.

In alignment with the mission and vision of Reynolds school district, DOME is committed to empowering multilingual learners to become global citizens who are linguistically, socially, and culturally equipped for success in school and beyond. We lead with equity, honor multilingualism, and will meet the individual needs of multilingual learners by ensuring equitable access to engaging, high-quality, culturally and linguistically relevant, and rigorous instruction. We believe in an asset-

based approach to student learning that incorporates students' social, cultural, and linguistic competency and funds of knowledge.

RSD's DOME developed the following principles and vision in spring 2022 in collaboration with a designated workgroup representing Reynolds K–12 teachers and administrators, both core content and language development specialists, and our partners at Education Northwest. Our goal is to define RSD's core beliefs about the needs of multilingual learners, particularly students identified as English learners. The principles below provide guidance to ensure all district stakeholders are held accountable for the equitable education of multilingual learners throughout their RSD experience.

Department of Multilingual Education (DOME) Guiding Principles

1. Reynolds multilingual learners engage in meaningful learning that values, harnesses, and develops their cultural and linguistic assets.

2. Reynolds multilingual learners develop language skills through scaffolded interaction with peers, strategic and explicit language instruction, and differentiated supports in content classes.

3. Reynolds educators hold high expectations for all students and deliver rigorous academic instruction.

4. Reynolds educators engage in a continuous cycle of teaching, learning, and assessment.

5. Reynolds School District provides a well-defined, well-implemented, evidence-based language learning model that includes English language development and dual language immersion.

6. Reynolds School District creates and implements policies and practices to ensure students have universal access to core instruction, support services, and enrichment opportunities.

7. Reynolds School District provides a clear and unified process for identifying student needs.

8. Reynolds School District provides educators with training and support to improve their ability to serve multilingual learners throughout the school day.

9. Partnerships between schools and families/caregivers are essential for student success.

Department of Multilingual Education
Vision

Reynolds families and caregivers

- Bring multiple perspectives to broaden and influence student and educator learning
- Lend linguistic and cultural assets to strengthen the school and community
- Build partnerships with the school to promote engagement, inclusion, and belonging in their child's education

All Reynolds staff ensure equitable education for multilingual learners in all classes and throughout the school day.

Reynolds multilingual learner students

- Engage in meaningful learning where their multilingualism and cultural assets are valued, harnessed, and developed
- Develop language through purposeful and scaffolded interactions with peers
- Actively participate in strategic and explicit language learning in all language and content classes
- Receive differentiated supports for grade level access in content classes
- Have opportunities to develop literacy in multiple languages, including their home language

Reynolds School District

- Provides an evidence-based, well defined, and well implemented language learning model that includes English language development and dual language immersion
- Creates and implements policies and practices to ensure students have universal access to core instruction, support services, and enrichment opportunities
- Provides a clear and unified process for identifying student needs
- Provides educators with training and support to improve their ability to serve multilingual learners throughout the school day
- Partners with parents and families to engage with their child's education in a language they understand
- Hires, recruits, and retains educators who are committed to providing multifaceted instructional supports for all learners

Reynolds educators

- Hold high expectations for all students and deliver rigorous academic instruction
- Engage in a continuous cycle of teaching, learning, and assessment
- Differentiate and scaffold academic language supports in all classes
- Celebrate and promote students' multilingualism and cultural assets
- Collaborate to support students' language development through focused language instruction
- Provide equitable access to rigorous grade level instruction for multilingual learners

What is Dual Language Education?

Dual language education is a comprehensive, asset-based educational model that provides students with access to core content instruction in two languages, one of which is English. The foundational goals of dual language for all students are bilingualism and biliteracy, grade-level academic achievement in two languages, and sociocultural competence (see figure 1). The structure of dual language education may vary, but an essential element is to deliver a minimum of 50 percent of the instruction in the partner language.

Dual language programs seek to develop literacy in English and a partner language as well as familiarity with the cultures connected to each language. Students study academic subjects in both languages, and programs may extend into high school. Classes ideally include native speakers of English and the partner language.

Figure 1. The Three Pillars of Dual Language Education

Source: Center for Applied Linguistics, 2019

The Benefits of Dual Language Education

Multilingual learners are students who are building on the foundational strength of their home language while simultaneously learning English. Dual language programs serve multilingual learners whether they are currently, were previously, or were never classified as English learner students. All students in these programs work toward high levels of bilingualism and biliteracy in both program languages. Harnessing multilingual learners' linguistic and cultural assets allows for increased engagement and facilitates greater learning.

Dual language education provides all students with important cognitive, academic, and socio-cultural benefits. These programs help students maintain proficiency in their home language, prevent language loss, and build academic literacy skills that are easily transferred to English. Studies have shown that bilingual students have greater cognitive flexibility and outperform monolingual peers in executive control tasks (Bialystock, 2011).

Students who spend more time in school developing their primary language show stronger proficiency in English (August & Shanahan, 2006). Students who come from homes where languages other than English are spoken are better able to access and learn content through their home language—this is particularly true for students designated as English learners (Ball, 2010; Lindholm-Leary & Genesee, 2014). In the long term, students who participate in dual language programs demonstrate higher academic achievement in comparison to peers who participate in monolingual programming. A rigorous study of dual-immersion programs, using data from Portland Public Schools, found a significant positive effect on reading and a higher rate of reclassification for English learner students (Steele, Slater, Miller, Li, Burkhauser & Bacon, 2017).

Building and maintaining fluency in culturally and linguistically diverse students' home language(s) supports positive identity development and enables communication with multiple generations, while promoting empathy and cross-cultural understanding for all students. Additionally, students are more likely to engage in learning when their cultural and linguistic identities are leveraged as assets.

Students in dual language programs have been found to be more likely than their peers in mainstream programs to complete high school, participate in Advanced Placement courses, have positive attitudes towards school and bilingualism, as well as to have a greater understanding and appreciation of other cultures (de Jong & Bearse, 2011; Thomas & Collier, 2002).

Although all students may benefit from bilingual education, dual language programs are designed to meet the academic, social, and cultural needs of students classified as English learners. Consequently, English learners demonstrate higher levels of achievement through participation in dual language than other types of programs.

Dual Language Education in RSD

By federal law, multilingual learners classified as English learners must learn the same core content as their native English-speaking peers. At the same time, they must develop the academic language associated with the content they learn, in addition to social language skills to connect with peers and navigate an English-dominant society. These students have a civil right to learn English and grade-level academic content without being segregated from their classmates. Dual language programming in Reynolds provides students with access to core content learning and explicit language development in both English and Spanish.

RSD's Dual Language Instructional Vision

RSD's vision for dual language programming is to provide instruction that leverages student assets, empowers the learner, and prepares students to graduate while celebrating their bilingual and cultural identities. Our dual language program supports strong development of bilingualism and biliteracy within a culturally and linguistically responsive framework of equitable instruction that reflects students' and families' lived experiences. We teach rich and engaging content that integrates holistic language development practices so that students have opportunities to grow and excel academically and linguistically. We value both program languages equally and engage with families as knowledgeable and trusted partners. Our goal is to build socioculturally competent bilingual readers, writers, and communicators prepared to meet the demands of college and career and to engage as productive citizens.

Defining Multilingual Learners in RSD

Multilingual students have a wide range of experiences, knowledge, assets, strengths, and needs. Students participating in dual language may fall into one or more of the following categories:

- **Heritage speakers** are multilingual learners who have a cultural connection to the target language through their family or home environment and may have learned it informally. Their stronger language is typically English, and they may or may not be classified as English learner students. Heritage speakers' linguistic assets can be harnessed to benefit their learning through dual language programs.

- **Simultaneous bilinguals** are students who learn English and their home language at the same time. Multilingual learners often acquire both languages in the home and can maintain both while building their literacy skills in dual language programs.

- **Sequential bilinguals** are students who learn one language before learning another. Multilingual learners classified as English learners are often sequential bilinguals, learning English after their home language. Dual language programs are effective for preventing loss of the home language while building home language literacy skills.

- **Newcomers** are English learners born outside the United States who have been enrolled in U.S. schools for less than two academic years. Newcomers arrive with a wide range of experiences and preparation. Dual language programs are a culturally and linguistically supportive environment for newly arrived students that builds upon students' existing skills and assets.

- **Students with limited or interrupted formal education** (SLIFE), also known as students with interrupted formal education (SIFE), are newcomers who have experienced significant gaps in their access to formal education. Some of these students may have had some of their schooling in refugee camps, while others may not have had access to formal education at all.

- **Dual-identified students,** also called English learner students with disabilities (ELSWD), are students who are classified as English learners and have an identified disability with either an individualized education program (IEP) or 504 plan. Bilingual learners have the right to access dual language programs and research suggests that these programs are as successful and appropriate a placement for dual-identified students as they are for students without disabilities.

RSD students who live in the Alder attendance boundary and who come from homes where Spanish is spoken have the opportunity to participate in the district's dual language program (table 1).

Table 1. Students who benefit from access to dual language programs

Student language profiles	Program access point	Program goals and outcomes
Home language speakers of the target language	General program access at the kindergarten or grade 1 level*	- Bilingualism and biliteracy - Grade-level academic achievement in both program languages - Sociocultural competence
Simultaneous bilinguals	General program access at the kindergarten or grade 1 level*	
Newcomers	Upon arrival at any point in the K–5 trajectory	
Heritage speakers	General program access at the kindergarten or grade 1 level*	
SLIFE	Upon arrival at any point in the K–5 trajectory	
Dually identified students	General program access at the kindergarten or grade 1 level*	

*Individual student and family background and circumstances should be viewed on a case-by-case basis to grant students who are home language speakers of the target language access at various points in the K-5 trajectory.

RSD's Current Dual Language Program Model

Alder Elementary is the site of a transitional one-way bilingual program serving students whose home language is identified as Spanish and who are qualified to receive services as English language learners. The Alder program is a strand within a school that also serves students in classrooms where the language of instruction is only English. The bilingual program makes up about half of the school population and currently ends at grade 5, as students do not have dual language course options at the middle or high school level.

RSD's Dual Language Program Recommendations

The Guiding Principles for Dual Language Education

The Center for Applied Linguistics' *Guiding Principles for Dual Language Education—Third Edition* is used as a framework and primary resource for the collaborative work presented in this document. The recommendations for action below are organized around, informed by, and aligned to the research and guidance for best practices for dual language education (Howard et al., 2018). The guiding principles are presented within the **seven strands for dual language program development:**

1. Program structure
2. Curriculum
3. Instruction
4. Assessment & Accountability
5. Staff Quality & Professional Development
6. Family & Community
7. Support & Resources

In some strands the workgroup identified important areas for future consideration without making specific recommendations. Where the workgroup did make recommendations, they are listed by priority as identified by the workgroup.

Through deep and thorough study of the guiding principles, the RSD dual language workgroup surfaced specific areas of focus for dual language program development and refinement. Although the workgroup reviewed all seven strands, not all resulted in specific recommendations for program improvement. RSD educators and administrators identified the following important values to consider when developing action plan recommendations:

- Bilingual and biliterate student outcomes
- Equitable funding of the program
- Valuing student assets and diversity
- Celebrating student and family culture

- Creating a welcoming and safe school environment
- Supporting and retaining highly trained bilingual staff
- Promoting parent and family engagement and partnership
- Robust district and school resources
- Program longevity and K–12 trajectory
- Consistent dual language vision shared by all stakeholders

Recommendations and areas for consideration proposed by the dual language workgroup and organized within the seven strands follow below.

Strand 1. Program Structure

High quality and cohesive dual language programs are characterized by a well-developed and articulated structure providing a strong foundation for all other aspects of the program. A robust program structure implemented with fidelity results in strong student outcomes. Research-based elements of effective dual language program structure addressed in the guiding principles include:

- Equity and a positive school environment
- Effective leadership
- Ongoing, continuous program planning
- Considerations for developing or refining a dual language program
  - Program duration
  - Language allocation
  - Literacy instruction
  - Student demographics

Program Structure Recommendations

1. Create a dual language program mission statement, that can be shared widely, to guide stakeholders in ensuring goals and vision of dual language programming in Reynolds are clear and inform any program refinement.
2. Refine the existing one-way program at Alder to align with a clearly articulated 90/10 language allocation plan.
3. Develop a dual language trajectory and feeder pattern K–12.
4. Conduct a feasibility study to determine potential sites for two-way immersion programs and include languages other than Spanish.

Ensure that Dual Language Immersion (DLI) students feed into one middle school to continue a strong program expansion.

Strand 2. Curriculum

Dual language curriculum should align standards that reflect biliteracy within an asset-based approach to instruction that emphasizes integration of language standards across content areas. Research-based elements of effective dual language programming addressed in the guiding principles include:

- Alignment with standards, assessment, and the vision of bilingualism and biliteracy
- Inclusion of thematic or cross-disciplinary approaches
- Alignment and articulation
- Promotion of multiculturalism, linguistic diversity, and equity
- Infusion of technology

This strand needs further study for development of recommendations for the future.

Strand 3. Instruction

Effective dual language instruction is well coordinated between program languages and attends to bilingualism, biliteracy, and sociocultural competence. Addressing the language needs of English learner students in a positive and supportive environment through cognitively rigorous instruction is associated with higher student outcomes and has a long-lasting effect on student achievement. Research-based elements of effective dual language programming addressed in the guiding principles include:

- Language and literacy development
- Language input
- Oral language development and instruction
- Literacy development and instruction
- Language of instruction/separation of languages
- Grouping practices

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Instruction Recommendations

1. Align instructional practices and collaboration to focus on oracy and language development so that all students develop language within the four domains of speaking, listening, reading, and writing in all content areas.

2. Provide professional learning and capacity building schoolwide around translanguaging to effectively build bilingualism and biliteracy for all students.

3. Implement bilingual curriculum planning across grade levels to coordinate instruction holistically and support cohesive language and content learning across a student's school experience.

4. Use cultural learning objectives so that instruction addresses and includes the pillar of sociocultural competence and promotes building students' critical consciousness.

5. Provide environmental bilingual support inside and outside classrooms, such as bilingual signs and labels, color-coded to demonstrate the value of all program languages and ensuring learning resources are visible, accessible, and useful to students.

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Strand 4. Assessment & Accountability

Dual language assessment practices aligned to these guiding principles are characterized by the use of multiple measures to inform program implementation and to understand and monitor student progress. It is vital that dual language assessment practices include collection of data related to content and language learning in both program languages and consider the learning and language trajectories of dual language students. Research-based elements of effective dual language programming addressed in the guiding principles include:

- Formative assessment
- Assessment in dual language
- Assessment and infrastructure

After the dual language program structure is defined this strand will need further study for development of future recommendations.

Strand 5. Staff Quality & Professional Development

Dual language teachers require a high level of proficiency in the languages in which they teach. They also need training and support to grow as knowledgeable practitioners who are adept at facilitating the complex art of dual language instruction while understanding pedagogy specific to bilingual learners. Dual language programs where educators establish positive culturally and linguistically responsive classroom environments better meet student needs.

Staff Quality & Professional Development Recommendations

1. Develop a comprehensive, multiyear dual language professional development plan and schedule that leverages our current dual language teachers and administration to support current program needs.

2. Develop a staff recruitment and retention plan for well-trained and qualified staff to support the DLI program.

3. Maintain coaching support and collaboration so that DLI educators can strengthen and grow their instructional practices.

4. Offer a stipend for dual language teachers to attend professional learning sessions so that all bilingual staff members feel supported in their learning and invested in improving instructional practice.

5. Contract with leaders in the field to work with the program to support educator learning and provide access to expertise.

6. Identify and support existing bilingual educators in our district who are invested in the program and grow a cohort to prepare for future staffing needs.

Strand 6. Family & Community

Family and community engagement and support are essential to the success of students and dual language programs. Ethnically and linguistically diverse families often face barriers to participation in school, despite wanting to support their children's success. Research shows that higher levels of family engagement are associated with higher student achievement, language proficiency, positive social skills, and higher graduation rates (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2018, p.106).

Family & Community Recommendations

1. Inform parents and students about the benefits of dual language programs so they can participate as knowledgeable, equal partners.

2. Highlight the voices of families participating in the dual language program to improve community perceptions of the program.

3. Welcome parents and students as important members of a dual language advisory committee to value multiple perspectives and family funds of knowledge in the improvement of the dual language program.

Strand 7. Support & Resources

Student achievement is directly affected by the level of district engagement and support for dual language programming. Concentrated positive engagement and understanding of dual language at the district and school levels promotes equitable support and distribution of resources for successful implementation.

Support & Resources Recommendations

1. Focus district commitment, planning, resources, and support on dual language programming.

2. Provide transportation for greater student access and to remove barriers to dual language programming to address inequitable academic outcomes, especially for multilingual learners.

In conclusion, aligned with best practices and research on dual language education, Reynolds School District can focus efforts to engage and support families, improve bilingual instruction, and dedicate district resources to grow dual language education as a vehicle for equity. The recommendations provided in this document will support the district in refining and strengthening the current dual language program and expanding equitable access for multilingual students and families to educational opportunities that best meet their unique needs.

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Reference

Howard, E. R., Lindholm-Leary, K. J., Rogers, D., Olague, N., Medina, J., Kennedy, B., Sugarman, J., & Christian, D., (2018). *Guiding principles for dual language education* (3rd Ed.). Center for Applied Linguistics.