Dual Language education, where students are learning in two languages simultaneously in a classroom setting, has the power to transform Washington schools while significantly improving outcomes for all students. With growing demand from parents, students, and community leaders for dual language learning opportunities, the legislature can take a bold step to expand Dual language learning programs in Washington through support of SB5529/HB445.

Dual Language Programs are Effective:
ELL and Native English Students Outperform Their Peers

By 2025, 1 in 4 students enrolled in Washington State public schools will be an English language learner (ELL) or have an immigrant/refugee parent. With the demographics of Washington State rapidly changing, we must meet the needs of our increasingly diverse student body with evidence-based strategies that improve school readiness and student outcomes. It is imperative that we begin to implement these proven strategies to close the opportunity gap and that we begin those investments now.

Investing in dual language programming and infrastructure can be a key strategy for closing the opportunity gap. Research shows that ELL students who begin dual language programs in preschool have higher academic achievement by the end of 3rd grade and beyond. Moreover, ELLs who begin dual language programs in kindergarten are meeting academic standards and begin surpassing their peers by sixth grade. However, in Washington only 3.29% of ELLs in public schools are enrolled in dual language programs, while 85.97% are receiving instruction in only English which is the least effective education method for ELLs.

The positive impact and academic gains of dual language programs is not limited to ELLs - research by the University of Washington Institute for Learning and Brain Sciences (iLABS) found that exposure to a second language positively impacts cognitive and linguistic learning mechanisms. These dual language students outperform monolingual children on tasks that require attention, working memory and mental flexibility.

There are numerous benefits of Dual Language Learning education for students, parents, and our community...DLL helps me make sure every student will walk across the graduation stage.

- Ralph Wisner, Principal

Thompson Elementary
Bethel School District
2015 OSPI Dual Language Grant Recipient

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Benefits of Dual Language Learning/Programs

Dual language learning models and research has grown substantially in the last twenty years, with Washington State as a national leader. Case studies, research, and testimony from schools, families, and educators all report that DLL is a strong model for closing the opportunity gap while reflecting our changing demographics.

Benefits and impacts of DLL programs:
- Research indicates DLL as one of the most effective strategies to close the opportunity gap for all students, oftentimes successfully engaging diverse students in ways that traditional modeled schools do not.
- “Brain benefits” of DLL include strengthened neural pathways and cognitive abilities like attention and memory.
- DLL classrooms promote cross-cultural learning, valuing diversity, and traits like empathy.
- Longitudinal studies indicate DLL students achieve academic gains faster than their peers, DLL students outperform their peers in math and reading assessments as early as the 5th grade.
- DLL builds a homegrown bilingual and biliterate workforce, keeping Washington’s economy competitive.
- Schools with DLL programs build stronger learning communities: families and educators work together to support DLL students in an academically rigorous program.
- DLL models also show increased family engagement at schools that value culture, language, and diversity as an asset; this asset-based learning environment builds positive identity and encourages leadership of all students and families.

How We Do It

In 2015, $500,000 was secured through a budget proviso to provide grants to school districts to support start-up or expansion costs of dual language programs. As a result, three new dual language programs were funded in the districts of Bethel, Mabton, and Selah; two districts, Bellevue and Wenatchee, were awarded funds to expand their current programs and mentor the new districts. The pilot program was a huge success and we learned lessons on how these programs could be scaled to statewide expansion.

Hundreds of children now have access to research-backed models of DLL education. Another early success of these programs already show they are sustainable through basic education funds. With this success, we seek to replicate and expand the number of grants to be awarded, add supports in the early learning system, and also address teacher diversity and shortages through growing the number of bilingual educators. Many schools have the desire to start dual language programs but the high cost, resources, and support needed are common barriers to get programs off the ground, supporting HB 1455/SB 5529 would expand this effective, in-demand education model to reach more Washington families.

We propose a holistic approach to expanding the number of dual language programs in the early learning and public school system with the goal of increasing school readiness and student achievement. These investments will increase the number of early learning and K-12 dual language classrooms, create statewide infrastructure to support programs and ensure their sustainability, and increase the number of bilingual teachers to sustain these programs ($4.5 million 2017-2019 biennium):

**Preschool grants: building infrastructure and capacity in early learning ($1,500,000).**
SB 5529/HB1445 would provide an opportunity to grow the number of dual language classrooms in Washington State’s Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) through a grant program while supporting the Department of Early Learning (DEL) to provide resources to support and sustain these models in our growing early learning system. SB5529/ HB1445 would also support outreach to parents and families of young children about the benefits of bilingualism and dual language programs.

**School district grants, building infrastructure in public education ($2,000,000).**
Building on the success of the 2015 grant program SB 5529/HB1445 would award grants to 10 new school districts—growing the number of school districts offering DLL by over 40% —to start or expand dual language programs. It also supports the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to provide trainings and technical assistance to support and sustain these programs across the state.

**Grants for recruiting and supporting a bilingual workforce ($1,000,000).**
Washington currently has a shortage of bilingual teachers with the necessary training and certification to teach in dual language programs. SB 5529/HB1445 would provide grants to ten selected school districts or community-based organizations to hire a teacher advancement position responsible for the recruitment and retention of bilingual teachers. This will complement ‘grow your own’ teacher models of school districts and the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB).

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