

February 28, 2020

Interim Superintendent Cintia Johnson
Arlington Public Schools
2110 Washington Boulevard
Arlington, Virginia 22204

Dear Ms. Johnson,

We are writing to request that APS undertake a comprehensive PreK-12 Visioning Process for the Dual Language Immersion Program.

As APS works to develop the PreK-12 Instructional Programs Pathway (IPP) framework, it is imperative that we have a vision that articulates the pathway for student success in the Dual Language Immersion Program. To achieve this goal and ensure that the education model supports students developing high levels of speaking, reading, writing, and listening in two languages, it is necessary to undertake a process in which APS pulls together expertise and ideas from Teaching and Learning; World Languages; Office of English Language Learners; the Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer; immersion school administrators, school-based teachers, and staff; English-speaking parent representatives from all three school levels; Spanish-speaking parent representatives from all three school levels; immersion students; and community stakeholders, among others. We ask APS to hire a consultant to lead the visioning process, one who has deep expertise in PreK-12 Dual Language Immersion Programs in diverse communities.

A visioning process will deliver a road map to meet APS' goals for the Dual Language Immersion Program. The process would address, at a minimum:

Instruction

Develop consensus around high-level quality instructional elements such as, but not limited to:

- How can the Dual Language Immersion Program help APS comply with the DOJ English Learner Settlement?
- How is Spanish Language Arts instruction differentiated for various levels of Spanish language fluency from K-12?
- How can instructional practices serve students with disabilities in the Dual Language Immersion Program?
- What are the barriers to expanding the offerings in the high school Dual Language Immersion Program?
- What is the current research on 90/10 instructional model vs. 50/50 instructional model?
- How can students be prepared for transitions between the programs (5th-6th and 8th-9th)?
- What are the Standards of Learning for Spanish Language Arts K-12?
- What is the proficiency goal for Spanish? Is there a different goal for a native Spanish speaker than a non-native Spanish speaker? Should it be different?
- Does the model differ for standards-driven English instruction and English Language acquisition for English Learner Students in the Dual Language Immersion Programs?
- How does APS locate and purchase quality Spanish-language text resources and instructional materials?
- Is APS giving Dual Language Immersion students biliteracy skills, such as translation, interpretation, and fluency, that can be used in the 21st century workplace?

Assessments

To drive differentiated leveled instruction for all students:

- How are standardized assessments used to measure and track language acquisition?
- Why are high school students taking the A2/B1 DELE instead of the B2 DELE?

Outreach/Enrollment

In order to ensure the program maintains a 50/50 native Spanish speaker to non-native Spanish speaker ratio:

- Are there alternatives to the current online lottery system to better serve incoming immersion families in order to increase Spanish-speaking student enrollment?
- How can we decrease attrition in the middle and high school Dual Language Programs?
- Would the term “dual language program” or “bilingual program” or “bilingual immersion program” better describe the program (instead of “immersion program”) and attract Spanish-speaking families?
- How can we ensure English-learner families know the benefits of dual language programs?
- What is the specific outreach to native Spanish-speaking families prior to enrollment?
- What is the role of the APS Welcome Center in communicating with incoming families about the availability of the APS Dual Language Immersion Program? Does the Welcome Center effectively assist families in promoting the programs and helping families who are interested apply for the program?

Staff

To implement a high-level instruction needed to sustain a strong Pre-K through 12 Dual Language Immersion Pathway:

- What is the timeline for hiring a Dual Language Coordinator within APS central office?
- How can APS recruit, hire, and retain qualified dual language teachers and staff?
- Should schedules across APS immersion programs align to give more cross-campus planning time and combined professional development?
- Should a Spanish Language Arts reading specialist position be created on the school level?
- How can professional development be made available for dual language teachers on how to optimize instruction of the target language?
- How can the teachers who attend special dual language conferences and meetings be given the opportunity to share the material learned with their dual language colleagues?

Other

- What is the ideal number of incoming kindergarten and VPI classes for elementary Dual Language Immersion schools?
- Should APS identify a third elementary Dual Language Immersion school location or explore co-locating the program within another school?
- What supports need to be put in place as Key transitions to a new building?
- How can the Dual Language Immersion Program support and strengthen diversity, equity, and inclusion within APS?
- What is the process for ongoing monitoring of feedback for the Dual Language Immersion Program from staff and parents after the Visioning process concludes and recommendations are implemented

With the APS Dual Language Immersion Program in a time of transition, as Key moves to its new building, time is of the essence for the Dual Language Immersion community and APS to address these questions. Therefore, we encourage APS to facilitate a community visioning process in the Spring of 2020. We are excited to participate and collaborate with you and APS to strengthen the Dual Language Immersion Program. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Melissa Schwaber, on behalf of the Claremont PTA (melissaschwaber@gmail.com 703-231-8906)

Alicia Rich, on behalf of the Key PTA (president@keypta.org 703-346-6197)

Beth Hicks, on behalf of the Gunston PTA (GunstonPTApresident@gmail.com, 571-451-8888)

Gabriela Uro, on behalf of the Wakefield PTA (gabriela_uro@yahoo.com, 571-730-7090)

CC:

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