

Curriculum Board Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: August 1, 2016 @5:00 p.m. – SSC

Members:

Attendance

Kimberly Hatchett	Yes	<u> x </u>	No
Annette Johnson	Yes	<u> x </u>	No
Kirsten Strand	Yes	<u> x </u>	No
Dr. Carla Johnson	Yes	<u> x </u>	No
Suzanne Bement	Yes	<u> x </u>	No
Diane Argueta	Yes	<u> x </u>	No
Beatrice Reyes Childress	Yes	<u> x </u>	No
Jennifer Dalrymple	Yes	<u> x </u>	No
Dr. Marion Hoyda	Yes	<u> x </u>	No

Ms. Hatchett opened the meeting at 5:04 p.m.

I. Dual Language Presentation

Dr. Johnson stated that the dual language program is so important a topic that it's being presented by itself to the curriculum committee. It's been talked about a lot but the meeting marks the premier of providing a game plan for the program's implementation. Dr. Johnson then gave the floor over to Ms. Argueta for the presentation.

Dual language is research-based program founded on best-practice teaching for ELL students. It provides literacy content instruction to students in both English and Spanish. In other school districts the native language might be different, but in District 131 the native language is Spanish.

Its main goal is to have ELL students achieve high academic standards in both their native language of Spanish and in English.

Ms. Hatchett asked if only for ELL students; Ms. Argueta explained that it's been proven to be successful with both EL students and monolingual speakers. However, the original intention of dual language was to service EL students. Dual language will also help fill gaps in curriculum.

Ms. Hatchett asked if goal is for just EL students to be dual language at graduation or for all students to be dual language; Ms. Argueta said she would cover that in her presentation.

Key components of dual language include effective bilingual language instruction, integrating content and language across all content areas. District is currently developing a Biliteracy Unit Framework (BUFs) where teachers are writing units (BUFs) directly aligned to best practices in native language instruction, because it's very different for students to read and write in Spanish vs. in English. Teachers are using resources district has recently acquired, like STEMScopes for science, My World for social studies, Go Math!, and ReadyGEN /Biliteracy Pathway for language arts – all are being incorporated into the framework. It's something that's completely aligned to what the district is doing; it's not in isolation from gen ed.

Another key component is assessment and program evaluation – careful monitoring is built in for both Spanish and English instruction. It's being developed as we go; it'll be fluid assessment

of the program rather than developing strict guidelines that can't be changed. As teachers begin to implement and monitors observe, we will update as necessary.

Dual language is a program aligned to Common Core, NGSS, C3 framework, language arts standards, and English-language development standards.

Another key component is district and community support and that's why Ms. Argueta is here tonight: to explain the key components for board members to use while they're out in the community having discussions re: dual language. It provides multicultural education for district's students in all areas, not just Spanish and English.

Also must have staff qualifications and fidelity to the dual language program. District continues to look for new staff to fill bilingual vacancies. Ms. Argueta explained district is speaking to ISBE, the Mexican consulate, and state rep. Linda Chapa LaVia as resources for finding and hiring qualified staff.

Parent involvement is another key component for dual language so the district is using parent liaisons to ensure parents are educated in terms of what the program is and isn't.

Why dual language? What does research say? It says by late elementary – usually 4th to 5th grade – dual language students achieve at or above grade level compared to their peers in gen ed. In 5th, 6th, and 7th grades, you really start to see really great results but more important, students retain that knowledge base throughout the rest of their secondary education, no matter where they end up. That's key because while students in our current program may achieve higher than our gen ed students, they always retain or keep growing from there. We want students in high school to be able to draw on their previous knowledge base to have success on assessments.

Research also suggests a lower high school dropout rate for students in dual language programs as well as a higher college attendance rate, both of which have been district goals for some time.

Ms. Hatchett stated the last point is enough to move forward, i.e., a dual language program improves academic performance and more students attend college – and also, in this day and age, having the multicultural competence as a country.

Ms. Argueta directed committee's attention to a graph showing EL students tend to perform well in a dual language environment.

District currently utilizes an early exit program wherein specific time is dedicated to ESL. Students generally do not receive Spanish-language instruction past the 2nd grade, instead being immersed in English-only instruction, known as "sheltered" instruction, at that point.

The non-negotiables in order for the district to move forward with dual language include program awareness and education for all stakeholders – from board of education to administrators to parents and teachers and staff – everyone should know what it is and the benefits of it. Then we need program and professional development fidelity, e.g., if we have a workshop dedicated to dual language or biliteracy then we wouldn't schedule anything else for that day so the focus can be kept on that alone.

Dual language needs to be part of the district's goals, which it currently is as of last year. Some of these can be checked off as already implemented or continuing to implement.

Curriculum needs to be designed with EL's in mind and this year we've adopted Biliteracy Pathway, specifically because we were looking to target that native language instruction. STEMscopes is another well thought out program – it's 95% aligned to what we need for our students. Staff is working very hard on curriculum design from pre-K through later grades. As we go along, will make sure that even high school curriculum is aligned to Spanish-language arts standards and others.

In future, board may hear Dr. Johnson or Ms. Argueta talk about the need for more Spanish instructional materials at 7th grade in order to bolster dual language instruction.

Admin support and accountability are necessary as well. During PD and PLC, it's important to have building principals and/or district administrators talk about what dual language is and the importance of instructional practices.

Lastly, and most important, we need to recognize, honor, and respect native language and cultural awareness, as Ms. Hatchett already mentioned.

The next slide covers the question of if dual language is so important, why haven't we implemented prior to now? In 2014 there was a dual language conference in New Mexico and one of the questions was what are some of the challenges with dual language. Those include a need for more resources, which Ms. Argueta is working on with Dr. Johnson, specifically for filling in gaps on math instruction. Another difficulty was convincing students of the importance of being able to speak both English and Spanish, or to keep both languages, but if everyone is on board with actively implementing it, that will help them get on board. Particularly since we're starting in Kindergarten, it will become easier over the course of students' educational careers.

Another difficulty is that in mixed classrooms, it's difficult to adhere to a language of instruction. Ms. Argueta stated the district is transitioning to late exit which means students will have native language instruction from Kinder to 5th grade; and in preK-2, students will have native language instruction the majority of the day, while grades 3-5 will be looking at more of a 50/50 – where 50% of the day is in English and 50% is in Spanish -- to deal with a shortage of bilingual staff.

The district being guided by Cheryl Urow, a guru in biliteracy instruction, and her professional development contains a lot of modeling and support for teachers for what it looks like when using Spanish and when to bridge over to English.

Another issue sometimes is there not being enough time in the day to implement dual language, as well as the existence of high-stakes testing, which can be a real challenge, as you don't begin to see a lot of academic growth with dual language until 5th, 6th, and 7th grades.

Additionally, there's concern about possible inconsistent instructional directives which Ms. Argueta isn't that concerned about since district has board and community support behind it. Finally, not having enough bilingual staff is an issue but district is working on that piece.

To make everything work as well as possible, staff is writing the BUFs, establishing a one-way, district-wide program for native language students in Kindergarten designed to fill the gaps in math, language arts, social studies, and science. Currently, gen ed teachers have what they need with the new curriculum; however, bilingual has some gaps that require some translation and tweaking to align it to best practices for Spanish. We're starting with one way in order to ensure we have adequate professional development and sub coverage. However, once the program is implemented and established, we can move forward with the two-way to meet the district goal of ultimately having a preK-12 dual language two-way program for everyone.

Some PR will be necessary to ensure enough students will be interested and will also need a lot more bilingual teachers.

Ms. Strand asked why teachers are writing units – is it because there’s nothing out there or is it because it’s the approach we think is best? Ms. Argueta said both; teachers want the units because they help fill in the gaps in curriculum and because it’s more inclusive.

Ms. Hatchett asked how long it will be before full implementation of dual language program – Ms. Argueta said one year at a time.

Ms. Hatchett asked when the two-way program will roll out; Ms. Argueta stated perhaps after year three, with half the classroom native speakers and half monolingual.

Ms. Johnson asked for 2017-2018, how many students would district like to target? Ms. Argueta said approximately 800 Kindergarten students.

Ms. Strand wanted to know how the district will avoid the problems like Oswego had rolling out dual language. Ms. Argueta explained that dual language has become much more popular and in demand. The district has had student biliteracy for years. Ms. Argueta and Ms. Gonzalez are the district Spanish literacy experts while Ms. Urow is the state and national guru. The district has the right student population to make it work.

Ms. Johnson wanted to know how the program will be rolled out to staff and how PD will work; Ms. Argueta explained that the district is working on staff recruitment and is currently planning targeted biliteracy professional development sessions in August, December, and May; as well as three whole staff bilingual PDs per year on an ongoing basis as we continue to assess the program.

Ms. Johnson asked about training of gen ed staff as they need to be on board as well; Ms. Argueta said that that can begin in year two, the year prior to implementing the two-way program, to prepare gen ed teachers.

Ms. Hatchett asked how do we bring gen ed teachers up to speed over the next two years; Ms. Argueta referred to the non-negotiable of having a top-down approach emphasizing the benefits of dual language and being able to answer any questions.

Ms. Johnson stated she supports the program but feels it’s starting out too large. Ms. Argueta explained that preK-2 is 90% in Spanish and instruction is only provided by bilingual teachers for dual language instruction.

Ms. Hatchett asked what the plans are in place to prepare the 3rd-5th gen ed teachers whose students are going through dual language? Ms. Argueta said that in 4th and 5th grades, there’s a 50/50 split so reading and writing are in Spanish, and math, social studies, and science is in English.

Ms. Argueta explained there will be a lottery to assess interest from English-speaking parents with an opt-in option at a couple of district sites.

Ms. Johnson stated a co-teaching model is expensive to implement – are we planning for it? Ms. Argueta stated it’s not co-teaching, that students will switch between bilingual and English-speaking teachers. A lot of it hinges on the ability to hire bilingual staff – it doesn’t mean we need more teachers just that we need certified staff. Are working with HR, ISBE, and state rep. Linda Chapa LaVia to help with that.

Ms. Johnson asked if the Spain recruits only teach two years then return to Spain? Ms. Argueta explained the issue with tenure.

Ms. Hatchett asked if the district is looking for bilingual teaching recruits at universities in Illinois? What is the recruitment effort like locally? Ms. Argueta explained that she and Ms. Gonzalez have spoken at Aurora University and at Northern Illinois University; additionally, Ms. Argueta and Mr. Megazzini have attended recruitment fairs; however, the district is competing with other districts because of the great need for bilingual teachers everywhere.

Another tool has been visiting high schools to address students interested in teaching to advise them of the demand.

Ms. Argueta stated there's a need to retain current teachers as the district often loses them to other districts.

Ms. Hatchett asked that recruitment be broadened to include Illinois State University and look at Puerto Rico as well.

II. New Business

Committee members requested that test scores, alternative education, and special education costs be covered at the next meeting in September.

III. Public Comments

None.

IV. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 5:54 p.m.