

## Frequently Asked Questions: Dual Language Immersion

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### What is GLOBE's foreign language immersion program and how does it work?

At GLOBE, the Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE's) are taught in the immersion target language for half of the time students are in school. This is called the "50/50 model for DLI," as 50% of instruction is in the target language. Students' instructional time is equally divided between the English teacher and the language teacher. In Kindergarten GLOBE, students receive instruction in the immersion language for half of the day. In upper grades, students alternate full days with each teacher, A/B days.

The goal is to provide a creative, constructivist academic experience promoting students' linguistic and academic progress in both their native language and the foreign language. GLOBE's curriculum encourages interaction and communication between students, where students build their own experiences and understandings while learning.

### What if my child says they do not understand *everything* the language teacher says?

GLOBE immersion teachers have a wide range of instructional strategies they use while teaching content in the target language. Students may not understand each individual word that is said; **that's normal!** Our teachers provide students with *whole language* while also utilizing frequently used words with which students are familiar (Krashen, 1987). Teachers use dramatic facial expressions, expressive intonation, visuals, modeling, gestures and body language to provide students with comprehensible input to understand the meaning of the other words in the sentences that students may not know as easily.

### What if my child is not speaking that much of the language yet?

In grades K and 1 at GLOBE, students are learning to attach meaning to the words in the foreign language as well as visualize the language. During this time, they are developing listening comprehension skills (Dahlgren, 2008) and are encouraged to repeat frequently heard phrases. At GLOBE, teachers use caretaker speech patterns to help students, give them wait time to answer, and praise students' efforts in the language. They often help students by providing students with beginning sounds, gestures, and model sentence frames for students to help them express their ideas.

It is common for students to sometimes use a word of English when communicating with the teacher and peers in class in these grades. Students may also sometimes answer parts of questions to a teacher in English. To help students progress in their language production, teachers in K and 1<sup>st</sup> use songs, and review common phrases, chants and rhymes to carefully structure the day with familiar routines. Teachers use self-talk to talk about what they are doing as they do it, and use parallel talk to talk about what students are doing. Students are constantly surrounded by a language-rich environment.

After 1<sup>st</sup> grade, students use the target language in class to not only communicate with their teacher, but to communicate with their peers using both academic and social language in the target language.

Teachers use extended wait time to provide students more time to process the information in the foreign language. GLOBE teachers use expansions to take what students say and provide the additional words students are missing in terms of grammar to facilitate conversations between students. Teachers model the language students can use to communicate, especially in their interactive stations, as well as encourage social language throughout the day.

In language classes, the walls are filled with vocabulary and visuals to help aid students in their oral production. Teachers practice the language with students using sentence frames and sentence starters. Students use these in class to speak with their friends.

Read Alouds are used to model best practices in reading and grow students' vocabulary by using definitions, gestures, and synonyms for new vocabulary introduced.

GLOBE teachers work hard to create a supportive community of learners in the classroom through class discussions and teambuilding in Morning Meetings. This special time is essential for language production: a sense of community, support, and safety helps children lower affective filters or "mental blocks" due to low self-esteem, and also combats anxiety or low motivation to help acquire the second language (Krashen, 1987; 1988).

Morning Meeting helps build connections and transfer skills of active listening, sharing, taking turns, empathy, problem solving, showing respect, tolerance, and collaboration to learn in class and as an individual in society (Allen-Hughes, 2013). Students also feel safe to express themselves in the language and not put on the spot; language develops in a natural way in a supportive environment.

Each child has a way they best understand, interpret, and understand information. GLOBE teachers adapt their lessons to account for students in their classroom by teaching to students' instructional level, as well as to their interests. Enduring understandings help students move forward. Therefore, we want to give students experiences that are authentic and unique, to help them make personal connections to what they learned.

## **How will learning everything in a second language affect my child's English language and literacy development?**

Research consistently finds immersion in a second language aids students' English language development over time. Many cognitive processes help children begin to read; many, such as the relationship between the written language and spoken language, transfer from one language to the other in languages akin to English (Cloud, Genesee, & Hamayan, 2000). In languages that differ from English in using a different alphabet and different directional tracking, for example, literacy skills in one language will not carry over to the other language; however, teachers are able to encourage transfer through concept and content (Kanagy, 2001).

Studies have shown it is expected for students in immersion programs to obtain higher language proficiency than students in modern language programs (Met, 1998). There are economic and social advantages of reaching high proficiency in a foreign language, such as higher pay in jobs and the opportunity to interact with different people and cultures. Immersion students with high proficiency in

the foreign language also have cognitive benefits such as more advanced nonverbal problem-solving abilities and higher “flexible thinking” (Met, 1998).

Immersion students also are shown to perform just as well or better than peers in non-immersion programs on standardized tests measuring verbal and mathematical skills in English (Cloud, Genesee, & Hamayan, 2000).

### **How long will it take for my child to be “fluent”?**

By the beginning of second grade, students show readiness to produce strings of thought in an organized manner to convey meaning when speaking to peers. However, their speech lacks grammatical accuracy and does not contain a vast range of vocabulary or complex sentence structures.

In fourth grade, students are expressing themselves in various time frames and are able to convey what they would like to say in the target language fairly quickly; although, their speech patterns may contain errors.

Johnson & Swain (1997) found while it only takes students two to three years in an immersion program to demonstrate proficiency, their quick, easy speech is not without errors. It is important for stakeholders to commit to language learning over a long period of time to help expose students to the opportunity to groom these errors and practice often. Most cognitive benefits of language immersion are not seen until High School, and students must have remained in an intensive language program throughout Middle School (Thomas & Collier, 2002).

Students’ speed in reaching this proficiency depends on many elements: students’ personalities, their personal connections with their teachers, motivation, patience, teacher’s expectations, school support, curriculum leadership, and parent involvement and support. Students’ success is determined by the continual relationship and partnership between these stakeholders and factors.

### **How can I help if I do not speak the language?**

Make sure to read to your child daily in English, incorporating dramatic rhythm, intonation, and asking your child questions as you read, such as what they think will happen in the story and why. Try to encourage them to justify their answers.

Check your email and teacher’s blogs. They notify you of what your students are working on in class. You can practice these vocabulary words, videos, or activities at home. Make sure to keep in contact with your teacher and keep an open relationship. Student success is a partnership between the school, parents, students, and teachers.

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