



Eighth-Grade Dual Language Students' Feedback on the Dual Language Program

Austin Independent School District, 2018–2019

This report summarizes the results of a survey given to 8th-grade students in the middle school Spanish-English Dual Language (DL) Program during the 2018–2019 school year. Students were surveyed during their Spanish Language and Culture course during the spring semester. The survey asked students about their reasons for enrolling in the program; their attitudes about being bilingual; things about the program that they enjoyed, found difficult, and would like changed; their confidence in speaking, reading, writing, and listening to Spanish; and their intentions to continue DL in high school. The survey consisted of multiple choice and open-ended items. The survey was administered at eight middle schools, and a total of 238 students responded (Bedichek $n = 42$, Burnet $n = 36$, Covington $n = 14$, Fulmore $n = 40$, Lamar $n = 13$, Paredes $n = 36$, Small $n = 30$, and Webb $n = 27$). There was an 85% response rate for this survey. The full survey is presented in Appendix A.

Why did students enroll in the middle school DL Program?

Almost all students surveyed said they were proud to be able to speak English and Spanish (98%) and that being in the DL Program made them proud to be bilingual (96%; Appendix B). Additionally, the majority of students responded that they enrolled in middle school DL because “Knowing two languages will give me more opportunities in the future” (81%), “Because Spanish is part of my culture and family” (72%), and “To get high school and college credit” (72%; Table 1).

Table 1.

Number and Percentage of Responses that Students Selected as Reasons They Enrolled in the Middle School Dual Language Program

Reasons students enrolled in the middle school DL Program	<i>n</i>	%
Knowing two languages will give me more opportunities in the future	189	81%
Because Spanish is part of my culture and family	169	72%
To get high school and college credit	168	72%
I want to learn how to use Spanish very well	117	50%
I want to be able to learn, communicate, and make friends with people from other cultures and languages	111	47%
Knowing and learning another language is cool/fun	96	41%
I want to be able to talk to my parents/grandparents/family	79	34%
So that my parents will understand me better	74	32%
Other	14	6%

Source. 2019 8th-Grade DL Student Survey



The majority (86%) of students agreed they enjoyed translating for their parents and others (Appendix B). Table 2 displays other things students said they enjoyed while enrolled in the DL Program. The majority of students (71%) responded, “Using my Spanish with my friends, teachers, and parents” as what they enjoyed. In addition, a little more than half of the students surveyed said they enjoyed having time and space to learn Spanish at school (52%).

Table 2.

Number and Percentage of Responses Students Selected of What They Enjoyed While Enrolled in the Dual Language Program

While enrolled in the DL Program, I enjoyed:	<i>n</i>	%
Using my Spanish with my friends, teachers, and parents	163	71%
Having time and space to learn Spanish at school	120	52%
Making projects where I can showcase the Spanish I know	102	44%
Seeing different people on campus using Spanish	99	43%
Having a variety of students learning Spanish in my class	99	43%
Access to books in Spanish	61	27%
Other	17	7%

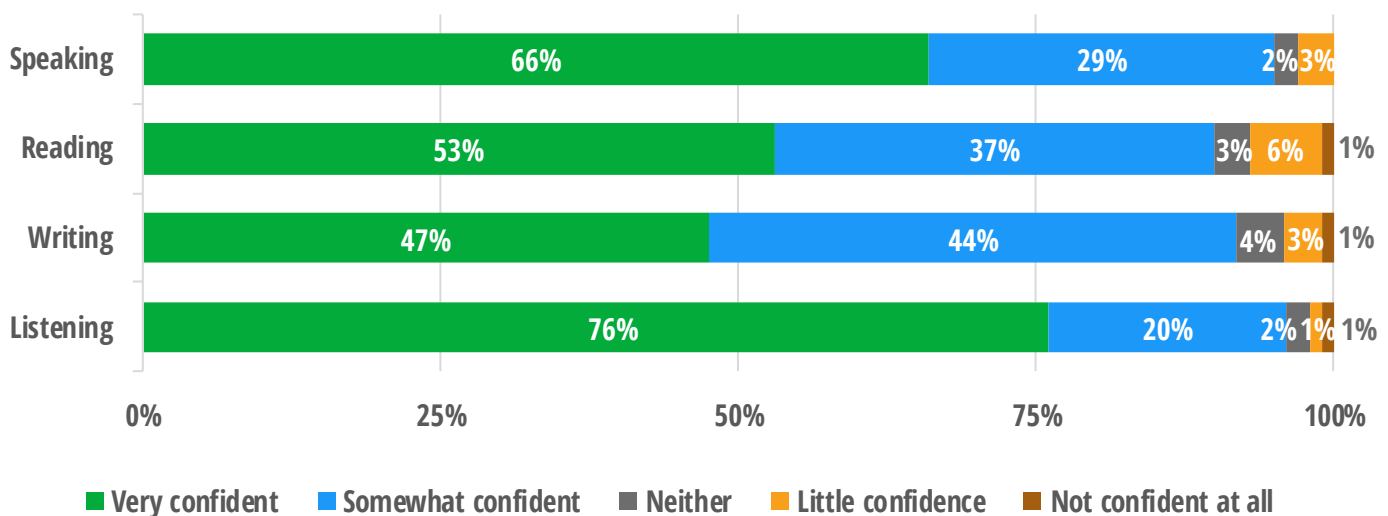
Source. 2019 8th-Grade DL Student Survey

How confident were students when using Spanish?

Students were asked to rate their confidence level using Spanish when speaking, reading, writing, and listening (Figure 1). Students reported being most confident when listening to Spanish, with 76% being very confident. Students reported slightly less confidence when speaking in Spanish (66% very confident). A little more than half of the students surveyed reported being very confident reading in Spanish (53%). Students reported the least confidence when writing in Spanish, with 48% being very confident.

Figure 1.

Percentage of Students’ Self-Reported Level of Confidence in Speaking, Reading, Writing, and Listening in Spanish



Source. 2019 8th-Grade DL Student Survey

What did students have to say about the DL Program?

Students were asked several open-ended questions, such as what they found difficult, why they were proud to be able to speak two languages, what they had learned about their culture, and what would make the DL Program better. When asked what they found difficult while enrolled in the DL Program, students most commonly indicated that new vocabulary was difficult. Writing in Spanish was the second most common difficult task reported, which aligns with students' lower confidence in writing in Spanish. Speaking grammatically correctly and exams, such as the advanced placement (AP) exam, were also mentioned as difficulties while enrolled in DL.

“Why are you proud to be able to speak both English and Spanish?”

Most students said they were proud to be able to communicate with more people and family members. Students also said they were proud because they will have more job opportunities, and because they have the ability to help others who do not speak one of the languages.

“What have you learned about your culture from being in the DL Program?”

Students' responses to this question were varied. Some students said they learned about their ancestors and the history of Hispanic people. Others said they learned about different traditions and how other cultures have influenced their culture. One student commented, “[I] learned that there [are] many more cultures and that we all have differences and similarities.”

“What would make the DL Program better?”

The most common response was that the program is good the way it is. Students frequently said more fieldtrips and doing more activities and/or projects would make the program better. Several students said that expanding the program so more students could participate and more languages could be offered would make the program better. Finally, students indicated that better and/or more books and resources would improve the program, as well as more class options and electives in Spanish.

Conclusion

The 8th-grade students currently enrolled in the middle school DL Program had many positive experiences while in the program. Most students indicated they enrolled in the program in order to expand their future opportunities. Additionally, most students were very confident in using Spanish when speaking, reading, and listening. Although students reported being less confident when writing in Spanish, the proportion of students who felt very confident was relatively high (48%). When students were asked if they wanted to continue DL next year in high school, the majority (78%) said yes. This response along with the suggestions for expansion of the program indicates that middle school students are happy with the DL Program and desire to continue their studies.

Appendix

Appendix A: 8th-Grade Dual Language Student Survey

The response options for the following items ranged from 1 = *Strongly agree* to 4 = *Strongly disagree*.

I am proud of being able to speak in English and Spanish.

Does being in the Dual Language Program make you feel proud of being bilingual?

Do you feel that your culture and language are valued in the Dual Language Program?

I enjoy translating for my parents and others.

Please rate your confidence level using Spanish when (response options ranged from 1 = *Very confident* to 5 = *Not confident at all*):

Speaking

Reading

Writing

Listening

Select some of the reasons why you are in the Dual Language Program in AISD. (Choose all that apply)

Knowing two languages will give me more opportunities in the future.

I want to learn how to use Spanish very well,

I want to be able to talk to my parents/ grandparents/ family.

Because Spanish is part of my culture and family.

I want to be able to learn, communicate, and make friends with people from other cultures and languages.

Knowing and learning another language is cool/ fun.

So that my parents will understand me better.

To get high school and college credit.

Other

The following items were open-ended.

Please explain why you are proud to be able to speak both languages.

Why do you feel that your culture and language are valued in the Dual Language Program? Can you provide some examples.

The things that I have found difficult in being in a Dual Language Program are:

What have you learned about your culture from being in a Dual Language Program?

What would make the Dual Language Program better?

What is unique (or special) about being bilingual?

Do you want to continue Dual Language next year in high school? (Yes/No)

Appendix B: 8th-Grade Dual Language Student Survey Responses

Table 1.

Number and Percentage of Responses for Items Rated *Strongly Agree* to *Strongly Disagree*

Item	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Total
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
I am proud of being able to speak in English and Spanish.	185	78%	48	20%	3	1%	2	1%	238
Does being in the Dual Language Program make you feel proud of being bilingual?	123	53%	99	43%	7	3%	3	1%	232
Do you feel that your culture and language are valued in the Dual Language Program?	89	39%	126	56%	8	4%	4	2%	227
I enjoy translating for my parents and others.	84	36%	115	50%	23	10%	10	4%	232

Source. 2019 8th-Grade DL Student Survey

Table 2.

Number and Percentage of Responses of Students' Self-Reported Level of Confidence Speaking, Reading, Writing, and Listening in Spanish

Item	Very confident		Somewhat confident		Neither		Little confidence		Not confident at all		Total
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
Please rate your level of confidence using Spanish when:											
Speaking	155	66%	68	29%	4	2%	6	3%	1	0%	234
Reading	124	53%	87	37%	8	3%	13	6%	2	1%	234
Writing	111	47%	102	44%	10	4%	8	3%	3	1%	234
Listening	178	76%	46	20%	5	2%	3	1%	2	1%	234

Source. 2019 8th-Grade DL Student Survey

Table 3.

Number and Percentage of Responses Indicating Desire to Continue Dual Language in High School

Item	Yes		No		Total
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
Do you want to continue Dual Language next year in high school?	182	78%	51	22%	233

Source. 2019 8th-Grade DL Student Survey

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