

Need for bilingual instruction grows, but experienced bilingual educators in short supply

Following are excerpts from a March 2008 report, *Educating English Language Learners in Washington State, 2005-06*, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

When students with little or no previous exposure to the English language enter the public school system, they are most often unable to profit fully from instruction in English and they experience a high risk of academic failure. Research has found that DIAL (dominant in another language*) students tend to have lower levels of academic performance in math and reading, higher rates of grade retention, and much higher drop-out rates than their English-proficient peers.

DIAL students require highly qualified teachers skilled in first/second language acquisition theory, ESL, and sheltered instruction methodologies. This knowledge base provides teachers with the instructional skills to assist students to develop the academic English language proficiency that will help them meet state standards. However, one obstacle facing the education of DIAL students is the shortage of properly trained teachers to provide effective instruction. Many districts report difficulties recruiting teachers qualified to teach students with limited English proficiency.

Diverse language needs in Washington

A total of 190 different languages were represented in the state Transitional Bilingual Instructional Program in the 2005-06 school year. Spanish was spoken by more students than students speaking all other languages combined.

Spanish-speaking students represent more than 66 percent of the DIAL population (in the state's bilingual education program). Twenty-one percent of all DIAL students in Washington spoke one of the following eight languages: Russian, Ukrainian, Vietnamese, Korean, Somali, Tagalog, Arabic, and Cambodian.

How DIAL students are taught in Washington State

While the state program supports "bilingual instruc-

* The acronym ELL is replaced with DIAL, dominant in another language. This is due to a clear preference expressed by students in Washington State.

tion," relatively few students in the program actually receive formal instruction in their primary language. Thus, for the majority of DIAL students in the state, their English Language Development program is more accurately defined as an ESL program.

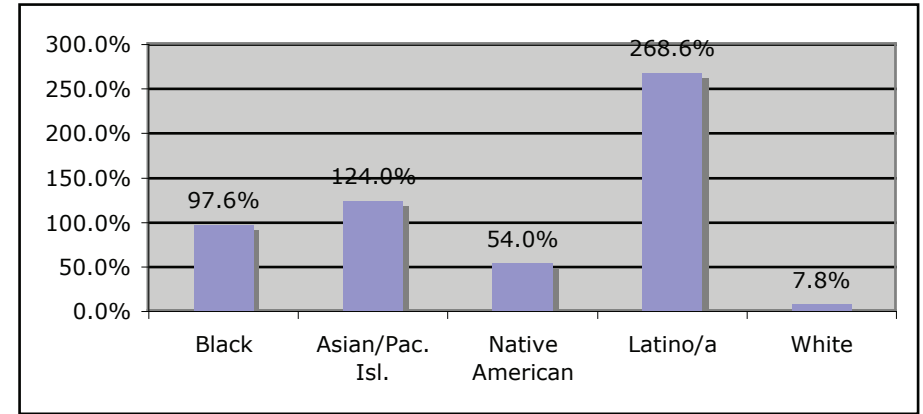
Most supplemental instruction for DIAL students in Washington is provided by instructional aides. These aides typically provide intensive ESL instruction in a classroom setting, but provide little or no instruction in the student's primary language. Many instructional aides are not formally trained to use ESL strategies.

Districts have relied mainly on instructional aides to provide instruction to DIAL students. In the 2005-06 school year, 2,608 staff provided instruction to DIAL students, including 1,569 instructional aides and 1,039 teachers.

Most DIAL students do not receive instruction in their primary language, even though research has found that long-term academic performance is more likely to occur when students have significant exposure to instruction in their primary language. Research (Collier-Thomas study**) has found this model (dual language instruction) to be the most effective academic and linguistic model for both DIAL students and native English speakers.

Another reason for the lack of primary language instruction is a critical shortage of qualified teachers who are literate in a language other than English. This continues to be the case even though the DIAL student population has grown for over 30 years and over half the teachers teaching in the state's bilingual education program have an ESL or bilingual endorsement. Many of the ESL endorsed teachers speak only English.

** A National Study of School Effectiveness for Language Minority Student's Long-Term Academic Achievement, Wayne P. Thomas and Virginia P. Collier, *Diversity and Excellence*, 2002. http://www.crede.ucsc.edu/research/llaa/1.1_final.html



Student population growth in Washington State's K-12 public schools, 1986-2006

A long-term strategy is needed to provide effective instruction

The BTMP is a strategy that provides future teachers with a carefully monitored educational experience (in brief):

- ∞ In 2008, 50 high school juniors will be recruited into the 2-year program. The same students will continue in their senior year.
- ∞ High school students are assigned a teacher/mentor.
- ∞ Teachers/mentors work with students and parents (or guardians) using a curriculum developed by educators to guide their annual activities.
- ∞ Teachers/mentors participate in professional development activities regarding effective teaching practices, multicultural understanding, and parent involvement strategies.
- ∞ Students and parents participate in effective family practices seminars and training.
- ∞ Students and parents learn what is necessary to prepare for college, including what courses are needed for entry to universities, financial aid, etc.
- ∞ Teachers/mentors receive a stipend for services to students and families.
- ∞ Students and mentors will participate in a summer educational institute on a college campus following the junior year.
- ∞ Funding for full-tuition scholarships for students who complete the 2-year program will be sought in the 2009 legislative session.

Bilingual Teacher Mentoring Program

In 2008, the state Legislature and Governor Christine Gregoire provided funding to begin a program to increase the number of bilingual teachers in Washington State and to improve academic achievement of students whose first language is not English.

To accomplish these aims, school districts, in collaboration with the Latino/a Educational Achievement Project, will implement the Bilingual Teacher Mentoring Program (BTMP), a grow-your-own, long-term strategy for improving teaching and learning.

In addition to helping students learn about the teaching profession, BTMP teachers/mentors will help students understand what is needed to succeed in college, and to effectively teach in our schools.

Research points to clear evidence that DIAL (dominant in another language*) students benefit most when provided trained, bilingual educators. Learning a second language and academic achievement are enhanced, not impeded, when qualified, bilingual educators are in our classrooms.

Thus, as more and more DIAL students enter Washington State's school system, bilingual educators should be considered vital assets for improved teaching and learning.

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction reports that Washington State continues to become more diverse (see inside pages). In March 2008, OSPI reported to the state Legislature that the state's bilingual education program "serves an increasing number and percentage of DIAL students who have English language skill deficiencies that impair their learning in regular classrooms." DIAL students often have lower levels of academic performance and higher dropout rates than their English-proficient peers, OSPI reports.

The BTMP is aimed at improving academic achievement of DIAL students and represents a long-term strategy aimed at developing a bilingual teaching corps that is prepared to meet the diverse needs of increasing numbers of students in Washington State.

** The acronym DIAL replaces ELL throughout this document, including quotations. This is due to a clear preference expressed by students in Washington State.*

How mentors can help parents

According to Susan Quattrociocchi, a nationally prominent educator and author (*Quattrociocchi, Families & Schools: Making the Connection*), family involvement is the number one factor in affecting student success during and after high school. For parents without the college experience, it is difficult to know how to help their children get there. Signing up for tests, choosing colleges and applying for admission, filling out the financial aid forms, etc., are confusing and intimidating to anyone who hasn't been through the process before.

For those parents who speak little to no English, confusion isn't adequate to describe the feelings of helplessness as it relates to understanding the higher education system, what it requires, and how their children fit into it.

Program Coordination

The BTMP is conducted by local school districts in collaboration with the Latino/a Educational Achievement Project.

For teachers who would like to participate in the program, please provide the following information.

Name _____

School and grade level where you teach or have taught: _____

Second language you are fluent in: _____

email _____ work phone _____

On a separate piece of paper, describe on one page why you would like to participate in the program and what personal and professional strengths you would bring to the program. Also list two references whom we may contact.

In the Highline School District, send information to:

Jackie Martinez, 206.439.4447
martinjg@hsd401.org

For more information: info@leapwa.org



Bilingual Teacher Mentoring Program

A program to mentor and train future bilingual teachers

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Educating English Language Learners
in Washington State
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