

MAKE AN INFORMED CHOICE

There are three main English language learning programs in New York City's Public Schools: English as a Second Language (ESL), Bilingual Education, and Dual Language (or two way bilingual). Currently, the most common programs are ESL and bilingual, but dual language programs are becoming increasingly popular.

Parents of English Language Learners (ELLs) have a right to choose one of these three programs for their children to learn English. Each program uses different methods to help children learn English. When thinking about which program will be best for your child, remember that a program that is good for one child might not be best for another child. Things like age and personality type can affect your child's success. Also, other factors may have an effect on your child's education such as teacher quality, school support, and how the specific classroom fits your child's needs.

When you enroll your child in school, you should be given an orientation about these three programs and asked to choose which one you prefer. If your school does not have the program you choose, they may be obligated to create it. If not, you can transfer your child to another school that has the program you chose. Parents have the right to choose between an ESL or bilingual class for their children. Schools are required to create bilingual programs when there are:

- 15 or more ELLs of the same language in two contiguous grades from K-8th grade
- 20 or more ELLs of the same language in a single grade from 9th-12th grade.

When you enroll your child, be sure to ask about the programs the school offers and ask to visit the classrooms and speak with the teachers to help you decide which program is best for your child.

Our Mission

AFC promotes access to the best education New York can provide for all students, especially students of color and students from low-income backgrounds. We use uniquely integrated strategies to advance systemic reform, empower families and communities, and advocate for the educational rights of individual students.

Still have more questions?

Please Call
The Jill Chaifetz Education Helpline
Monday through Thursday
10AM to 4PM
(866) 427-6033 (toll free)

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AFC'S

Program Options for English Language Learners

A GUIDE FOR NEW YORK CITY PARENTS

July 2010



Advocates for Children
of New York
Protecting every child's right to learn

English as a Second Language (ESL)

Characteristics and goals:

- All teaching is in English and should be at a level that matches each student's English ability
- The teacher is trained to teach English as a Second Language
- ESL can be taught in a separate class, in a content area class (for example: math, science, literature) with an ESL teacher helping ELL students, or ELL students can be pulled out of their content classes to receive ESL instruction in small groups
- The focus is on learning content knowledge (math, science, reading, etc.) by using English
- When they reach a certain level of English proficiency, students exit the program

Advantages:

- English is used at a level appropriate for the student
- Students slowly transition to regular (monolingual English) instruction over time
- Students may feel more comfortable in ESL classrooms and be more willing to take risks because all students are learning English
- Students learn academic content in English



Disadvantages:

- No attention is given to the student's native language
- There are no native English speakers in an ESL class and classmates may speak different native languages
- Students do not receive help explaining schoolwork in their native language
- Students may become frustrated because they have to start over with a new language
- Going to pull-out ESL classes may require students to miss content instruction

Bilingual

Characteristics and goals:

- Students learn academic subjects in English and their native language
- All students in the class speak the same native language
- The teacher speaks the native language
- Every bilingual program also includes periods of ESL or English instruction
- As students learn more English, less instruction is given in their native language
- The goal is to use a student's knowledge and skills in their native language to help them master English
- When they reach a certain level of English proficiency, students exit the program and are transferred to a monolingual English class

Advantages:

- The classroom teacher knows both languages and will teach subject matter using both languages
- Students use their native language to help them learn the second language
- Students continue learning content area instruction at their grade level in their native language

Disadvantages:

- There are fewer bilingual programs available than ESL programs but if there are enough ELLs in a school, the school must create a bilingual program. See "Make an Informed Choice."

For more information, please see AFC's "A Guide to the Legal Rights of Immigrant Students & Parents in the NYC Public Schools". This guide is available on our website (www.advocatesforchildren.org).



Dual Language (two-way bilingual)

Characteristics and goals:

- Native English speakers and non-native English speakers (who all speak the same native language) are taught together in the same classroom
- Half of the instruction is in English and half in the student's native language
- The goal is for all students to become fluent in both languages
- Students in Dual Language programs can be instructed in both languages from Kindergarten through 12th grade

Advantages:

- Students spend half of their instructional time with a teacher who uses only the target (non-English) language and the other half with a teacher who instructs only in English
- Students use their native language to help them learn the second language
- Students can learn to appreciate multiculturalism and develop cross-cultural understanding



Disadvantages:

- Dual Language programs are not widely available in all schools, grade levels or languages, but if there are enough ELLs in a school, the school should create one

