



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2023.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).


PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: County of Henrico
Program Title: Dual-Language Immersion Program
Program Category: Health and Human Services

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Title: Deputy County Manager for Administration
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Program Overview

Elizabeth Holladay Elementary School in Henrico County, Virginia, is home to 594 students in kindergarten through fifth grade. Of those 594 students, 248 (42%) speak Spanish as the primary language in their homes. Dual-language immersion is an instructional program where students simultaneously learn grade-level content in both English and Spanish. Teachers plan lessons, create engaging activities and assess students in both languages. Upon enrollment in Kindergarten, parents elect to opt-in to the program and a lottery is drawn in July each year to determine the Kindergarten cohort. Once in the dual language program, students remain in the program as they advance from one grade level to the next at Holladay Elementary.

Problem/Challenge/Situation Faced by Locality

Henrico County Public Schools explored several options when considering how the expanded (1,100 capacity) Elizabeth Holladay Elementary School would be used and what programs should be incorporated. In community and school meetings, a dual-language immersion program emerged as the leading choice. A STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) magnet program and year-round schooling were also considered. Additional considerations driving the choice for dual-language immersion at Elizabeth Holladay were the number of English-language-learners at the school — approximately 210 — and literacy performance over time, which hovers around a 75% pass rate over several years. Research shows that dual-language immersion programming supports literacy development in both native and target languages. This made it a natural fit for the expanded size of the school, the student's needs and the expansion of cultural awareness in the building and community. Elizabeth Holladay's Spanish-English Dual Language Immersion program is the first in Henrico County.

How Program Fulfilled Awards Criteria

Jose Andres, chef and founder of the nonprofit World Central Kitchen, stated "the goal of any community should be to build longer tables, not higher walls." Communities must find ways to pull together rather than separate and divide. The dual-language program at Elizabeth Holladay Elementary is, metaphorically, building a longer table. By responding to community needs and demographic changes, the launch of an immersion program where students learn in both Spanish and English is a major step in creating a bilingual community. Holladay's dual-language immersion program is the first in Henrico County. Because of the program's success, two dual-

language immersion classes will debut at the school each year by grade level; by 2026, Holladay will have two dual-language immersion classrooms at each level, from pre-K through grade 5.

One Spanish-speaking parent said, “My son is confident in his skills. He identifies the language and the words.” An English-speaking parent said, “My student is able to answer immediately in either language, whereas it takes me a minute to translate in my head.”

Certainly, students who speak two or more languages fluently will have enhanced job opportunities in our diversifying society. Additionally, HCPS supports students by developing a stronger cross-cultural awareness and respect for other cultures. They also become stronger communicators as a result. This program could be replicated by other counties as communities diversify.

How Program Was Carried Out

[School Board presentation: Spring 2021](#)

The purpose of the Elizabeth Holladay Dual-Language Immersion Program is to develop students who are life-ready in bilingualism, biliteracy and sociocultural competence. Guiding principles were established to connect the core components of the traditional teaching and learning environment to a dual-language immersive environment:

- The program focuses on academic success, bilingualism and biliteracy, cross-cultural thoughtfulness and cooperative problem-solving.
- All students receive language arts instruction in both English and Spanish. Fifty percent of all instruction occurs in Spanish. This may occur across core content areas like math and science, and in other areas such as library, art and music.
- Positive reinforcement is important for children as they acquire another language. It is normal for children to speak across languages, confuse words in different languages and experience some frustration in the language-learning process.
- Classrooms used in the school’s dual-language immersion program include students at all academic levels.
- Selection of students is based on the number of available seats; an attempt to balance the number of English and Spanish speakers; and the number of girls and boys.

Underpinning this is a desire to empower our students with a multicultural awareness that prepares them for citizenship in an increasingly diverse society.

The first step to achieving these outcomes and establishing a dual-language immersion program was the creation of a steering committee to research the strategies that support second-language acquisition. The Dual-Language Immersion Steering Committee, composed of HCPS' director of elementary education, the world languages specialist and Elizabeth Holladay's principal, went on a variety of site visits and explored models of dual-language immersion programs. The visits were designed to better understand how to implement the program in ways that align with proven research-based second-language acquisition strategies. Research supports dual-language programs for both English and non-English speakers to build literacy across languages. Numerous studies have shown the cognitive benefits of bilingualism. Bilingual students have enhanced career opportunities, cross-cultural understanding and strong communication skills — all of which support the goals of HCPS' strategic plan and the Henrico Learner Profile, the division's blueprint for learning. Research also shows that English learners who build proficiency in their native language become proficient in English more rapidly. At a Virginia dual-language conference, the steering committee learned directly from Virginia Collier and Wayne Thomas, two professors among the foremost researchers in dual-language immersion instruction. The committee sought guidance in the "50-50 model," where students receive instruction in both Spanish and English every day. Supporting students' linguistic abilities in their native language deepens their abilities in a partner language. Literacy in one support literacy in the other, thus supporting HCPS' goal of students reading at grade level. The power of learning in context cannot be underscored enough in an effective dual-language immersion model.

The objective of traditional "foreign language" programs — now called world language programs — that many parents studied in middle and high school is to speak another language. The goal of a dual-language immersion program is more deliberate: to grow not only speaking and listening skills, but reading and writing skills. These goals foster both bilingualism and biliteracy. Encouraging multicultural awareness, providing authentic learning experiences and honoring students' native languages and cultures are among the many ways to build student agency and increase instructional relevance.

The next phase of the process was to turn the research into action by planning and developing resources for launching and implementing the program. The planning focused on the day-to-day needs for developing and implementing a school-based program. The steering committee developed the protocols for applying to the program; communication tools; timelines; and supporting resources needed to successfully implement the new program.

Unlike traditional language immersion programs, the HCPS dual-language immersion model supports English-speaking students learning Spanish, as well as English-learners who are native Spanish speakers. Students in the program spend part of their day immersed in the content curriculum taught in Spanish and the rest of their day in a traditional academic program taught in English.

In January 2021, the focus shifted from planning to implementation. The entire Holladay staff was invited to become part of a site-based professional learning community to ensure the program fit within the school and community. The professional learning community deepened the staff's understanding of the program and how it supports students and was supported by the HCPS Department of Professional Learning and Leadership.

It is essential in a dual-language immersion program to secure Spanish-speaking teachers with an elementary teaching endorsement. The steering committee also collaborated with the HCPS Department of Human Resources to coordinate division-wide communication about staffing at Holladay, to find potential dual-language immersion teachers within Henrico County Public Schools. To support these efforts, Elizabeth Holladay sought an associate principal who would also serve as Holladay's dual-language immersion site-coordinator, managing the program's growth. As such, a key requirement for the position was ensuring the new administrator had an advanced level of Spanish-speaking proficiency. A bilingual librarian was also added to accommodate the dual-language immersion program and respond to the future expansion of the school's total student enrollment.

In March, the formal communication about the program got underway at Holladay, with three virtual parent information sessions to publicize the program and encourage participation. By June, the division identified the first cohort of kindergarten students for the Elizabeth Holladay Elementary School Dual-Language Immersion Program.

The program is for students who live in the Elizabeth Holladay attendance zone. Students enrolled in the program are held accountable for meeting the Virginia Standards of Learning tests in all content areas, regardless of the language of instruction. To support language outcomes in the growing number of dual-language immersion programs across the commonwealth, Virginia adopted new Standards of Learning for world languages and included standards for dual-language immersion programs for the first time. These standards inform the development of language structures facilitated through the dual-language immersion program at Holladay.

In a 50-50 model, the curriculum is taught by two partner teachers — one Spanish-speaking and one English-speaking at each grade level. The instructors teach the different groups of students throughout the day. Below is an example of one classroom’s daily instruction within the dual-language immersion program:

	Mrs. Smith's homeroom students	Mrs. Jones' homeroom students
Target Language Instruction Mrs. Smith	Using the target language, Mrs. Smith teaches mathematics, science, and literacy in the new language to the students in her "homeroom."	Using the target language, Mrs. Smith teaches mathematics, science, and literacy in the new language to the students in Mrs. Jones' "homeroom."
English Instruction Mrs. Jones	Mrs. Jones teaches language arts and social studies in English to the students in Mrs. Smith's "homeroom."	Mrs. Jones teaches language arts and social studies in English to the students in her "homeroom."

The dual-language immersion program is not a replacement for current programs to support the needs of English-language learners. Language-instruction educational programs will continue for identified students and structures, such as intervention programs, will remain in place for students who struggle with reading.

The school division will add one-grade level each year at Elizabeth Holladay’s program, adding first grade for the 2023-24 school year, second grade the year after that, and so on. This will enable the first group of students to begin a similar dual-language immersion program planned for the middle school level in fall 2027.

- **Dual-language Immersion Parent Advisory Group** - (example from November 2022)
Parent Newsletter - sent monthly (example from May 2022)

Financing and Staffing

The dual-language immersion program at Elizabeth Holladay Elementary School is self-sustaining and operates within the existing staffing allocations and budget of the school. Outside of the grade-level startup costs, there is no dual-language program fee or annual cost of operation. The yearly budget asks for FY 24-FY27 for startup costs to add grades 3, 4 and 5.:

Funding	Activity
\$15,000 grade-level startup only	Curriculum materials (purchase of ready-made)
\$10,000 grade-level startup only	Curriculum writing (personnel)
\$10,000 grade-level startup only	Travel to conferences, site visits, etc.
\$82,000 grade-level startup only	Spanish-speaking intervention specialist

Program Results

After the first year of implementation, students demonstrated significant growth in language arts (Spanish and English), as well as in math (taught in Spanish and English). Students have grown, not just academically, but are also able to make connections to their home culture and new culture. In one parent advisory meeting, a parent shared that the family celebrates the Mexican tradition of creating an altar in their home during the annual Day of the Dead holiday, on Nov. 1-2. They explained that because their student was learning academic and cultural Spanish as well as kindergarten content, the student was now noticing things they hadn't before, including this holiday. The student began asking questions about the significance of the holiday and wanted to know more about the loved one who was being honored. As evidenced by the state assessment results for the Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program, kindergarten students enrolled in the dual-language immersion program reached their growth targets in language arts and math at a higher rate than cohorts not enrolled in the program. A summary of those results is included in the supplemental materials section. The program also collects results from quarterly parent advisory meetings and anecdotal evidence.

Students enrolled in dual-language immersion programs in other Virginia school divisions have achieved levels greater than their non-dual-language immersion peers over a long period of time. One division measured these outcomes for more than 25 years, noting such growth every single year.

Brief Summary

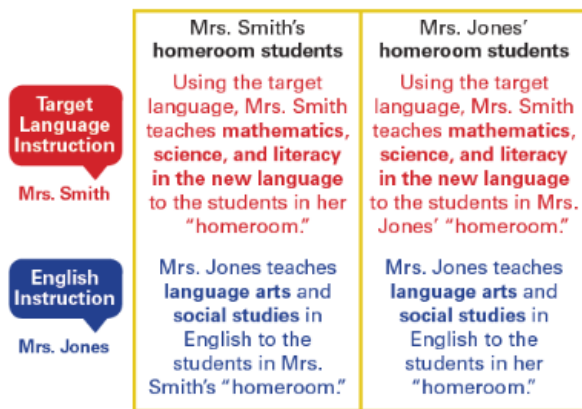
With the prominence of Spanish-speaking students at Elizabeth Holladay Elementary School, the dual-language immersion program has been able to significantly improve the learning retention and results of these students in various facets. The obvious benefits have been in school subjects, where the cooperating teachers have seen dramatic improvement in language arts and math. But students have also been more engaged and have connected with their schools because of the innovative curriculum, and this is just in the first year of the program, which is set to expand to every elementary grade level within the next four years. The 50-50 model and protocols involved in the dual-language immersion program took an immense amount of time, research and thought, but it has quickly become a boon for Spanish-speaking students at Holladay Elementary. Based on available data from this program, as well as comparable ones throughout Virginia, the success of the dual-language immersion strategy could signal groundbreaking progress for HCPS students.

Dual-Language Immersion Program at Elizabeth Holladay Elementary School Supplemental Material

- [Master schedule](#)
- [Professional learning](#) (sample article on translanguaging. Used with parents to help them learn how a child being taught in two languages processes information)
- [Professional learning](#) (sample with teachers and the concept of bridging is integral for students to receive linguistic and academic support in both languages).
- Enrollment and marketing announcement ([English](#) version and [Spanish](#) version)
- [Open house announcement](#)
- Quarterly Parent Advisory agenda ([sample from February 2022](#))
- ["Today's Classroom" video of Mayra Esparza](#) (video classroom highlight from April 2022)
- [Data summary: kindergarten dual-language immersion 2021-22](#)
- [Program Overview](#) with Source Documents - posted on Holladay Elementary's website

How Does It Work?

Here's an example...



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\$82,000 grade-level startup only	Spanish-speaking intervention specialist