**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Why should I consider enrolling my child in a Two-Way Dual Language Program?**

* You are taking the first step by researching our dual language program and considering this opportunity for your child. You should considering enrolling your child in our two-way dual language program because a bilingual person has the ability to communicate and interact with more people from around the world.  They have a vast opportunity because becoming bilingual will provide your student with the skills and knowledge to function competently in a global society.  It is proven that students in a Dual Language Program experience higher academic, cognitive, social and future benefits when compared to students who participate in all English classes.

**Academic benefits:**

* Higher academic achievement in school
* Higher levels of second language proficiency
* Higher results on state and standardized tests

**Cognitive benefits:**

* Higher levels of critical thinking and problem solving skills
* Higher flexible thinking abilities and enhanced creativity
* Increased ability to concentrate

**Social benefits:**

* Greater understanding of other cultures
* Greater acceptance of others
* Greater appreciation of personal heritage

**Economic benefits:**

* Increased opportunity and ability to fulfill language requirements for high school and university
* Increased employment opportunities

**How will my child learn in another language?**

* In the primary grades, our Dual Language teachers know that their students will NOT fully understand everything they say; therefore, our teachers use the appropriate teaching strategies to help the students learn. Such as, visuals, manipulatives, exaggerated facial expressions, expressive intonation to communicate their meaning and the appropriate body language. As students move through our dual language program, English speakers naturally use more English and Spanish speakers use more English.  All students are learning a second language, so they not only learn language and content from their dual language teachers but also from each other.

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

* At Herrera ES, we have the 80:20 model, so our students develop their initial literacy in Spanish. Many parents are initially fearful that full immersion may have a negative impact on their child’s English language development; however, research consistently finds that the immersion experience actually enhances English language development (Cloud, Genesee, & Hamayan, 2000). In our full immersion program (80:20 model), your child will develop initial literacy in Spanish. Your child will develop many cognitive processes that come from the ability to read, such as understanding the relationship between the spoken language and the written word, transfer from one language to another (Cloud, Genesee, & Hamayan, 2000).

**What does national research tell us?**

* Recent research shows that students, who participated in a Two-Way Dual Language Program, demonstrated strong self-esteem, felt academically competent, and held very positive attitudes toward other languages, speakers of other languages, and people they perceived as different from themselves.  In addition, most students also believed that being bilingual had made them smarter, able to perform better in school, able to think better, and would someday help them get a better job.  (Lindholm and Molina, 2006).
* Students in a Two-Way Bilingual Program have better developed verbal skills (Center for Applied Linguistics, 1988).
* Native English speakers in Two-Way Bilingual Immersion Programs maintained their English, added a second language to their knowledge base, and achieved well above the 50th percentile in all subject areas on norm-referenced tests in English.  The achievement of students educated in these programs equaled or outperformed their comparison groups being schooled in only one language, on all measures (Collier and Thomas, 2001).
* Immersion programs are the fastest growing and most effective type of foreign language program currently available in U.S. schools.  Most immersion program students can be expected to reach higher levels of second language proficiency than students in other school-based language programs (Met, 1998).
* In addition to the added social and economic advantages of bilingualism, immersion learners benefit cognitively, exhibiting greater nonverbal problem-solving abilities, enhanced creativity, and analytical thinking (Collier & Thomas, 2005).

**What is the role of a parent in a Dual Language Program?**

* At Herrera Elementary School, we highly encourage our parents to develop a healthy parent teacher relationship. Our Dual Language teachers develop a strong parent teacher partnership and maintain active parent communication through the use of the school agenda, parent conferences and our many parent events. Parents quite often feel some anxiety about having their child educated in a language, which they themselves do not speak.  They often worry about not being able to help with homework, or about not understanding their child’s difficulties; however, our teachers are ready to help support.  Our Dual Language teachers know that some of their children often come from monolingual homes and consider this when assigning homework. English dominant parents should expect some level of frustration to be expressed by their child.  The calm support of parents facilitates the adjustment to a new language and instructional environment.  It is important to realize that immersion provides a scholastic experience in Spanish.  We highly encourage our parents to help develop a higher level of bilingualism by looking for experiences outside of school. For example, allow your child to watch Spanish television shows and news stations, listen to Spanish radio and engage with your child about what they hear and comprehend.

* Our Dual Language teachers also encourage their parents to help their child with the following:
	+ Reading aloud with your child in your native language every day is also very important.
		- This will help create an interest in books, it enlarges your child’s vocabulary and it broadens his/her experience.
	+ Provide other learning experiences; such as, visiting the zoo, shopping centers, sporting events, watching TV together, cooking together and completing family chores. All of these provide you and your child the opportunity for talking together.  Research demonstrates that second language acquisition is dependent upon the first language development, so when you strengthen your child’s native language, he/she will become more successful in learning the second language.