

Success for All

PS 32 Korean Dual Language Program

Betsey Malesardi, Principal

As the first school on the East coast to offer a Korean Dual Language (DL) Program, PS 32 is proud to say that this innovative bilingual program shows great promise. The program was first initiated in the Fall of 2006, with one DL kindergarten class comprised of English language learners (ELLs) whose native language is Korean and students who are proficient in English. Four years later, the program has grown to include four classes, ranging from kindergarten to third grade, with one class at each grade level.

In the DL Program, both languages, Korean and English, are used equally for instruction across the curriculum. Since the inception of the program, the data indicates that participating students are developing literacy skills in both languages, and are extremely successful in their academic achievement.



PS 32, located in Flushing, Queens, New York City, serves students in kindergarten through fifth grade. The student population is 730, with 140 identified as English language learners (ELLs). The neighborhood in which the school is situated has a prominent Korean immigrant influence, and it is not unusual to find signs and Korean cultural displays in nearby churches, restaurants and stores. The school community, however, is multicultural, comprised of children not only from Korean heritage backgrounds, but from African American, Italian, Irish, Chinese, and Hispanic backgrounds as well. The goal for all students is to meet or exceed city and state standards, and to demonstrate respect, knowledge and appreciation of other cultures. This is a community that embraces multiculturalism.

At PS 32, the Columbia University Teachers College (TC) Work Shop Model is used for literacy instruction in all classes, including the DL classes. As part of the workshop model, ongoing assessment is implemented to identify students' instructional needs and strengths in order to inform instruction. For example, teachers keep running records, administer Teachers College reading leveling tests four times a year to correctly identify children's reading proficiency levels and conference with students so that appropriate instruction can be provided. According to the data gathered from these ongoing assessments, students in the DL program are making adequate progress that is on par or surpassing their counterparts in monolingual classes. This year, third grade dual language students will be participating in the English language Arts statewide assessment program for the first time. The school is confident that the students in the DL Program will perform well on ELA assessment.

It is important to note that ELLs in the DL classes are making rapid progress in learning English and often achieve proficiency on the NYSESLAT after one year. The school believes that this may be an instructional model that can help close the achievement gap between ELLs and non-ELLs.

Parent involvement is critical to the success of the program. Monthly meetings are organized specifically for the DL program parents to inform them of their children's progress, share pertinent information related to the DL program and discuss strategies that parents can use to support learning in the home. In a meeting held on January 26, the Director of the New York State Asian Languages Bilingual/ESL Technical Center (ALBETAC), Pat Lo, was invited to speak about the latest research on DL program implementation in other parts of the country.



Parents are pleased with PS 32's DL Program. Jihye Kim, whose child is now in third grade, has a lot to share with other parents. She is amazed at how her son can read and write in both English and Korean. As for kindergartener, Juliana, Korean is the 3rd language she's learning, and "she's doing fine and is a very happy child", according to her mother, Bibiana Parecki. PS 32's DL Program has even attracted participants from outside the school's home district. Evelyn Mallo, who does not live in the school's home district, learned about the program from a friend. She was so impressed by the program and the unique opportunities that it could provide her son Connor, that she arranged to register him in the DL kindergarten class. Evelyn now drives Connor to school every day and is very pleased with his progress.

Parent satisfaction and the high level of student performance validate the hard work of the teachers and administration of PS 32. One of the biggest challenges that the program has faced is the lack of Korean materials. Although there are beautiful books in Korea, they are not aligned with the curricula in New York. In addition, purchasing them overseas is always a difficult and tedious process. The DL Program teachers volunteer their own time to work extended hours to identify, develop, translate, and adapt materials that are appropriate for their students. The school also conducts outreach to many organizations for assistance. The Korean Consulate in New York, the Korean American Teacher Association, New York (KATANY), the Korean American Parent Association and ALBETAC are all partners in PS 32's endeavor to offer an enriched and promising instructional program model for the children.

As the school works to expand the DL program into the fifth grade, there are still many challenges to overcome. The PS 32 community is confident that they will have good news to share with you once the third graders take the NYS standardized assessments. Come and visit!



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