

Creating a Shared Vision for Your Biliteracy Program: Developing an Effective Tool

Backwards planning – knowing your destination before you begin the journey – is the motivation behind creating a clear and shared vision for your biliteracy program. The vision referred to in this document is designed to be a **shared and used tool** that ensures widespread understanding of the biliteracy program and its goals and therefore ensures that the program will not be eroded by stakeholders who may not fully understand the program. The vision is designed to be used to guide the continued growth and development of the biliteracy program.

The vision will serve as your sword and your shield.

Because the vision is designed to be a useful tool in increasing understanding and implementation of the biliteracy program, the act of creating the vision for the program should include a wide range of stakeholders. This is because the vision needs to respond to a series of questions and concerns held by diverse stakeholder groups throughout the school community. The graph at the end of this document outlines steps to putting together a diverse group to create the vision.

But before beginning to write your vision, it is important to understand what the vision will do. To help with this process, we have provided a criteria list on the next page (p. 2). The descriptors on the left refer to a fully articulated vision that reflects the multilingual perspective of students and of language, content, and literacy development. The descriptors on the right refer to a vision that needs additional information or that reflects a monolingual perspective.

Let's practice using the criteria list with some sample visions:

Vision

The Dual Language program at Sunset Valley is designed to ensure that all students become bilingual, biliterate, and multicultural with the ability to meaningfully engage with their learning in an increasingly global society.

This is a great vision – and it includes a clear goal: for all students to become bilingual, biliterate, and multicultural. But what about the other descriptors in the criteria list?

Most program visions look something like the vision shared above, and this is a great place to start. Unfortunately, when the vision includes **ONLY** the goals of the program (as outlined above) it allows a lot of room for misinterpretation, misunderstanding, and therefore, for erosion of the program.

Skip to p.3 to see how Sunset Valley enriched their program vision.

Criteria List for Looking at a Biliteracy Program Vision		
Element of the vision	Fully articulated vision	Vision requires more information
Program Goal	The goals of the biliteracy program are clearly articulated.	Goals are general, unclear, or missing.
Program Languages	The two program languages are identified. Neither language is described as a second language, target language, or additional language. Both languages are identified by name throughout the vision.	One or more of the program languages is omitted or the languages are referred to as other than the names of the language.
Program Students	The criteria for entering the program is so clear that any community stakeholder (parent, teacher, administrator) can read and understand the criteria. Provisions have been made for entering a wide variety of students, including those who qualify as ELLs, those who come from homes where Spanish is spoken, those who do not qualify as ELLs, students who are simultaneous bilinguals, students who come from homes where English is spoken, students who come from homes where a language other than English or Spanish is spoken, and students who come from multilingual homes.	The criteria for entry is confusing or uses a lot of acronyms. Students are referred to as either (native) English or (native) Spanish speakers or “true bilinguals” without regard for simultaneous bilinguals or speakers of languages other than English or Spanish.
Program Students	Criteria have been established for entry at PreK and Kinder and after the first day of first grade.	Language dominance is a qualifier for entry into the program or entry criteria is missing.
Program Students	Language dominance in a particular language is not a criteria for entry into the program.	Students are assumed to be in one of two categories only: English speaker or Spanish speaker.
Program Research	When research is quote, citations are provided.	Quoted research is not cited or there is no research quoted.

Vision

The Dual Language program at Sunset Valley is designed to ensure that all students become bilingual, biliterate, and multicultural with the ability to meaningfully engage with their learning in an increasingly global society.

Dual Language Program

The Dual Language Program for Sunset Elementary School is an educational approach to provide literacy and content instruction to all students through two languages, promote bilingualism and biliteracy, grade level academic achievement in both English and Spanish, and multicultural competence for all students. The goal is to prepare students for the future with abilities to listen, speak, read, and write both English and Spanish, as well as develop an appreciation for different cultures. The Dual Language Program provides children with the opportunity to learn English and Spanish, while maintaining high academic standards.

Research shows that students who participate in well-implemented dual language programs perform at or above-grade level on district and state tests, as well as achieve advanced levels of proficiency in two languages (Collier & Thomas, 1997). In addition, graduates from these programs have a head start on language requirements for college and have enhanced employment opportunities.

Biliteracy Philosophy

We believe in developing reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills in both languages concurrently (Simultaneous biliteracy). Students develop biliteracy in an environment that utilizes the gradual release of responsibility model (I do, we do, you do) in both languages daily

Enrollment

Incoming Pre-K 3, Pre-K 4, kindergarten, and first day of first grade students will have the opportunity to enroll in the Dual Language Program, regardless of language spoken at home. Once enrolled, students are expected to participate in the program for the duration of their elementary education. All new to Sunset Valley Elementary families whose Home Language Survey includes Spanish can enroll in the dual language program at any grade level, as this is required by law. However, students from families of native English speakers or another native language other than Spanish, will be given the opportunity to enroll at the Pre-K 3, kindergarten, or the first day of first grade only. These decisions will be made on a per-student basis due to enrollment limitations. If a student is transferring from another school district's dual language program, and they are not English Language Learners, they will be considered based on whether a seat is available in that grade-level

As you can see, the enriched (and much longer) vision on p. 3 responds to many more of the descriptors in the criteria list.

Before beginning to implement teaching for biliteracy, it is critical to have, at minimum, a draft of a program vision, like that of Sunset Valley above. Because of the need to include a wide range of stakeholders in the writing of a vision, it may be necessary to finalize the vision when you are back in your district.

When you return to your district to finalize your vision, it is suggested that you share both this guidance document (with the criteria list included on p. 3 of this document) and the sample visions with the vision-writing group.

Please note that the shared sample visions are included as samples only – it is critical that you and your team create your own vision that reflects the reality of your district and your biliteracy program.

The outlined below were compiled to support your vision-writing committee in the process of developing a strong vision that will serve as a useful tool for the biliteracy program. Take some time now to review the graph and the questions provided.

Guiding for Creating a Biliteracy Vision Committee and for Writing the Vision

	Guiding Questions to Consider
Before Creating a Vision	Biliteracy/Dual Language Program Vision: Stakeholders - Who are the stakeholders that need to be at the table to create and support the vision for your program? Why are these people essential to the success of the program? - Is there balance between stakeholders at the group? - How will the stakeholders be selected? Research - What research will you use to support the creation, maintenance, or restructuring of a biliteracy/dual language program? - What research will you use for each stakeholder group? Will it be the same, or does it need to be different? Preparation - How often will the group meet? Where will the group meet? When will the group meet in order to allow all stakeholders to be present? Who will communicate this information? What are the expectations for the group (attendance at all meetings, documentation of the work produced)?
While Creating a Vision	- What protocols will be used to ensure that all voices are heard during the vision making process? - What kind of language acquisition program should you have? Why? - Questions to ask the group: Who is this program for? What is the goal for these students? How will we enter students into the program?
After Creating a Vision	Communication - How will the vision be communicated to all of the different stakeholder groups? - How will the vision continue to be communicated to stakeholder groups after the first year? What platforms and/or mediums will be used to communicate the vision?

Biliteracy Program Vision Communication Plan Template

Who needs to know about this?	Why do they need to know about this?	How will they learn about this?
<i>Possible Stakeholder Group</i> Campus-based administrators (principal, AP)	<i>Possible reason:</i> To understand the underlying goals of dual language and biliteracy instruction, and how to support teachers in meeting the goals: schedules, PLCs, materials, campus-mandates, etc.	<i>Possible method:</i> Administrator-focused PD sessions.
<i>Possible stakeholder group:</i> Parents		
<i>Possible stakeholder group:</i> Central office personnel		

NOTE- Additional Sample Visions and Pedagogies Available
<http://bit.ly/T4B2019>

Huntley, Illinois:

District's goals for Dual Language:

- Bilingualism
- Biliteracy
- Multiculturalism
- Performance at or above grade levels in all academic areas in both languages

Who is the program for?

In alignment of In order to meet the vision of the Dual Language Program in D158 and we first ensure that all of the ELL (sequential and simultaneous) students have a seat in the program because this program close the achievement gap.

Class placement in our dual language program will be prioritized in this order:

- EL students. The program is driven by the needs of EL students.
- Non-Spanish speaking students will participate in a lottery

Families must fill out a contract and commit to the program for 6 years.

How long does the biliteracy program last (K-5, K-8, K-12)?

Pre-K to 5th grade, adding a grade every year. At this point, school year 2019, full implementation is pre-K, kindergarten and two 1st grade classrooms at Chesak.

Grade Level	Spanish Percentage and Content	The Bridge (Direction)	English Percentage and Content
K	80	S-E	20
1	70	S-E	30
2	60	S-E	40
3	50	Math E-S All others S-E	50
4	50	Math E-S All others S-E	50
5	50	Math E-S All others S-E	50

Literacy Pedagogy:

We in Huntley Community District #158 believe in literacy for All Students Always. As a part of our commitment to literacy for all, we value biliteracy, bilingualism and multiculturalism. The goal of literacy instruction in Huntley 158 is for students to learn effective reading and writing strategies and to have daily time to apply strategies through student-centered practice.

We believe that students learn how to read and write through an inquiry-based balanced literacy workshop model. This model provides student-centered instruction that is rigorous, but carefully scaffolded and differentiated to meet student needs and fosters a gradual release of responsibility--- an “I do, we do, you do” approach---and provides direct instruction of discrete skills and strategies within a meaningful context. We believe that an inquiry-based balanced literacy workshop model includes independent reading/writing, small group instruction, interactive reading/writing, mini-lessons, and group share that is based on a foundation of strong oracy and background knowledge. All students have access to an abundance of rich, diverse and culturally-relevant texts at both independent and instructional levels. Local curriculum is standards-based and focuses on content literacy that is organized into interdisciplinary units.

These units promote critical thinking, inquiry and social action. Biliteracy in English and Spanish is developed through an inquiry-based balanced literacy workshop model that occurs daily in both languages.

Balanced Literacy

A framework for literacy instruction which has three major components: Reading Workshop, Writing Workshop, and Word Study. Balanced literacy advocates that reading and writing achievement are developed through instruction and supports in multiple environments using various approaches that differ by level of teacher support and student control.

Content and Language Allocation Worksheet

Grade	Language Allocation (ex. 80/20; 70/30, etc.) Note: Spanish % is the first number	Content taught in Spanish Spanish Content and Minutes	Direction of the Bridge	Content Taught in English English Content and Minutes
K				
1				
2				
3				
4				

Grade	Language Allocation (ex. 80/20; 70/30, etc.) Note: Spanish % is the first number	Content taught in Spanish Spanish Content and Minutes	Direction of the Bridge	Content Taught in English English Content and Minutes
5				
6				
7				
8				

Comparison of Monolingual versus Multilingual Perspectives

Area	Monolingual Perspective	Multilingual Perspective
Perspective of Student Language Ability	Students have a dominant language (or L1, first language).	Students are developing bilinguals who have linguistic resource across languages. Their first language is bilingual.
	Students are viewed as “low” when they use Spanish and English together. (<i>“Está frizado.”</i>)	Developing bilinguals use what they know in both languages (<i>“El perro está barqueando.”</i>) and classroom instruction moves from informal (social) to formal (academic) language.
	Students are expected to produce “monolingual-like Spanish”, especially if they come from a Spanish speaking family.	Students are expected to make linguistic approximations, and classroom instruction strategically moves students from informal to formal language.
Programmatic Structure Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment	Students are placed in either a Spanish literacy/language or an English literacy/language class based on their strongest language.	Students are placed in a biliteracy program that develops literacy in both languages, developing and then building on students’ oracy skills. Students are integrated all day, and exposed to literacy in Spanish and literacy in English from Pk-5 (at a minimum).
	“Monolingual” like instruction is the norm in either English or Spanish.	Language acquisition practices are integrated with content and literacy instruction as the norm, in both English and Spanish.
	Spanish and English are thought of as separate, and students do not work across both languages.	The Bridge is pre-planned and it explicitly teaches students how their two languages are similar and different, thereby developing metalinguistic awareness, even in English-only programs of instruction.
	Students are assessed in each language separately. Bilingual programs follow the monolingual assessment calendar, adjusting it to two languages.	Students are assessed in both languages. Bilingual programs create an assessment calendar that captures what students can do in both languages; not necessarily doing everything twice (reduce redundancy and optimize transfer).
	It is expected that bilingual/dual language schedules look like those in the general education (monolingual) program.	Bilingual/dual language schedules intentionally look different than those in the general education (monolingual) program.
	Units of instruction are anchored in standards, use sheltered instruction strategies, and focus on instruction and assessment in one language, Spanish or English.	Units of instruction are anchored in standards, use sheltered instruction strategies, and focus on instruction and assessment in three linguistic spaces: Spanish, the Bridge, and English.

Beeman, K. and Urow, C. (2013). *Teaching for Biliteracy: Strengthening Bridges between Languages*. Caslon Publishing: Philadelphia

**Long and Short Term Plans for
Vision, Pedagogy, and Content and Language Allocation**

Short Term Goals	Long Term Goals