

BILINGUAL EDUCATION PHILOSOPHY:

Signature Assignment

Format: Letter to San Diego School Board considering opening the first two-way dual-language immersion public elementary school in the area

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Dear San Diego County School Board:

I am writing on behalf of the proposal to open a new two-way dual-language immersion public elementary school in San Diego County. I am a strong proponent of bilingual education and truly believe that it is the answer for helping our broken school system take one step closer toward closing the achievement gap. The achievement gap can be traced all the way back to elementary education where minority students are not being given access to equal, quality education compared to their white counterparts. I believe this is a direct result of how we have set up the existing public and private schools in the area. In fact, Gorski (2012) believes that the achievement gap is less about achievement and more about access. One way to increase access to *all* students is through language support. The implementation of our proposed two-way dual language immersion bilingual school will support, value, and build upon students' native language as means of increasing achievement.

In San Diego, 48% of the student population are comprised of English Language Learners and of that percentage, 80% of them speak Spanish as their first language. Our proposal is that our school district opens a new elementary school called "*Esperanza Elementary*" in order to address the needs of a large part of our city's population whose language needs have not been met in traditional English-only public schools. This school will follow the incredibly successful Spanish-English Dual Language Immersion model. In the field of bilingual education, the 50:50 two-way dual language model has been very effective and successful as demonstrated by the large body of supporting research. In 2002, Thomas and Collier conducted a study which found that the 'optimal program' for long-term academic success of language-minority students is two-way bilingual education at the elementary school level. In their analysis, they found that "students develop deep academic proficiency and cognitive understanding through their first language to compete successfully with native speakers of the second language" (Baker, 270). In other words, students will maintain their first language and academic development while they are also developing in a second language. Furthermore, Thomas and Collier's data showed that by eleventh grade, two-way bilingual educated students performed above the average level of native English speakers on English language assessments. I believe this model will empower Spanish-speakers and help them find value in their native language

while simultaneously learning English. It will also provide an excellent opportunity for the Spanish-speakers who in the past have struggled in English instruction to now shine and excel in Spanish instruction. In addition, Lindholm-Leary (2002) conducted a comprehensive study that found that dual language programs are very effective in promoting high levels of language proficiency, academic achievement and positive attitudes to learning in students. This last finding is incredibly important to us at *Esperanza Elementary* and we believe that our model of bilingual education will foster positive cross-cultural attitudes and behaviors in all students.

The goal of dual-language programs is to simultaneously integrate language minority and language majority students for instruction in both languages, Spanish and English. The beauty of this design is that it gives the native English speakers a chance to be “experts” and it gives the native Spanish speakers a chance to be “experts” so that the students are able to learn from each other. More specifically, the students at *Esperanza Elementary* will spend half of their instructional day in English and the other half in Spanish. The goal of *Esperanza Elementary* is to create bilingual, biliterate students by the time they graduate sixth grade in hopes that bilingualism will continue for the rest of their lives. We have adopted our proposed model for *Esperanza Elementary* from a highly successful charter school in Chula Vista (CVLCC) and will emulate their dual language immersion model. For half the day, the student will take English language arts, math and science (4-6) in English then proceed to take Spanish language arts, writing, history, and science (K-3) in Spanish; each core will address and incorporate the California state standards. As noted above, science will be taught in Spanish for kindergarten through third grade then in English for fourth through sixth grade.

Our motto at *Esperanza Elementary* will be: “Strong bonds between home and school are essential if the educational process is to be effective” (Alma Flor Ada, 1998). There is an extensive amount of research that has found that by bridging students’ home life and school life, we can raise student academic achievement. One of our goals at *Esperanza Elementary* is to include the students’ families into the classroom and learning process in an inviting, effective way. For this reason, the selection of high quality, dedicated, and enthusiastic teachers is of utmost importance to us at *Esperanza Elementary*. We have selected bilingual teachers who will make it a priority to incorporate and include each student’s parents or families in the learning process inside and outside the classroom. Research states that “by encouraging and providing opportunities for meaningful family involvement, teachers play a critical role in bridging home

and school” (Stuczynski et al, 2012). In addition, Valdes (2006) states the crucial importance of forging relationships between families and teachers in their children’s schools. For this reason, we have organized monthly soccer games, barbecues, ice cream socials, and movie nights for the families’ of our students in hopes of creating a fun, inviting environment within our school community. In addition, we have embedded family involvement into our curriculum so that parents and family members feel welcome to participate in their child’s classroom and support their child’s learning.

At *Esperanza Elementary* we believe that every child has the right, and the capacity, to succeed in life and in school. Every child is intelligent and it is our responsibility as educators to discover how. We believe that our progressive, student-centered approach to teaching and learning will benefit our students on an academic, social, and emotional level. Our aim is to improve academic achievement in English and Spanish while simultaneously enhancing a cross-cultural understanding through positive interactions in the classroom. Studies have proven the effectiveness and great success found in the 50:50 Dual Language Immersion Model which is why we have chosen to emulate and implement this model in San Diego.

We urge you to truly consider the potential benefits that would result from the opening of *Esperanza Elementary*, the first dual language immersion school of the area. The research has proven that bilingualism and bilingual education is a resource, rather than a barrier. As outlined in this proposal, research has additionally shown the immense cognitive benefits of bilingualism as well as the proven effectiveness of bilingual education in our increasingly globalized world we live in today. The two-way 50:50 dual language immersion model yields the highest level of success and effectiveness and we hope that you will give us the opportunity to bring the research to life with the opening of *Esperanza Elementary School*. Bilingual education is our hope for the future.

Thank you for your consideration and we trust you will make the right decision,

Katie Kinsella

Founder of proposed Esperanza Elementary School

Resumén de nuestra propuesta:

Soy un firme defensor de la educación bilingüe y estamos proponiendo que nuestro distrito escolar abra la primera escuela bilingüe de doble inmersión llamado *Esperanza Elementary*. Nuestra escuela bilingüe apoyará, valorará y aprovechará el idioma nativo de los estudiantes para aumentar el rendimiento estudiantil. Creo que la educación bilingüe es la respuesta para ayudar a nuestro sistema escolar roto a cerrar la brecha académica que existe en la actualidad.

En San Diego, el 48% de la población estudiantil están aprendiendo inglés como segunda lengua y de ese porcentaje, el 80% de ellos son hablantes nativos de español. Esta escuela seguirá el modelo exitoso de doble inmersión (español – inglés). En el campo de la educación bilingüe, el 50:50 programa de doble inmersión ha sido muy eficaz y ha tenido mucho éxito, como lo demuestra la gran cantidad de investigación.

Por ejemplo, en 2002, Thomas y Collier descubrió que el "programa óptimo" para el éxito académico a la larga de los estudiantes de minorías lingüísticas es la programa de 50:50 doble inmersión. Los estudiantes mantendrán su lengua materna mientras se desarrolla también en un segundo idioma. Creo que este modelo apoderará a los hispanohablantes y ayudarles a encontrar valor en su propio idioma y al mismo tiempo aprender inglés. Además, creemos que nuestro modelo de educación bilingüe fomentará actitudes positivas e interculturales en todos los estudiantes. En nuestra escuela, se enseñan conjuntamente a hablantes nativos de inglés y hablantes nativos de español. Los alumnos desarrollarán niveles altos de dominio en su primer idioma y desarrollarán niveles altos de dominio en un segundo idioma.

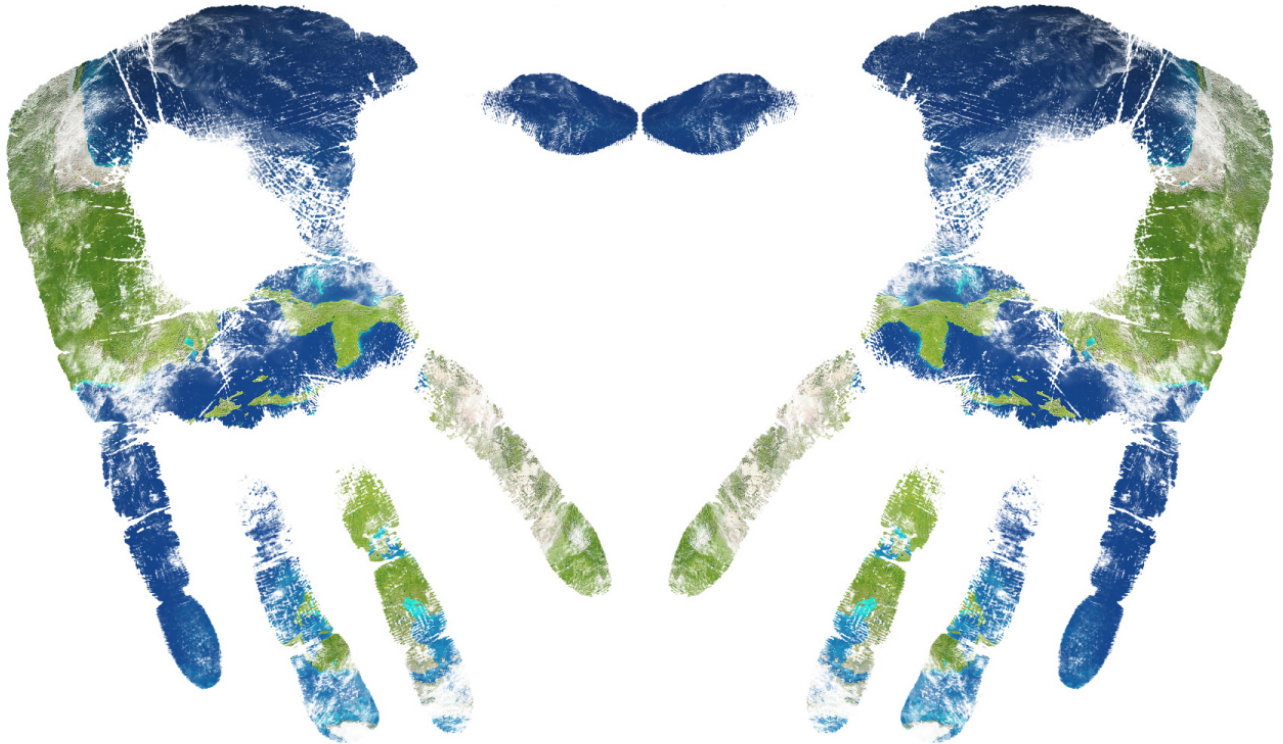
Uno de nuestros objetivos es integrar simultáneamente español e inglés para la enseñanza en ambos idiomas. En nuestro programa, el hablante nativo de inglés tiene la oportunidad de ser un "experto" y el hablante nativo de español también tiene la oportunidad de ser un "experto" para que los estudiantes aprenden unos de otros. Más específicamente, los estudiantes de la *Esperanza Elementary* se pasan la mitad del día de instrucción en inglés y la otra mitad en español. El objetivo de *Esperanza* es crear estudiantes bilingües y biliteratos para que el bilingüismo continuará por el resto de sus vidas.

Nuestro lema en *Esperanza Elementary* será: "Los fuertes lazos entre el hogar y la escuela son fundamentales para que el proceso educativo sea eficaz" (Alma Flor Ada, 1998). Hay una gran cantidad de investigación que dice que podemos elevar el rendimiento académico de los estudiantes si reunimos a la vida familiar y la vida escolar. Por eso, uno de nuestros objetivos en *Esperanza Elementary* es aumentar la participación de la familia en el salón de clases de sus hijos. Queremos crear una conexión entre el hogar y la escuela para nuestros estudiantes.

En *Esperanza Elementary*, creemos que cada niño y niña tiene el derecho y la capacidad para tener éxito en la vida y en la escuela. Cada estudiante es inteligente y es nuestra responsabilidad como educadores para descubrir cómo. Además, nuestro objetivo es mejorar el rendimiento académico en inglés y español al mismo tiempo que mejora la comprensión intercultural a través de interacciones positivas en el aula. Los estudios han demostrado la eficacia y el éxito de la 50:50 modelo de doble inmersión por lo que hemos optado por emular y aplicar este modelo en San Diego. La educación bilingüe es nuestra esperanza por el futuro de San Diego, de California y por nuestro mundo.

Esperanza Elementary

Dual Language Immersion Bilingual School



*Bilingual education is the key to closing the achievement gap
& changing the world*

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