



Frequently Asked Questions

Why learn a new language at such a young age?

Research shows learning a new language as an adult is much more challenging than it is for a child. Children are born ready to learn how to communicate; their brains are wired in a way that allows them to quickly learn language.

Why is this program only offered to preschoolers through 3rd grade?

The Dual Language Academy opened in the fall of 2019 with a preschool and kindergarten class. Each year one grade is added to our program until the Dual Language Academy has grades preschool through fifth grade. During the 2022-2023 school year, there will be a preschool, kindergarten, first, second and third grade class. As students move on to middle and high school, the Dual Language Academy Pillars of Achievement will be supported.

Do I need to speak Spanish and English for my child to be in the program?

Parents who enroll their children in the dual language program do not need to be bilingual. Throughout the school year, as an ongoing learning process, teachers will be in communication with parents about how they can support their children's growth at home.

Will my student learn the same content being taught in other English only classrooms?

Yes, the Dual Language Academy teaches to the same diocesan standards that all Bishop Heelan Catholic Schools use. The difference is that these standards will be taught mostly in Spanish in the younger grade levels. Teachers will be using many strategies to assure students are understanding the content and reaching their standards goals.

How will my child learn the content if they don't speak any Spanish?

Our bilingual teachers will use songs, pictures, charts, hand gestures and movement to help students learn content standards and language at the same time. Classroom routines will allow students adjust to transitions and know what to expect each day. Students will learn how to communicate essential needs, such as "May I have a drink?" using simple phrases and pictures. The teachers will create a comfortable, safe learning environment where students can feel at ease attempting to communicate in a new language.

If my child is a native Spanish speaker, how will they learn English?

It is important to be committed to the process of the dual language program. Your children will learn English, but at a slower rate than students who are immersed just in English throughout their school day. As students learn in Spanish, they are given the opportunity to develop their native language academically, which in turn, eventually deepens their understanding of English. This process takes longer, but has stronger ending results in both languages.

What does an ideal dual language classroom look like?

The ideal classroom ratio of students is 50% native English speakers and 50% native Spanish speakers. This creates a classroom environment where both languages are well represented and supported. All dual language teachers are bilingual and students are with the same teacher all day and the entire school year.

How is this program different than the dual language program offered at the Sioux City Public Schools Irving Elementary?

The Dual Language Academy uses a 90/10 language immersion model. Research shows a 90/10 dual language model to be most successful in producing biliterate students. Starting at the preschool level, classroom instruction will be 90% Spanish and 10% English. This will change by 10% annually until reaching 50% in Spanish and 50% in English. In Sioux City, exposure to English far outweighs exposure to Spanish. Immersing our dual language learners in Spanish develops a solid foundation, which they will continue to build alongside English throughout their dual language schooling.

Where is the Dual Language Academy located?

The Dual Language Academy is located at the Epiphany Center, 1000 Douglas Street in downtown Sioux City. The preschool class is located at the Heelan CYO Center, 1102 Grandview Boulevard.

Why is commitment to the program essential?

Student success is greatest with program dedication. Upon entering the Dual Language Academy, we ask parents to be committed to participating in this program through its entirety. We take this commitment seriously because it ensures the best results for your learner. Language learning is achieved through years of practice, hard work, and dedication. After second grade, no new students will be allowed into the program unless they have had dual language schooling elsewhere.

What resources are utilized by BHCS to support the Dual Language Academy?

The Dual Language Academy is offered in partnership with Boston College and its [Two-Way Immersion Network for Catholic Schools](#). The program is grounded in research with leadership of Boston College faculty and other education experts to support Catholic school classrooms around the country.

Do I have to be Catholic?

No, Bishop Heelan Catholic Schools works to build a community of students of all faiths. Thirteen percent of our student population is non-Catholic.

Where do the students go when they complete fifth grade?

After fifth grade, the students will transition to the Catholic middle school of their choice. There they will have a language arts class in Spanish with their DLA peers. The rest of their middle school content will be taught in English.