



World Languages



ASD Language Immersion Programs

The Anchorage School District's Japanese, Russian and Spanish language immersion programs are school-within-a-school programs in four of the district's neighborhood schools. Beginning in kindergarten, students are immersed for approximately half of their school day in a total language experience within a multicultural setting. The elementary immersion programs continue into designated feeder middle and high schools and are programs of choice for parents who would like their children to have the advantage of becoming proficient in two languages (English and a second language) by the time they complete the kindergarten through 12th grade sequence of the language immersion program. There is also a K-8 German immersion program at Rilke Schule German Charter School of Arts and Sciences. Currently in the Anchorage School District, we have approximately 2,300 students enrolled in our language immersion programs.

What is language immersion education?

Since the inception of French language immersion programs in Canada close to 50 years ago, countless research has been conducted showing the success and benefits of immersion education. Because immersion programs have the greatest amount of time dedicated to language learning, this is the program model that has the greatest success in terms of language outcomes (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2010). Immersion differs from traditional instructional approaches in which second languages are taught as separate subjects, in isolation from core content. Immersion refers to learning core content through a second language. As a result, students not only master subject area content, but also becoming bilingual when doing so. The programs in the Anchorage School District are partial-immersion programs, where students at the elementary level spend approximately half of their school day learning in English and the other half of the day learning in the target (second) language. At middle school students have two periods a day immersed in the target language, and at high school they have one period a day in the target language.

What are the goals of an immersion program?

- Developing a high level of proficiency in the target language
- Developing positive attitudes toward those who speak the target language and their culture(s)
- Developing English language skills commensurate with expectations for students' ages and abilities
- Gaining skills and knowledge in the content areas of the curriculum in keeping with stated objectives in these areas

— Center for Applied Linguistics

ASD World Languages Immersion Program Schools

Chinese

Scenic Park Elementary

German

Rilke Schule German Charter School of Arts and Sciences

Japanese

Sand Lake Elementary
Mears Middle School
Dimond High School

Russian

Turnagain Elementary
Romig Middle School
West High School

Spanish

Chugiak Elementary
Mirror Lake Middle School
Chugiak High School

Spanish/English Two-way

Government Hill Elementary
Romig Middle School
West High School



Anchorage School District
Educating All Students for Success in Life

How do children learn a second language in an immersion program?

At the elementary level, students have a team of two teachers, an English-speaking teacher and a native or near-native target language teacher (German, Japanese, Russian or Spanish.) For one-half of each day, students are immersed in the second language while receiving instruction in the district curriculum. Students acquire the second language in a natural way in everyday classroom situations. In the immersion model, students learn content, like math, science, or social studies in the second language and develop literacy skills in both languages.

Who can enroll in a language immersion program?

All students who meet the age requirements for entering kindergarten and/or first semester of first grade may apply to enroll in a language immersion program through the district lottery process for alternative programs. Bilingual students who meet the programs' target language literacy standards may enter at later grades on a space available basis through the lottery process. Parents are encouraged to attend parent informational meetings and observe in the classrooms prior to submitting a lottery application.

Enrollment is determined by the Anchorage School District lottery system. There are currently two lotteries a year held in March and August. For more information please visit: www.asdk12.org/choices/lottery.

Once students are admitted in the program, there is no need to reapply in the lottery each year. However, if a student exits the program, there is no guarantee that they will be readmitted at a later date.

Students tend to achieve the most when families make a minimum seven-year commitment to the program. This duration ensures full literacy development of both English and the immersion language.

What are the results from research on immersion education?

Review of the more than 40 years of research on programs in Canada and the U.S. shows longstanding and consistent results regarding students' academic achievement. Students perform as well as or better than their English-educated peers on tests of achievement in English and subject content mastery in math, science and social studies. The academic achievement of immersion students is equivalent to that of monolingual students who are studying the same subjects in their native language (Genesee, 1987, Lindholm-Leary, 2001). Research also shows that immersion education expands students' understanding of other cultural groups – their values, social customs and ways of viewing the world (Lambert, 1984). Students who acquire advanced levels of proficiency in second languages often experience certain cognitive and linguistic advantages when compared to monolingual students (Cummins, 1981; Lambert, Genesee, Holobow & Chartrand, 1993). Cognitive benefits include performing tasks that call for divergent thinking, pattern recognition and problem solving. Of most importance, bilingual children have been shown to exhibit enhanced levels of metalinguistic awareness.

Where can I learn more about immersion education?

CARLA – the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition: www.carla.umn.edu/immersion

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www.asdk12.org/worldlanguages