Dual Language Immersion Advisory Sub-Committee
February 2026

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Staff liaison: Wendy Bermudez, Dual Language Immersion Coordinator

| | | |
|---|---|---|
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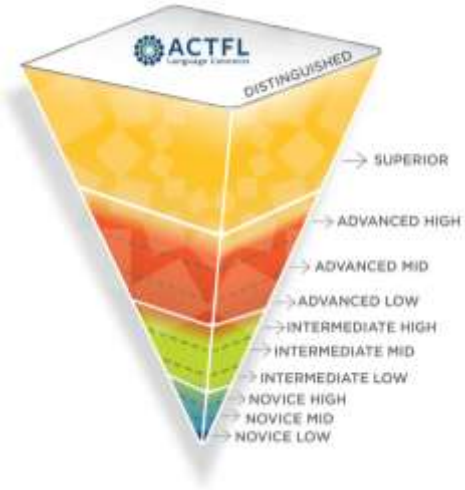
Recommendation 1: **APS should strategically place bilingual English Learner teachers who are literate in Spanish at Gunston Middle School to support a co-teaching model.**

**Alignment to Strategic Plan**
Priority: Student Academic Growth and Success
Performance Objective: SOL ProficiencyGrowth in Reading & Math
Strategies: Increase co-taught sections of courses and classes

**SUMMARY**

Arlington Public Schools provide English Learner (EL) students with EL services, including certified EL teachers. Currently, in the Dual Language Immersion (DLI) program at Gunston Middle School, EL teachers primarily support students in English classes. However, the strategic placement of EL teachers in Spanish classrooms would significantly strengthen biliteracy outcomes and better serve the unique needs of the same EL students in the DLI program.




The DLI program strives to ensure students have "conversational" and "academic" Spanish to excel professionally and academically. Additionally, the program works to achieve bilingualism and biliteracy. The middle school immersion model allows students to move beyond basic language acquisition skills (conversational Spanish) and into advanced biliteracy (academic Spanish). The ACTFL proficiency standards clearly outline how long true language proficiency takes to develop, underscoring that acquiring academic Spanish, especially the level needed to support future academic and professional goals, requires sustained, long-term immersion that continues through high school and even into college.

Incorporating bilingual English Learner teachers into Spanish Immersion middle school classrooms would allow teachers to co-deliver instruction with the intention of meeting both content and English language and literacy development goals simultaneously. The Native Spanish Lead teacher provides cultural authenticity and advanced fluency, while the Biliterate English Learner Teacher supports EL students and focuses on language acquisition strategies and bridging. To ensure the effective implementation of this co-teaching strategy, it is essential to provide common planning time. The EL teacher should be able to co-plan with both the English language arts teacher and Spanish language arts teacher to identify the vocabulary and skills that require bridging across languages.

Arlington Public School has implemented a best practice of co-teaching in many instances where EL teachers co-teach with Spanish-language arts teachers within the DLI elementary schools to provide bridging.

**Budgetary Implications**

None. This is cost neutral because it is making use of staff already funded by APS. There is currently one Spanish-speaking EL teacher at Gunston Middle School. The DLI Sub-Committee considered recommending an Assistant instead of reallocating the EL teachers portfolio, but did not recommend this since it would require additional qualified staff, incurring a cost.

**Committee vote**: 5 in favor, 0 opposed **Date:** January 27, 2026

**Detail**

Prioritize placing EL teachers in Spanish classrooms at Gunston Middle School to maximize biliteracy development and provide linguistically responsive instruction that honors the goals of the DLI program.

**Key Benefits:**

**Develops True Biliteracy**
EL teachers working in Spanish classes can explicitly teach cross-linguistic transfer strategies, helping students leverage their Spanish skills to accelerate English development—rather than treating the languages in isolation.

**Provides Bridging Support**
Students learn how concepts, vocabulary, and literacy skills connect across both languages, building metacognitive awareness of how bilingualism works in practice.

**Serves All Students More Effectively**
This approach recognizes that EL students in DLI need support developing **both** languages simultaneously, not just English. By embedding EL expertise in Spanish instruction, we ensure students build the strong Spanish foundation necessary for long-term academic success in both languages.

**Aligns with Research**
Research on bilingual education shows that strengthening students' first or stronger language directly supports second language acquisition and overall academic achievement.

| Gunston EL Enrollment | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Grade Level** | **Grand Total EL** | **EL Students in DLI** | **Percentage of EL students** |
| 6 | 125 | 14 | 11% |
| 7 | 117 | 15 | 13% |
| 8 | 100 | 11 | 11% |
| **Grand Total** | **342** | **40** | 10% |

The above number of EL students represents a caseload for one EL teacher. These EL students will get served similarly within the Spanish-speaking classroom. See below planning factor:

**Middle School English Learner Teacher Staffing Formula (From FY 2026 Planning Factors)**

| STAFFING | CRITERIA | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| English Learners (EL) Teachers[12] | EL STUDENTS *(includes dually-identified students)* | TEACHER PERIODS | STUDENT FACTOR | STUDENT PERIODS | CO-TAUGHT STUDENT FACTOR | CO-TAUGHT STUDENT PERIODS |
| | EL 1 Students | 5 | 15 | 5 | 10 | 0 |
| | EL 2 Students | 5 | 15 | 2 | 10 | 3 |
| | EL 3 Students | 5 | 20 | 1 | 15 | 3 |
| | EL 4 Students | 5 | 20 | 1 | 15 | 0 |
| | Per Countywide Life Skills and MIPA Class | | | 0.5 Teacher FTE | | |
| | **FORMULA:**<br>1. Calculate each group of EL students using the below calculation:<br>((EL Level Student Projection / Student Factor) * Student Periods) / Teacher Periods +<br>((EL Level Student Projection / Co-Taught Student Factor) * Co-Taught Student Periods) / Teacher Periods<br>2. Sum the raw number for all groups.<br>3. Round up the total to the nearest 0.5 teacher position. | | | | | |

Teacher Roles

| | **Native Spanish Lead Teacher** | **English Learner Teacher in a Bilingual Setting** |
|---|---|---|
| **Role** | Serves as the model for sophisticated vocabulary, nuanced grammar, and authentic cultural idioms. Delivers Spanish language arts instruction in a bilingual middle school classroom, fostering biliteracy and academic language development. | Serves as a bridge to teach cross-linguistic transfer, helping students understand how concepts in Spanish correlate to or differ from English structures. Breaks down the "how" of bilingualism in practical, accessible ways. |
| **Benefits** | Models academic Spanish across reading, writing, speaking, and listening while building cross-linguistic connections. | Provides targeted scaffolds for writing conventions and reading comprehension strategies that work across both languages, making biliteracy development explicit and intentional. |
| **Student Support** | Focuses on Spanish literature, literary analysis, and cultural-historical contexts while developing strong literacy skills. | Supports students in developing biliteracy skills while helping them understand how Spanish and English work together. |
| **Small Group Instruction** | Conducts literature discussions, writer's workshops, and targeted language development sessions that challenge critical thinking in Spanish | Conducts focused lessons on transferable skills, comparative language structures, and strategic language use for academic success. |
| **Student Impact** | Deepens connection to heritage and roots while developing academic language proficiency for success in bilingual contexts. | Equips students with tools to move fluidly between languages, strengthening their identity as confident, competent bilingual learners and communicators. |

**References**


https://drive.google.com/file/d/1tbltW9C_rlr4HLauaxCB5RkKPRNM2JTI/view

https://terpconnect.umd.edu/~memb/MartinBeltran_MLJ_2010_LangBridge.pdf

https://www.teachingforbiliteracy.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/The-Bridge-Making-Cross-Linguistic-Connections-p.-1-6.pdf

https://www.nysed.gov/sites/default/files/programs/bilingual-ed/topic-brief-2-final-2-24-21-a.pdf


**Staff Response**

I strongly support this recommendation as it aligns with best practices in Dual Language Immersion instruction and reflects the realities of teaching in a bilingual setting. Teaching in a bilingual classroom is fundamentally different from teaching in a monolingual setting—students are not simply learning two separate languages, but developing an integrated bilingual identity and skill set. To maximize student success, we must provide explicit support in bridging the two languages. EL teachers positioned in Spanish classrooms can make cross-linguistic connections visible, teach transferable literacy strategies, and help students understand how their knowledge in one language strengthens the other. This approach honors the bilingual nature of our students' learning and ensures they develop the strong biliteracy skills that define successful DLI programs. This means not just offering instruction in two languages, but strategically supporting students to become truly bilingual and biliterate.

Recommendation 2: **APS should increase the high school courses offered in Spanish as part of the DLI program, which will be offered to both DLI students and Spanish-speaking students outside of the program. (Both short-term and long-term options)**

**Alignment to Strategic Plan**
Priority: Student Academic Growth and Success
Performance Objective: SOL ProficiencyGrowth in Reading & MathCollege, Career & Civic Readiness
Strategies: Deliver APS curriculum through rigorous, differentiated, evidence-based, and culturally responsive instruction aligned to the Virginia standards of learning with opportunities to infuse depth and complexity to promote deeper understanding of the content.

**SUMMARY**

APS should create additional Spanish high school courses at Wakefield to continue to strengthen the DLI program at the high-school level, attract more students into the program, reduce the attrition of students that leave the program after middle school, and provide more advanced offerings to EL students. Courses to be considered include advanced math classes, social studies courses, professional Spanish courses, personal finance, or others based on availability of bilingual teachers.

With the current budget reality, the DLI sub-committee is offering a short-term cost effective option and a longer-term option that, while will require additional funding, will have a strong impact on the strength of the DLI program at the high-school level. In the short-term, APS should offer Intensified Geometry, Algebra II, or any other math class that one of the two current Spanish speaking math teachers could offer. These courses could be made available to DLI students and non-DLI EL students.

While this option would certainly strengthen the program, additional courses such as social studies, personal finance, or professional Spanish courses would do even more to minimize student attrition, based on findings from the survey discussed above. The DLI Sub-Committee recommends adding courses at both the regular and intensified levels for both Freshman and Juniors/Seniors. APS can achieve this through several options: courses could be offered by Spanish speaking current APS teachers who work at other APS schools and offer individual courses at Wakefield; part-time Spanish speaking teachers could teach only a few courses at Wakefield; or as natural attrition of teachers takes place at Wakefield, bilingual Spanish/English teachers should be given priority.

Over time, the addition of Spanish classes at Wakefield would allow for the DLI program to increase the number of required courses in Spanish during high school, which is now only five courses over all four years.

**Budgetary Implications**
In the short-term, there would be no budget implications because the teachers are already part of APS staff and able to offer these courses.

**Committee vote**: 5 in favor, 0 opposed **Date:** January 27, 2026

**Detail**

**Current DLI Courses at Wakefield High School**

| 9th Grade | 10th Grade | 11th Grade | 12th Grade |
|---|---|---|---|
| • Immersion 9<br>• Immersion Biology or Intensified Immersion Biology<br>• Immersion Algebra I or Immersion Geometry<br>• ***World History, Intensified** | • AP Spanish Lang or Spanish V<br>• Intensified Immersion Chemistry<br>• Immersion Geometry | • AP Spanish Language or AP Spanish Literature<br>• ***Professional Spanish courses (such as medical, legal, or business Spanish), or personal finance** | • AP Spanish Lit<br>• Advanced Studies in Spanish<br>• Spanish Focused Senior Project<br>• ***Professional Spanish courses (such as medical, legal, or business Spanish), or personal finance** |

***Recommended Courses**

DLI students may not need to take either Algebra 1 or Geometry in high school given their course completion at Gunston Middle School. Therefore, the DLI program at Wakefield is not servicing all DLI students' math immersion needs. There are currently two Spanish speaking teachers who teach math courses at Wakefield. Adding additional Spanish language math courses would not add any additional cost and would expand the options for advanced math courses for DLI students and non-DLI EL students.

**References**

https://www.apsva.us/wp-content/uploads/sites/57/2023/05/APS-Dual-Language-Immersion-Program-Framework_Sp.pdf

**Staff Response**

I fully support this recommendation as it strengthens educational opportunities for both DLI students and Spanish-speaking students schoolwide. Expanding course offerings in subjects like advanced math, Latin American or World History, professional Spanish (medical, legal, or business), and personal finance would provide meaningful academic challenge, validate students' bilingual skills as an asset, and create authentic pathways for using Spanish in college and career contexts. This expansion also leverages the strong language skills of Spanish-speaking students outside the formal DLI program for rigorous academic work beyond Spanish

language classes. By offering these courses, we reduce student attrition after middle school, signal that bilingualism is valued at the highest academic levels, and create a more robust, sustainable DLI program that follows through on its promise from elementary through high school graduation.

Recommendation #3: **APS establishes a Dual Language Immersion strand at an elementary school with a high population of Spanish-speaking English Learners (long-term recommendation)**

**Alignment to Strategic Plan**
Priority: Student Academic Growth and Success
Performance Objective: SOL ProficiencyGrowth in Reading & Math
Strategies: Deliver APS curriculum through rigorous, differentiated, evidence-based, and culturally responsive instruction aligned to the Virginia standards of learning with opportunities to infuse depth and complexity to promote deeper understanding of the content.

**SUMMARY**

English Learners (ELs) face some of the most persistent achievement gaps in APS, directly challenging the 2024-30 Strategic Plan's goal of eliminating opportunity gaps. While research confirms Dual Language Immersion (DLI) is the most effective model to close this gap, the current centralized "option school" model creates access barriers for the families who need the program the most. We recommend establishing an additional DLI strand within an elementary school with a high Spanish-speaking population. This scalable solution shifts instruction from remediation to enrichment, leveraging students' home language to ensure high-level English proficiency and academic success.

**Phase 1 (Pilot):** Begin with one Kindergarten cohort. While a two-teacher team (English/Spanish) is used at Claremont and Escuela Key, a single bilingual teacher model is a viable, lower-cost entry point.
**Growth:** Add one grade level per year.
**Alignment:** The program would utilize the DLI curriculum in use at Escuela Key and Claremont. Alumni would naturally feed into the existing Spanish Immersion Program at Gunston Middle School, merging with Key and Claremont alumni.

**Budgetary Implications**
The implementation will be primarily cost neutral as it would replace an English-only classroom with a DLI classroom. However, to begin the strand, teachers would need additional planning time to collaborate with peer teachers at Escuela Key and/or Claremont.

**Committee vote**: 5 in favor, 0 opposed **Date:** January 27, 2026

**Detail**

Currently, DLI in Arlington is housed in dedicated county-wide option schools (Escuela Key and Claremont). Data has shown the success of these programs. For example, the 2024-25 End of Year VALLSS K-3 performance indicates that the DLI program performs about the same as the rest of the county in English VALLSS, despite the reduced number of hours of English instruction, and even better in Spanish VALLS. In addition, Claremont and Escuela Key both demonstrated strong performance in regard to the Virginia Department of Education's recently

released updated accountability and accreditation results using the new School Performance and Support Framework.

While ELs are thriving in the Escuela Key and Claremont programs, these locations are inaccessible to some families due to transportation hurdles for parents as well as a lack of lottery awareness. Additionally some families view immersion schools as remedial programs for Spanish speakers, rather than enrichment programs, or vice versa, depending on how the program is explained to them.

The "Strand" Model (a program within a school building) would allow APS to utilize space in an existing neighborhood school for a smaller, third DLI program that utilizes the DLI curriculum APS has already fine tuned at Claremont and Escuela Key. Through this model, APS would serve students where they are, rather than asking families to navigate an online-only and complex lottery system to access best-practice instruction.

APS has [number] elementary schools where one-third of the student body is native Spanish speaking English Learners. This means we have the "linguistic capital" already in the building to support a robust, one-way dual language immersion model. In a K-5 one-way model, the classroom would be composed of only English learners with a Spanish home language background. This model is designed to develop students' fluency and literacy in English and Spanish. When students develop literacy skills in their first language, it fosters literacy development in their second language (English). This would improve literacy outcomes for EL students in both English and Spanish.

**Commented [1]:** To add once we receive

| Top 5 Elementary Schools with the Highest EL Population | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **School** | **Total Kindergarten Enrollment** | **Total Number of Spanish-Speaking EL Students** | **Percentage of Spanish-Speaking EL Students** |
| Abingdon | 91 | 29 | **32%** |
| Barrett | 57 | 31 | **54%** |
| Carlin Springs | 53 | 37 | **70%** |
| Hoffman-Boston | 87 | 15 | **17%** |
| Randolph | 67 | 28 | **42%** |
| **Grand Total** | **355** | **140** | **39%** |

**Commented [2]:** should Barcroft be added?

The strand program would begin with at least one kindergarten classroom and add additional grade-levels as the student cohort progresses, eventually merging with Escuela Key and

Claremont alumni for sixth grade in Gunston Middle School's Spanish Immersion Program. While a strand with two classrooms per grade would be ideal, to allow for the same two-teacher model used at the option DLI elementary schools, it is possible to start the strand with a single kindergarten classroom with one teacher who provides the instruction in both English and Spanish.

**References**

*Ensuring Equitable Access to Dual-Language Immersion Programs: Supporting English Learners' Emerging Bilingualism* by Dr. Conor P. Williams, Dr. Shantel Meek, Dr. Maggie Marcus and Jonathan Zabala of The Century Foundation https://tcf.org/content/report/ensuring-equitable-access-to-dual-language-immersion-programs-supporting-english-learners-emerging-bilingualism/

https://www.apsva.us/wp-content/uploads/sites/57/2023/05/English-Learners-Program-Evaluation-FINAL.pdf

**Staff Response**

I agree with the recommendation to establish one-way DLI strands in elementary schools with high English learner populations. These schools have the Spanish-speaking student base needed to support a strong and sustainable program, and research shows that DLI is one of the most effective models for improving long-term academic outcomes for ELs.

Starting with one Kindergarten cohort at selected sites and adding a grade level each year is a practical way to scale the program. Aligning curriculum with Claremont and Escuela Key will also create a clear pathway into the Gunston Immersion program, supporting biliteracy development and overall academic success for our EL students across the division.

**Appendix 1: 2024-25 VALLSS ENGLISH PERFORMANCE COMPARISON**

| Grade Level | School/ Program | Language | % Low Risk | % Moderate Risk | % High Risk | District Average % Low Risk | Difference from District |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Kindergarten** | **District Average** | **English** | **75.24%** | **11.71%** | **13.05%** | **75.24%** | **—** |
| | Immersion K | English | 76.1% | 11.7% | 12.2% | 75.24% | +0.9% |
| | Immersion K | Spanish | 75.0% | 20.2% | 4.8% | — | — |
| **Grade 1** | **District Average** | **English** | **68.48%** | **12.72%** | **18.80%** | **68.48%** | **—** |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Immersion Grade 1 | English | 70.5% | 12.1% | 17.4% | 68.48% | +2.0% |
| | Immersion Grade 1 | Spanish | 86.8% | 10.0% | 3.2% | — | — |

**DLI Performance:**

- **Both Immersion Kindergarten and Grade 1** exceed district averages in English Low Risk performance
- **Immersion Kindergarten** performs 0.9 percentage points above district average (76.1% vs. 75.24%)
- **Immersion Grade 1** performs 2.0 percentage points above district average (70.5% vs. 68.48%)
- **Dual language instruction is working** - students learning in two languages are achieving at or above levels of district peers learning in one language
- **Students are making strong progress in their second language** while maintaining or exceeding English performance

Recommendation 4: **APS should commit to successfully completing all recommendations within the Dual-Language Immersion Program Framework (Long-term recommendation)**

**Alignment to Strategic Plan**
Priority: Student Academic Growth and Success
Performance Objective: Growth in Reading & Math
Strategies: Deliver APS curriculum through rigorous, differentiated, evidence-based, and culturally responsive instruction aligned to the Virginia standards of learning with opportunities to infuse depth and complexity to promote deeper understanding of the content.

**SUMMARY**
In August 2022, APS published the Dual-Language Immersion Program Framework, which contained "recommendations aimed at strengthening the DLI program to further the goal of graduating students who are bilingual, biliterate and leaders in our multilingual and multicultural world" (page 1). With support from the School Board, APS has made great progress in addressing the nine recommendations contained in the report; however, work is still required to address recommendations 4, five, and 8.

> **Recommendation 4**: That APS allocate funding to hire one Spanish reading specialist for each elementary school that is assigned to the school to support the continued training and development of their respective DLI programs.
>
> **Recommendation 5**: That APS expand access to the DLI program through marketing, recruiting and strengthening the Pre-K-12 pathway.
>
> **Recommendation 8**: To fund, plan, designate staff, and increase course offerings at Wakefield High School to allow it to attract and sustain DLI students at the school.

DLI Sub-Committee recommendations one through three directly relate to each of the remaining recommendations from this Framework. For example, recommendation 2 (increase course offerings at Wakefield) would successfully address recommendation eight from the APS Dual-Language Immersion Program Framework.

**Budgetary Implications**
The DLI Sub-Committee acknowledges that there are budgetary implications with this recommendation. As a result, it is being recommended as a long-term recommendation to implement in the coming years.

**Committee vote**: 5 in favor, 0 opposed **Date:** January 27, 2026

**Detail**

**Recommendation 4**: That APS allocate funding to hire one Spanish reading specialist for each elementary school that is assigned to the school to support the continued training and development of their respective DLI programs.

*Progress to Date:* The DLI Advisory Committee has advocated for this position post-DLI Visioning.

- World Languages Advisory Committee's 2022-23 recommendation: Prior Recommendation: Spanish Reading Specialists for the Dual Language Immersion Program
- Dual Language Immersion sub-subcommittee 2023-24 recommendation: Recommendation #1: APS allocates funding to hire one Spanish reading specialist for each DLI elementary school to support student literacy in Spanish.
- Dual Language Immersion sub-subcommittee 2024-25 recommendation: Recommendation 2: APS Establish Planning Factors for the K-12 DLI Program to support high quality instruction throughout the full immersion program included included the Spanish Language Arts Reading Specialist (Elementary School) position.

*Gap:* As of the 2025-26 school year, the Spanish reading specialist positions have not been funded.

**Recommendation 5**: That APS expand access to the DLI program through marketing, recruiting and strengthening the Pre-K-12 pathway.

*Progress to Date:* The DLI Advisory Committee acknowledges substantial progress to expand marketing and recruiting towards prospective DLI families and strengthening the Pre-K-12 pathway. However, there is still work to do.

*Gap:* There is a need to continue recruiting Spanish-speaking families at the elementary level. In addition, while the progress has been dependent on particular staff members and the school staff, there is a need to institutionalize this within APS processes and offices, such as the Welcome Center.

**Recommendation 8**: To fund, plan, designate staff, and increase course offerings at Wakefield High School to allow it to attract and sustain DLI students at the school.

*Progress to Date:* Additional math and science courses have been added to the DLI curriculum.

*Gap:* Social studies and professional courses should be added as detailed in the DLI Sub-subcommittee's Recommendation 2.

**References**

https://www.apsva.us/wp-content/uploads/sites/57/2023/05/Dual-Language-Immersion-Program-Framework.pdf

**Staff Response**

I agree that APS should revisit the remaining recommendations from the 2022 DLI Program Framework. While significant progress has been made, Recommendations 4, 5, and 8 still need attention to fully strengthen the PreK–12 immersion pathway.

We support prioritizing funding for Spanish reading specialists at each DLI elementary school, expanding access through targeted outreach and pathway development, and enhancing high school course offerings so Wakefield can better serve and retain immersion students. These steps align with the original visioning process and will help ensure a stronger, more coherent DLI program across the division.