

Dual Language at Sunset Valley Elementary FAQs

**These really are the most commonly asked questions!*

Q: How can I learn more about the dual language program at Sunset Valley Elementary?

A: Each year, the principal of Sunset Valley hosts dual language information sessions, accompanied by a brief tour of dual language classrooms. The tours are offered in the morning on several different dates. Please check this website to see the exact dates for tours, which begin in December each school year. This is the best way to learn what two-way dual language at Sunset Valley is really all about. We also recommend that you follow the Sunset Valley Facebook page and Twitter account.

Q: How do I apply for Sunset Valley's dual language program?

A: Please check the dual language website (below) for the updated application for dual language and any updates regarding district enrollment into the program. Once updated applications are uploaded at this site, paper copies will also be available at Sunset Valley. You may come by our office during business hours (7:05 a.m. - 4:05 p.m.) for an application, or download one from the website. <https://www.austinisd.org/multilingual/dual-language>. All families interested in enrolling their child(ren) into the program must submit a dual language application, and all its required components, to Sunset Valley by the dual language deadline posted by Austin ISD in order to be in the lottery. Applications turned-in to Sunset Valley, or Austin ISD departments, after the deadline will be added to a second lottery OR placed on a waiting list if no space remains.

Q: I received a letter and email from the district stating that my child was placed on the waiting list for dual language. When will I know if they get in?

A: Between March and May, there may be updates to the waiting list based on changes to the enrollment (i.e. families deciding to move away from Austin, families in the program deciding to transfer to a school closer to home, etc.). In that case, you would receive an email from Austin ISD's dual language department confirming any movement from "waitlist" to "accepted." Unfortunately, it is very unlikely that the waiting list will "move" between June and August. Sunset Valley's office is closed from mid-June until August, and the registrar is off duty. During these months, you're encouraged to contact the Multilingual Department at 512-414-4732 with any questions about your enrollment status. Acceptance always comes from the Multilingual Department and not the school.

Q: What are the odds my child will get in if they are on the waiting list?

A: This is a complicated answer! First and foremost, it's important to know that students entering Kindergarten and 1st grade, who live in the Sunset Valley school zone (confirmed via the Austin ISD address locator on the Austin ISD website) will never be turned away, and all students at Sunset Valley who are entering at PK (must meet the eligibility requirements for PK if not already accepted into DL), K or the first day of 1st grade will be in the dual language program. Students entering after the first day of 1st grade may participate in the dual language program at Sunset Valley if they have been in a dual language learning environment before

transferring to Sunset Valley or if they are a native Spanish speaker. So, if you live in the Sunset Valley zone and are entering at PK (and you meet the eligibility requirements), K, or day one of 1st grade, you're in. If you live in the Sunset Valley zone and are bilingual and/or a native Spanish speaker, you're in and you may enter at any grade level. If you do not meet any of these criteria, you may still be able to participate in our program, but you will most likely have to wait until after the first week or so of classes to be accepted because your ability to participate will depend on how many students are actually enrolled, per teacher, at the grade level in which you're enrolling. We recommend that families check-in after the first week of school if they are still interested in our dual language program, and they haven't yet been accepted. By then, the school will have a more accurate depiction of our enrollment.

Q: Will moving into the Sunset Valley zone ensure that my child can attend Sunset Valley's dual language program?

A: As long as they are entering Kindergarteners or 1st graders, yes! If they are entering at PK (PK-3 or PK-4), they will be accepted if they meet eligibility requirements (federal PK requirements) OR if there is space in our tuition-based program. If your child is already in 1st grade or above, they must be bilingual or have participated in a dual language program to enter our program. Students in our zone who do not wish to participate in dual language, and those who do not meet entrance criteria, can enroll at Joslin Elementary without a transfer.

Q: What is a reasonable expectation for me to have regarding my student's bilingualism by the time he/she/they "graduates" from Sunset Valley's dual language program?

A: Every child is different. In the same way students learn to walk, talk and read at different ages, students will "master" Spanish at different levels. Research tells us that it takes approximately 9 years to master a second language. Therefore, most native English speakers who enter our program will *not* master Spanish by age 11 unless they began learning Spanish before they entered elementary school. However, you can expect your child to:

"develop a high academic and linguistic proficiency in two languages by participating in a rigorous academic program that enhances the development of bilingualism, biculturalism, and biliteracy so that students will graduate ready for college, career, and life in a globally competitive economy." - Austin ISD Multilingual Department

All of our students are able to read and write in English and Spanish by 3rd grade, though they will definitely prefer one language over the other. Most students read at much higher levels in one language than the other, and typically the language they read at a higher level is the same as the dominant language spoken in their home, but occasionally a student will read at the same level in both languages or even higher in their non-native language. Because our teachers receive training for dual language, social emotional learning, etc., most students in our program have a low "affective filter," which means they are more likely to take risks in their speaking of their second language than students who do not start to learn a second language until middle school. Many social and emotional factors contribute to a child's "affective filter," and that often determines when, to whom, and under what circumstances they speak their

second language. Our students will often refuse to speak their second language at home or on demand. However, all of our students speak their non-native language during the school day! Administration is in classrooms observing this daily. You will receive data from your child's teacher regarding their progress in both languages, and teachers will create the environment that will best ensure your child is successful in English and Spanish.

Q: Are there equal numbers of native spanish speakers and native english speakers in your two-way dual language program?

A: Every year and grade level is different. However, there are no grades with a perfect 50/50 split. We do not believe in looking at students as simply "spanish speakers" and "english speakers" because we see our students as both english and spanish learners the day they start our program. Students with fluent or proficient spanish language are evenly distributed into each classroom. We have initiatives in place to ensure that native spanish speaking families have the ability to participate in our program if the school in the area in which they live does not offer two-way dual language. Two-way dual language was developed based on research that shows that English Learners (also known as ELs ; they are assessed by a committee called the Language Proficiency Assessment Committee) achieve at high academic levels when they participate in a two-way dual language program. Therefore, we believe all ELs should have access to two-way programming when possible. ELs do take priority in our program in terms of enrollment into the program.

Q: How can I best support my child in a dual language program if I don't speak spanish myself?

A: While knowing spanish is definitely not a prerequisite for parenting a student in a two-way dual language program, we do tend to produce more and more spanish-learning parents each year! There is a spirit of language-learning on our campus that translates to all. That said, parents can best support their students by reading with them, talking with them, checking communication from the school regularly and attending events and conferences. Basically, however you support your child, continue to do that in your native language. If you'd like to enhance your child's access to spanish, we recommend spanish cartoons, YouTube videos (spanish songs, etc.), MyOn (online library featuring books in spanish), iStation (online website with login information available from your child's teacher), Mamalingua (phone app), spanish music, changing the language on movies/shows to Spanish, and Duolingo (app). The school will often host after-school programs, and those who offer their programming in spanish receive priority on the calendar. Those opportunities will be advertised on the Facebook page and PTA website.

Q: I still have questions. How can I learn more?

A: In 2017-18, our campus dual language committee spent an entire year developing our Sunset Valley Dual Language Handbook. This handbook is a comprehensive guide to dual language on our campus that will "go live" in 2018-19 on our website. Please review those documents, and if you still have questions, come to a tour in December or January!