

MASSACHUSETTS ASSOCIATION FOR BILINGUAL EDUCATION



Listening, speaking, reading, and writing in social and academic settings in two or more languages.
A nonprofit organization for educators, families, and policy makers

April 2017

MABE Supports a Dual Language Educator Endorsement

The Massachusetts Association for Bilingual Education (MABE), an organization that has promoted excellence in bilingualism and biliteracy instruction since the 1970's, proposes the creation of a Massachusetts Dual Language Educators (DLE) endorsement, and supports the continuation of the TBE endorsement. Specifically, MABE recommends the following:

- 1. Continuation of the current endorsement in Transitional Bilingual Learning for Pre K-6 and 5-12 in 603 CMR 7:06 section (9) (b);***
- 2. Creation of a new endorsement category, Dual Language Educator (DLE) endorsement, appropriate for educators teaching in effective dual language program models described in MA G.L. Chapter 71A.***

In this public comment, we focus on four critical reasons to create a DLE endorsement:

- 1) The documented need for highly qualified bilingual teachers to staff existing and developing DLE programs, which are proliferating statewide and have been cited as future priorities for many districts.
- 2) The need for equitable requirements for highly qualified teachers working in DLE programs; these would equate to requirements that now exist for other English Language Learner education programs (e.g. Sheltered English Immersion (SEI), English as a Second Language (ESL), Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE).
- 3) The need for promotion of high pedagogical and linguistic standards for dual language education programs in order to ensure fidelity of implementation and therefore efficacy.
- 4) The need for development of licensure requirements to teach in dual language education programs similar to those that exists in other states.

1. The documented need for highly qualified bilingual teachers to staff existing and developing DLE programs, which are proliferating statewide and have been cited as future priorities for many districts.

Supply and demand

High-quality instructional personnel who are proficient in academic language in the language of instruction are critical to the success of dual language education programs. In 2012, there were 10 dual language education programs (Two-way immersion model) in the Commonwealth. Currently, there are 19 programs, with at least two slated to begin Fall 2017 (<https://www.massmabe.org/Directory-DL-Programs>).

With the increase in numbers of programs, there is a well-documented need for teachers. Supply of these teachers is not keeping up with the growing demand of new and existing programs. For example, schools and districts have asked MABE to post 20 dual language teacher positions on their website across 8 districts since January 2017. This phenomenon is well documented: “finding highly qualified teachers [is] the greatest challenge in implementing an immersion program. Aside from needing to be fluent in the target language, teachers also need to be competent in language learning strategies and the relevant pedagogical skills” (Liebtag & Haugen, 2015). (We address these skills in Section 2 below).

Research on dual language programs indicates overwhelmingly positive outcomes for **all** students, including English language learners. According to data provided by established dual language programs in Massachusetts, these programs demonstrate that they are meeting expectations as established by the state’s accountability system (Dual Language Leadership Network Meeting, April 12, 2016). Dual language programs are routinely the most highly chosen language learning programs when they are available; all existing programs currently have a waiting list to enter these highly successful TWI programs and are forced to use lottery systems for enrollment.

DLE as a future priority for many high-need districts

DLE programs have been cited as future priorities for many districts, including those under turnaround status. (603 CMR 2.00: Accountability and Assistance for School Districts and Schools). ESE has recently called on MABE to consult with “Level 5” schools and districts (Holyoke, Southbridge) in order to implement DLE programs. Dual language approaches are more appropriate for schools to implement with large pockets of linguistically homogeneous language populations such as those found in the “Gateway Cities.” A 2011 [Gateway Cities Agenda Fact Sheet](#) named DLE programs as a priority approach for closing achievement gaps for ELL students in these high-need areas. In a 2015 study commissioned by ESE of 10 MA districts, several of which were Gateway Cities, researchers concluded “In all 10 districts, the top home language is spoken by a large majority of the students, indicating that most of these students could feasibly be provided instruction grouped by their first language, with first language support, through dual language instruction programs.” (Massachusetts English Language Learners’ Profiles and Progress, AIR 2015). This report highlights the recurring theme of Dual Language Education as a focus of ESE’s future priorities.

In addition, ESE has demonstrated their commitment to the proliferation DLE programs in awarding a grant to MABE to create a guidance document for defining and implementing two-way immersion and transitional bilingual education programs. This work is an important first step, but cannot proceed effectively without the existence of a DLE teaching endorsement.

2. The need for equitable requirements for highly qualified teachers working in DLE programs such as exist for other English Language Learner education programs (e.g. SEI, ESL, TBE).

The Commonwealth has a critical shortage of educators who are appropriately qualified to teach the state's over 85,000 ELLs (MA ESE, 2015-16 Selected Populations Report). While many of these students will continue to be educated in SEI programs, an increasing number are also to be found in DLE programs in Massachusetts. Without licensure, the preparedness of teachers working in DLE programs is left up to the programs themselves and not guided by consistent standards.

While the federal government requires documentation of highly qualified teachers, existing endorsements and licenses which focus on the development of English (ESL license, SEI endorsement) do not adequately reflect the competencies required, nor equitably prepare highly qualified teachers for the multiple types of dual language education programs now serving students in Massachusetts.

We submit two documents, a DLE description developed in 2012 and presented to the Commissioner at that time which articulates the pedagogical competencies, knowledge and skills that are unique to dual language educators (<https://tinyurl.com/kr899sa>), and a comparison of the existing ESL license with a proposed DLE endorsement (<https://tinyurl.com/kea6wch>). These documents may serve as a basis for developing these standards. MABE would be happy to assist in future revisions of these documents and development of the DLE endorsement.

3. The need for promotion of high pedagogical and linguistic standards for dual language programs in order to ensure fidelity of implementation and therefore efficacy.

Equitable licensure requirements for dual language educators acknowledge the proven effectiveness of DL programs for improving educational outcomes for ELs and all students. As previously mentioned, ESE has recently called on MABE to develop a new guidance document for the implementation of DLE programs. As stated in this document, “For the benefits of bilingualism to be obtained it is essential that students develop high levels of bilingualism through sustained educational programs that (1) provide sufficient and ongoing exposure to both languages of instruction (ideally 6 years or more), (2) ensure access to standards-aligned high-quality curriculum across the content areas, and (3) utilize pedagogical approaches aligned with current understandings of bilingual language and literacy development. Meta-analyses (studies that summarize the findings of many other studies) have consistently noted that students educated bilingually perform as well as, or better than, comparable students educated monolingually on English achievement indicators, and have language and literacy capabilities in another language as well.” (MA ESE, Guidance for Defining and Implementing Two-Way Immersion and Transitional Bilingual Education Programs, 2016)

In our work with new and developing DLE programs (networks, conferences, self-evaluation retreats, summer professional development opportunities), we observe a high level of variability of implementation of DLE programs due to the lack of state guidance and support. The development of the new guidance document quoted above is an

important first step in meeting this need. A DLE teacher endorsement is a logical and necessary next step in establishing the support base for high-quality DLE programs statewide.

4. The need for development of licensure requirements to teach in dual language programs such as exist in other states.

Other states that educate large numbers of ELL students, specifically California, Colorado, Delaware, Illinois, Michigan, New Mexico, and Texas, require DLE teachers to hold a bilingual certificate or endorsement. Utah has developed, and North Carolina is currently developing, credentials specifically for teachers of DLE programs (Dual Language Education Programs: Current State Policies and Practices, 2015, p. 74). As an educational leader, Massachusetts should keep pace or exceed the work of other states in best preparing ELL students.

Massachusetts has two higher educational institutions that have developed courses of appropriate depth to meet the need for a DLE endorsement category, (e.g., Boston College: The Teaching Dual Language Learners (TDLL) Certificate Program and UMASS Boston: Dual Language Certificate Program). Other higher educational institutes would be encouraged to prepare dual language education teachers with leadership and standards provided by ESE, especially given that ELL teacher preparation programs are an area of growing enrollment amidst an overall decline in enrollment nationwide.

In conclusion:

Massachusetts is required to focus on the needs of ELL students. ELLs have been in the lowest performing subgroup on data assessed by ESE, including MCAS, NAEP, dropout data, achievement gap data, and special education statistical data since the passage of Question 2 in 2002. Dual language programs are the most successful language learning education programs in Massachusetts and in the nation, and offer the most promise in closing the achievement gap.

Similar to general education programs, Transitional Bilingual Education and Dual Language Education programs require highly qualified teachers (Thomas & Collier, 2010; Genesee, 2010; Serpa, 2010, AIR 2015, Steele, et al., 2015).

Since the law permits other types of program models, ESE should mandate highly qualified teachers regardless of the language of instruction. By requiring enhancement of teaching licenses that only pertain to instruction in English, we miss a crucial opportunity to prepare all Massachusetts students to meet a critical 21st Century need: the ability to communicate well in more than one language. While there are requirements for ESL, SEI and general education teachers who teach ESL students as a result of the RETELL initiative, there are no specific requirements for teachers instructing students in dual language education programs. Although there are excellent dual-language programs of long-standing in Massachusetts, such as the Amigos, Rafael Hernandez and Barbieri Schools, there are also a number of newer programs that struggle with implementation and hiring without specifically endorsed teachers. MABE proposes that because the

Sheltered English Instruction (SEI) endorsement, English as a Second Language (ESL) license, Transitional Bilingual Learning (TBL) endorsement, and a Dual Language Educator (DLE) endorsement each demand specific dispositions, knowledge, and competencies, it is vital that the need for a dual language educator endorsement be addressed now.