

***What advantages are there for my child in a TWI program?
Are the advantages the same for language minority and language majority students?***

There are three major advantages for students of both language backgrounds, all tied to the goals of two-way immersion education (e.g., Howard & Christian, 2002). The first advantage is that students develop full oral and reading and writing proficiency in two languages. This allows them to see their first language in a comparative perspective, which in turn helps them analyze and refine their language use (Cazabon, Lambert, & Heise-Baigorria, 2002).

A second advantage is that students not only achieve at levels that are similar to or higher than those of their peers enrolled in other programs on standardized tests of reading and math in English, but in addition they are able to read and write at grade level in another language. This in turn positively affects general academic performance. Research (Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Thomas & Collier, 2002) shows that there are fewer high school drop-outs from dual language programs than from other programs. Lindholm-Leary (2003) also found that most dual language students expect to attend college. Thus, not only do dual language programs appear to improve academic performance but they may also enhance job opportunities in the future.

The third advantage is attitudinal: Students in TWI programs develop very positive attitudes about students of other language and cultural backgrounds, and positive attitudes toward themselves as learners. For example, Cazabon, Lambert, & Heise-Baigorria (2002) found that TWI students showed a great deal of diversity in the friendship choices that they made, and that the dual language educational experience produced students who became comfortable with speaking the second language and interacting with members of other ethnocultural groups. In a very real sense, students in TWI programs become more self-confident because they are better prepared to engage in a global society that values multiculturalism and bilingualism. One parent noted these benefits when she stated, "My child has the opportunity to be bilingual, biliterate, and bicultural. There are social and cognitive benefits to bilingualism. He gains a second language, a broader vocabulary, and multiple views of the world."

Overall, the advantages are the same for both native English speakers and English language learners, but the benefits may be stronger for English language learners, given that two-way immersion education has been found to be the most successful model for helping these students succeed academically in school (Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Thomas & Collier, 2002). Specific benefits for English language learners include an increased sense of pride and self-esteem. At school, they become the models of proficiency for students who learning their language. At home, they are able to communicate with family members, including grandparents and other members of the extended family.