

The Research

In Edmonton Public Schools, records over the past 25 years demonstrate that results on **provincial English Language tests are consistently higher** for students in bilingual and immersion language programs. The difference is small at grade 3 but by grades 6 and 9 the difference is significant.

Bournot-Trites and Tallowitz (2002) cite 3 studies that show students in high intensity French programs **scoring higher on mathematics** achievement tests than unilingual students.

Standardized English Language Arts tests have shown that students involved in second language programs have **higher achievement scores** than students not taking a second language. (ERIC 2001)

Marsh et al (2000) in a study in Hong Kong demonstrates the extent to which second language learning **promotes the development of first language skills**. Increasing time for second language learning does not reduce time spent on Language Arts, as skill is transferable to first language.

Halsall (1998) in an Alberta study, French Immersion, the Success Story Told by Research, showed a strong **positive**

correlation between overall student achievement and the number of hours spent in the study of a second language.

Bialystock (1997) proved that knowing a second language helps a child **comprehend written languages faster**, and enables children to learn to **read more easily**.

Genesee, in a 1987 study (Learning through Two Languages, Cambridge Mass.), quantified that intensive second language study, had **no negative impact** on English Language skills, or overall academic achievement.

Albanese (1987) The Rationale for Studying a Second Language, demonstrated that all second language education served to **enhance reading skills, as well as English vocabulary and general communication**.

Cummins (1984) demonstrated that first and second language skills are interdependent and **positively influence one another**.

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Impact

of Second Language on First Language Learning

Background

Edmonton Public Schools has an extensive history of delivering second language instruction through French Immersion, seven Bilingual programs, French Second Language and eleven other International Second Language programs.

In an effort to understand the impact of second language instruction on student learning, five areas were reviewed:

- first language development
- intellectual potential
- scholastic achievement
- citizenship
- future economic potential

Research has consistently shown that the impact of second language instruction proved to be positive in all five areas.

Considerations

- Research, summarized in this brochure, demonstrates that second language learning is a BEST PRACTICE in developing proficiency in first language, relieving concerns that learning a second language negatively impacts first language instruction.
- For second language instruction to be most effective, it must be offered as a core subject, preferably daily, by a teacher who is competent not only in the target language but in the pedagogy of second language teaching and learning.
- Increasing or diverting instructional time for second language learning enhances English literacy as skills are transferred from one language to the other. Time in second language learning is therefore well-spent. *(Cummins)*
- Second language curricula are based on the English Language Arts Framework. The many commonalities of these documents facilitate an integrated, contextualized approach to language learning. *(The Common Curriculum Framework for International Languages, Western Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Basic Education, 1999)*
- All students, including those with special needs, can and should have the opportunity to learn a second language in order to be fully functional in the global society *(Leloup and Ponterio)*

The Impact of Second Language Education

Students who receive quality second language instruction, when compared to their monolingual counterparts, show:

- increased levels of verbal and non-verbal intelligence *(Carroll)*
- greater flexibility in thought and divergent thinking skills *(Kessler & Quinn)*
- enhanced memory and listening skills capacity *(Ratté)*
- increased verbal fluency and originality *(Albanese)*
- enhanced development of learning strategies and metalinguistic ability *(Bialystock)*
- superior problem solving skills *(Cummings)*
- improved Math and English results *(Trites & Tallowitz)*
- development of cross-cultural skills and awareness *(Genesee and Cloud)*
- better preparation for the demands of languages other than English in the global marketplace *(Panetta)*

Second language education develops skills and abilities that are transferable to other subjects:

- students who have studied math in French achieve higher than their unilingual peers on English math tests *(de Courcy and Burston)*
- study of a foreign language in the elementary grades has been associated with higher scores on standardized measures of reading and mathematics *(Caldas and Bourdeaux, Robinson)*

Conclusion

National and international studies consistently show that learning a second language has positive intellectual, academic and social impact.

Second language education produces value-added citizens. A growing capacity of second language skills in our youth contributes significantly to the academic and economic enhancement of our society.

Learning another language helps prepare students for the challenges and opportunities in a complex global world!