



# Implementing Two-Way Immersion Programs in Secondary Schools

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## Introduction

Two-way immersion (TWI) programs have been gaining popularity over the past decade, and have recently begun to proliferate at a rapid pace across the United States. In TWI programs, language minority and language majority students are integrated for all or most of the day and receive content and literacy instruction through both English and the minority language, with the goals of promoting academic achievement, bilingualism and biliteracy development, and cross-cultural competence in all students (Christian, 1994; Genesee, 1999). There are many reasons for the popularity of these programs, including opportunities for federal and state funding, interest from parents, and the publicized success that some two-way programs have had in educating both language minority and majority children. While the numbers have grown from 30 documented programs in 1987 (Lindholm, 1987) to 261 in 1999 (Loeb, 1999), the vast majority of these programs operate at the elementary school only. To date, very few programs have effectively carried on into the middle school (26) and fewer still to high school (8) (Loeb, 1999).

There are two main reasons for the small number of secondary TWI programs at this time. First, because the growth of TWI is a recent phenomenon and most TWI programs start with a single cohort of students in kindergarten, adding additional grade levels and cohorts each year, there has not been a sizeable number of TWI programs in need of expansion to the secondary level until this time. Second, the structure of secondary schools often complicates the continuation of TWI programs. For example, in secondary programs, students have greater freedom of course selection than they do in elementary school, meaning that TWI course offerings must be scheduled in such a way as to not interfere with core courses or popular electives. In addition, secondary teachers tend to teach a single academic domain rather than all content areas, meaning that several bilingual teachers may need to be hired in order to perpetuate the program at the secondary level. These issues and others will be discussed in the following sections.

This preliminary report serves two purposes: 1) to present the challenges that districts face in operating their two-way programs at levels above the elementary school, and 2) to present options for meeting these challenges based on the experiences of programs that have tried to move to the secondary school level, whether successfully or not. In addition, there are a few programs that have not relied on elementary level feeder schools to populate their programs, but have started from scratch at the middle or high school level. These programs' experiences will also be considered.

While reading this document, it is important to keep in mind that the information presented here is anecdotal and self-reported. Currently, the number of secondary TWI programs in operation is minimal; subsequently, there is no existing research base on their effectiveness. At the same time, because of the growth and expansion of elementary TWI programs, there is increasing interest in the design and implementation of secondary programs. For that reason, a logical first step seemed to be to contact existing programs to find out more about what they are doing and how well it is working. The resulting document is descriptive; in the absence of any other information on the topic, we believe that it provides a useful introduction for programs that are considering expansion to the secondary level.

## Assembling the Information

This report is based on information obtained during telephone interviews with school or district personnel across the country who were involved and intimately familiar with a middle or high school two-way immersion program. In some cases, the programs were no longer in operation—because they had lost support at the school or district level, experienced a significant drop in language minority students coming to the district or school, or because the program was incorporated into the elementary school. Interviews were conducted with personnel from these programs to discover what, if any, specific obstacles or challenges led to the discontinuation of the program at the secondary level. It was felt that such information would be beneficial for schools or districts to know when planning their own programs, to help them prepare for the possibility of facing similar challenges.

In the end, representatives of seven programs were interviewed (School profiles and contact information may be accessed on the website, see reference section). One program was close enough for the authors to observe the transition of its middle school program from one school to another in the district, so they were able to gather more documentation on that district’s planning and implementation of secondary two-way immersion. A site visit to another program also permitted a closer look at the only program that started at the high school level rather than building on an established elementary TWI program, as other existing secondary TWI programs have done. All of the information about the other programs was gathered via telephone interviews and from the Directory of Two-Way Bilingual Programs in the U.S. (Christian & Whitcher, 1995).

## Benefits of Two-Way Immersion in Secondary School

While this report focuses on the challenges of implementing secondary TWI programs and strategies to address them, we should first note that there are many potential benefits to be derived from implementing or continuing a two-way program at the secondary level. Of course, the greatest may come from giving secondary students access to continued development of language skills and cultural knowledge that will be marketable assets.

Benefits shared with most elementary TWI programs	Additional benefits of middle/high school TWI programs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Lower likelihood of tracking and other practices that might be detrimental to language minority students</li> <li>· Development of bilingualism and biculturalism</li> <li>· Development of positive cross-cultural attitudes</li> <li>· Development of cognitive flexibility</li> <li>· Provision of an efficient model for serving the second language needs of English language learners and native speakers of English</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Continued development of second language skills</li> <li>· Preparation to enter advanced language courses in high school or college</li> <li>· Preparation for International Baccalaureate (IB) programs in high school</li> <li>· Preparation for additional languages in high school or beyond</li> <li>· Preparation to earn college credit through Advanced Placement language exams</li> </ul>

## Challenges Faced in Secondary Programs

School districts confront many challenges in attempting to extend programs to the middle or high school level. There are still more challenges if they attempt to create programs at the secondary level in the absence of elementary feeder schools. This report focuses on core issues faced by all programs:

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Planning the program</b></li> <li>2. <b>Language distribution, curriculum, and materials</b></li> <li>3. <b>Student participation and motivation</b></li> <li>4. <b>Attrition and late entries</b></li> <li>5. <b>Student scheduling</b></li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. <b>Teams, clusters, and houses</b></li> <li>7. <b>Staffing</b></li> <li>8. <b>Transportation</b></li> <li>9. <b>Parent involvement</b></li> </ol> |
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Each of these issues is examined individually below. Each section summarizes the information provided by the program representatives consulted and features options, ideas, and suggestions that they have either implemented or would recommend based on their experience to date.

## 1 Planning the Program

Existing TWI programs recommend that new programs take at least one year to plan prior to implementation. A committee or task force created to lead the planning efforts would take on some of these activities:

- Compiling information and evidence to convince the district powerbrokers of the need for or desirability of the program
- Giving a presentation to the school board in collaboration with teachers and students from the elementary program
- Helping to choose an appropriate site for the program
- Making recommendations on how the program should be structured (with regard to curriculum, materials, staffing, scheduling, transportation, and continued articulation with the elementary program)

In cases where there is no initial consensus for starting a new program or expanding an existing program to the secondary level, the planning stage can entail activities that will inform and persuade both the district powerbrokers and the community. Once these two groups are open to the idea of having the program, planning for all of the other components can take place. Of course, planning the entire program and then presenting the plan to the district administrators and the community is another option. However, if there is no support for the program, the planning time might have been wasted.

### Advice and Ideas

- ✓ **Include teachers from all subject areas, parents, students, counselors, and administrators.** The more people involved in the decision making from the start, the more buy-in there is likely to be, resulting in support to keep the program going. If there is a sense of shared ownership, there will also be more people willing to help resolve programmatic dilemmas that may arise down the line. Convene meetings regularly and well in advance of the beginning of the first year. Assign sub-committees or task forces to deal with specific issues or tasks (e.g., scheduling and content, electives and extracurricular activities, parent survey).
- ✓ **Conduct a parent survey** the year before implementation to find out under what conditions parents would be willing to have their children continue in the TWI program. For example, location may be a deciding factor. If the school is distant and transportation is not provided, this may be a barrier to participation for otherwise enthusiastic families.
- ✓ **Bring in experts.** Find people at other schools who have experience with TWI programs, researchers in the field, or simply research-based information. These can help persuade those not yet convinced as well as offer options and advice on how to tailor the program and adapt it to local circumstances.
- ✓ **Discuss and set goals and objectives.** Identify what students should be able to do by the time they graduate from the school and the program. This may force some difficult choices to be made, but it will also guide decision making on issues such as how many courses to offer in each language, how many teachers to hire, and so forth.

If there is consensus for starting or continuing a program at the secondary level, the issues listed below should be dealt with next.

## 2 Language Distribution, Curriculum, and Materials

The nature of secondary TWI programs differs from that of elementary programs. At the high school level especially, but also at the middle school level, the program typically becomes the sum of the classes offered in the non-English language only. That is, the Spanish-English TWI program is considered to be the two or three courses taught in Spanish to the participating students, since those are typically the only classes offered exclusively to TWI program students. Classes taught in English may no longer count as TWI, since they frequently include non-TWI students. Planning the TWI program, then, consists mostly of deciding which courses to offer in the non-English language and how many periods per day students will be required to attend these classes in order to be considered part of the TWI program.

While most TWI programs appear to offer the same middle and high school curricula as non-TWI programs (with the exception of language arts in the non-English language), deciding how much of the curriculum and which subjects will be taught through which languages is often a difficult decision. At the elementary level, the self-contained nature of the classroom makes it easier to adopt any of a variety of program models, such as a 50/50 model or a 90/10 model.<sup>1</sup> One bilingual teacher, for example, can teach any or all subject areas in Spanish, while a monolingual English teacher can teach any or all subject areas in English. Middle and high schools operate differently, however. High schools tend to be departmentalized, and teachers specialize in one or more content areas. Consequently, offering social studies, science, and math in Spanish, for instance, will most likely require the services of three bilingual teachers instead of just one. Middle schools are more flexible in their structure. Some may be very departmentalized (especially in the upper grades), while others may operate more like elementary schools (especially in sixth grade), with one teacher teaching multiple subjects or staying with the same group of students for most of the day.

According to the existing secondary TWI programs interviewed, the most critical factors for deciding which subjects to offer in which language are the availability, qualifications, and subject-matter preferences of the staff and availability of appropriate materials in the non-English language. Finding qualified bilingual content teachers to teach subjects in the non-English language can be quite challenging. Finding appropriate bilingual texts in non-English languages can also prove problematic. For example, required social studies curricula typically differ from state to state, making it difficult for educational publishers to know what to include in their non-English-language version texts. Planning to teach the same subject in two languages will also require budgeting for two textbooks, or for the creation and distribution of either commercial or teacher-created supplemental materials.

### Advice and Ideas

- ✓ In order to continue to develop students' skills and to promote the status of the non-English language, **have at least two mandatory classes in that language each year.** Most programs offer some form of social studies and language arts.
- ✓ **Try to maintain some degree of continuity in language allocation from one year to the next.** Avoid multiple year gaps in teaching math in Spanish, for example. When a subject is offered in Spanish after several years of being offered in English, the students may fear they won't be able to cope with it in Spanish and choose not to enroll.
- ✓ **Choose subjects to teach in the non-English language for which quality textbooks are available.**
- ✓ **If sources of materials in the non-English language cannot be found, create your own materials to supplement or replace existing texts.** It might also be possible to persuade those who determine text adoption to select texts that have versions in multiple languages.
- ✓ **Hire bilingual teachers who can teach more than one subject.** This will allow for flexibility in course offerings and lower the number of staff required for the program, if your school or district is seeking to limit the cost.

### 3 Student Participation and Motivation

Another issue commented on by survey respondents was the motivation of students to participate in secondary TWI programs. Adolescents are pulled by many biological and social forces. On the one hand, they are developing their individuality; on the other hand, they can be extremely susceptible to peer pressure and the fear of being perceived as different from the "in" group. If participation in the TWI program means not being able to take electives, having an extra period each day, having a longer commute, or being at a different school than their friends, even previously successful and dedicated students may determine that the sacrifice is too great and balk at continuing in the program.

The balance of native English speakers and native speakers of the non-English language of the program was also discussed by respondents. Consideration should be given to the effect of time on this balance. For instance, students who have been together since kindergarten may not want to continue to be together as a group in middle or high

<sup>1</sup>In the 90/10 model, the non-English language is used in the early years for nearly all instruction (usually about 90%), with the amount of English instruction increasing each year until instruction in each language is roughly equal. In the 50/50 model, the ratio of instruction delivered in each language is equal at all grade levels (Christian, Montone, Lindholm, & Carranza, 1996).

school, instead preferring to make new friends and blend with the non-TWI students. Questions of how the program will deal with attrition and late-entry students also affect the overall distribution of students by language background. These questions will be discussed in a separate section.

## Advice and Ideas

### ***Prior to Participation:***

- ✓ If graduating fifth or eighth graders are being relied on to fill program seats, ***poll these candidates and their parents ahead of time to get an indication of their willingness to participate and their level of interest.***
- ✓ ***Arrange for elementary school students to visit other schools that feed into the secondary school,*** so they can meet their future classmates and lay the foundation for social relationships.
- ✓ ***Have middle or high school immersion students make a trip to the elementary or middle school to answer questions and allay possible fears of feeder school students.*** Arrange for a half or full day of “shadowing” of sixth graders by fifth graders or of ninth graders by eighth graders, so that they may become familiar with the school and what secondary-level immersion looks like. This will help dissipate some of their possible fears and concerns.
- ✓ ***Have a Two-Way Immersion Night*** for parents, teachers, and students to socialize at the middle or high school.
- ✓ If the program is just beginning its first year, ***have a contest to choose a logo or motto for the program.***
- ✓ ***Create buttons that say “First Two-Way Immersion Class at <your school name>”*** to give to incoming students.

### ***During Participation:***

- ✓ ***Create cross-program social activities for TWI students so they are not isolated in school.*** Students who are separated in one wing of the school or who feel that they are perceived as different may be less likely to stay motivated to continue in the program. Framing the program in terms of enrichment will allow participants to integrate with others in the school, yet pursue a somewhat more specialized path.
- ✓ ***Make sure that classes are those that students find challenging and worthwhile.*** At one high school, for example, there are no honors TWI math classes because there are not enough students to fill a separate class. The school is trying to find out from students what electives they would like to see included in the TWI program. One idea is to offer a folklorico class that could replace physical education, an alternative that is appealing to many of the students.
- ✓ ***Create opportunities for elementary and secondary staff, parents, and students to work and socialize together*** (e.g., cultural celebrations, curriculum development, school board presentations, staff visits).
- ✓ ***Have the program featured in school and district promotional/informational literature and materials.***
- ✓ ***Emulate methods that varsity sports teams and bands use to create status for their members.***
- ✓ ***Present TWI students with special pins at graduation.***
- ✓ ***Take a group picture of TWI students for the school yearbook.***
- ✓ For graduating students, ***organize a trip to a country where the non-English language is spoken.***
- ✓ ***Align the TWI program with another high status program in school*** (e.g., science focus). At one middle school, TWI parents earned \$2,000 by catering the end-of-the-year dinner for the science magnet families.

## 4 Attrition and Late Entries

Over time, students will leave the program for various reasons—most often family relocations, but occasionally for other personal reasons. If the numbers get so low that they jeopardize the language balance or the actual viability of the program, schools will look for a way to re-populate the program in a manner that does not endanger the pedagogical integrity of a two-way model. Some programs will not accept new entrants to the program at the middle or high school

level if there are sufficient feeder school students from which to draw their students annually. Other programs will allow late-entry students from either language background, if they can show proficiency in both languages. Still others may find a middle or high school TWI program an advantageous place for limited English proficient (LEP) students to receive content instruction in their native language while spending the rest of the day in an English as a second language environment. Though there are several options to choose from, the program would do well to set a policy before implementation for dealing with late-entry students from both language backgrounds.

### Advice and Ideas

- ✓ **Keep students motivated to continue participating in the program.**
- ✓ **Try to avoid scheduling conflicts between TWI courses and other courses** that all students want or need to take.
- ✓ **Set specific criteria that late-entry candidates must meet** to participate in the program.

## 5 Student Scheduling

Scheduling can make or break a secondary TWI program, particularly at the high school level. Participating students need to be able to take the required courses in the non-English language, but at the same time want to take electives and meet other non-TWI students. Since many programs require language arts classes in both English and Spanish, students usually have one fewer period for an elective of their choice, which can be a disincentive to continuing in the program. Programs need to work with those responsible for scheduling to find ways to avoid conflicts among TWI classes, allow students to take electives, and make the program a viable and preferable option for students.

### Advice and Ideas

- ✓ **Work with whoever is doing the master schedule to ensure that TWI courses don't compete with each other.** For instance, at one high school, TWI U.S. history was scheduled at the same time as TWI algebra, so students had to choose one or the other. Now the TWI staff communicates their scheduling needs to the counselors far enough in advance to avoid such conflicts. Issues such as this are also raised during TWI articulation meetings, which are held regularly.
- ✓ **Include counseling staff in program plans.** This will help greatly in avoiding scheduling difficulties. If possible, identify or hire a special TWI counselor. If this is not possible, brief the counseling staff about TWI and re-visit issues periodically.
- ✓ **Have the students in TWI commit to an extended day program** (one extra period per day for electives). This has the advantage of providing a full array of courses and electives for students in the program, and it conveys the message that the TWI program is important. The downside is that it may lead to attrition if the students feel overburdened by the extra period, or if it means they have to get up much earlier or return home much later than other students. This kind of scheduling will also require coordination with transportation services. Extending the day in this manner may not be feasible for rural schools, if there are already long bus commutes.

## 6 Teams, Clusters, and Houses

Many secondary schools, especially middle schools, have organized their students and teachers into teams, clusters, or houses. The choice of whether to have all TWI students and teachers in one team can influence how isolated the TWI students feel. A program drawing from feeder schools with students who are weary of studying with the same classmates for 5 or 6 years may want to distribute the TWI students among multiple teams. A program whose teachers want and need time to coordinate and plan together may want all TWI teachers and students in one team. Each

program needs to choose a structure that works best for everyone involved. Presented below are two structuring options, along with some of the advantages and disadvantages of each.

All TWI Team Options	Combination (TWI/Non-TWI) Team Options
<b>Advantages</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Program identity as a team is strengthened.</li> <li>· All teachers in the team are dedicated to the needs of TWI students.</li> <li>· Interdisciplinary lesson planning is possible in the non-English language.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Students are mixed with other students in school, which may keep them motivated to participate in the program, because they will still have an opportunity to form friendships with students outside of the program.</li> <li>· Non-TWI teachers have more of an incentive to be involved in the program and may feel a part of it over time.</li> <li>· Block scheduling is possible.</li> <li>· Students feel they are part of the whole school, not isolated.</li> <li>· Teachers can concentrate on teaching one subject, not multiple subjects.</li> </ul>
<b>Disadvantages</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Students and teachers are separated from the rest of the school.</li> <li>· Block scheduling becomes difficult, if not impossible.</li> <li>· Students don't meet as many non-TWI students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· It is harder to do interdisciplinary lesson planning in the non-English language.</li> </ul>

## 7 Staffing

Most TWI programs mention quality staff as one of the most important components of a successful TWI program (second only to careful preparation). Finding and hiring qualified staff can be challenging and may require extensive recruitment efforts. Teachers who meet state or district content certification requirements and who are also bilingual may be particularly hard to locate. It should be kept in mind that many of the program's curriculum choices regarding content to be taught in the non-English language may very well be conditioned upon the content knowledge, experience, and flexibility of the TWI teachers that can be found.

### Advice and Ideas

- Bring secondary staff to visit the elementary level program** so that they may become familiar with students, program goals and structures, curriculum, and so forth.
- Transfer an elementary TWI teacher to the secondary school** to make use of his or her experience and to serve as an anchor for the secondary school program.
- Hire part-time teachers to teach the smaller courses until the number of students increases.**

## 8 Transportation

As with some elementary TWI programs, the middle or high school program may not be in the neighborhood where TWI students live. This means either the school will need to provide busing or parents will have to arrange transportation for their children. If numbers of eligible students in the district are slim, and the secondary-level program is situated in what is perceived by parents as an undesirable location, the program could have difficulty maintaining or attracting students from the start. If the program needs to bus students to the school in order to keep the program viable, these costs should be taken into consideration in advance and budgeted for accordingly.

## Advice and Ideas

- ✓ **Poll parents ahead of time as to their preferences for a site for the program.**
- ✓ **Attempt to obtain district commitment to bus students as needed** (including for extracurricular activities).
- ✓ **Choose a site where commuting time will not be a disincentive to participation.**

## 9 Parent Involvement

Parents who were the TWI program's biggest fans when their children were in elementary school can suddenly become less than supportive when the program moves to middle school and especially high school. As their children face more serious academic studies, parents may grow more concerned about having their children taught subjects like math and science in a non-English language, fearing that they will not do as well on standardized tests, such as the SAT, and that participation in the program will ultimately hinder their prospects of gaining entry into a good college or university. These concerns can influence everything from the program's language choices for the curriculum to the overall percentage of instructional time spent in each language. Parents may also have concerns about the neighborhood in which the middle or high school program is situated, transportation inconvenience, the student population at the school, the school's existing reputation, and the impact that continued participation will have on their children's education.

## Advice and Ideas

- ✓ **Obtain support from and consult with parents** throughout the life of the program before making significant changes.
- ✓ **Have a TWI Parents' Night at the school each year.**
- ✓ **Offer language classes for both English -and non-English speaking parents**, pairing them up to facilitate peer tutoring.

## Conclusion

Just as there are multiple variations of elementary two-way immersion programs, there is no one way to implement a secondary-level TWI program. While most have grown out of elementary school programs, there are attempts to start a secondary program without such a base. Some programs had a choice of which school in the district to move their elementary school graduates into, while others had to continue the program in one school only or not continue at all. One program has changed schools annually for several years, searching for just the right home. The programs profiled here offer different courses in Spanish. Some offer electives in Spanish, others do not. One has an extended day program. Some hire new teachers; others use existing bilingual staff. Some have to work to keep their students motivated; others find that their students have coalesced into a tight-knit and enthusiastic group over the years.

There are similarities across programs. They all offer at least two classes in Spanish; they all have to deal with issues regarding staffing, scheduling, curriculum and materials, and parent involvement, though each does so slightly differently. Most of the programs highlighted in this report give the same advice to those just starting out: Be patient, plan well in advance, hire good teachers, and obtain buy-in from the district, the school, the teachers, the students, and the parents. As increasing numbers of elementary TWI programs grow to maturity and begin to expand to the secondary level, our knowledge base about effective implementation of secondary TWI programs will become more extensive. Possible areas for research on secondary TWI programs include the academic achievement and language development of students, the question of assessment, the professional development needs of teachers, and the implementation strategies of programs. In the meantime, specific recommendations from the few existing secondary TWI programs have been discussed in this report as a preliminary resource for programs wishing to continue at the secondary level.