



OYSTER DUAL LANGUAGE EXPANSION AND REPLICATION AT ADAMS

*For Consideration by the Board of Education
Special Community Hearing
June 13, 2006*

Summary of the Proposal

The following is the proposal to establish a fifth through eighth grade dual language middle school at the current Adams Elementary School (Adams) in the 2007-08 school year (SY), with the lower grades at Oyster Bilingual Elementary School (Oyster) feeding into Adams. This proposal is included in the Superintendent's Rightsizing Recommendations (submitted May, 15, 2006) as an example of operational efficiency, as it is designed to increase enrollment at a currently under-enrolled school, and maximizing building utilization at both affected campuses.

The proposed dual language expansion and replication model incorporates two key goals outlined in the Master Education Plan: 1) it will create a seamless Pre-Kindergarten through eighth grade instructional program that will allow the two campuses to share services, professional development, and staffing, and 2) it will establish a dual language demonstration site for other principals, teachers and parents to observe and begin to replicate in their own schools.

According to two of the most highly recognized experts in the field of dual language theory and practice, Thomas and Collier (1997), the following factors are present in successful two-way immersion (dual) programs:

- Students participate for at least six years;
- The ratio of speakers of each language is balanced;
- Languages are taught separately, with no concurrent translations;
- The minority language is emphasized in the early grades;
- Instruction is rigorous and emphasizes core academics;
- Parents have a strong, positive relationship with the school.

Oyster clearly has demonstrated that all of these variables are consistently present in their instructional program. This programmatic expansion will provide an opportunity for the students who are being promoted from Oyster to continue participating in a dual language program in middle school. By moving the fifth and sixth grade classes from Oyster to Adams, we will replicate a successful program at the middle school level, while at the same time increase participation at the Pre-Kindergarten through fourth grade level.

Under this proposal, Oyster will serve as a demonstration site for seven other schools in DCPS that are just beginning to implement their own dual language models, thus supporting commonalities amongst dual language programs and the use of best practices. These schools could share staffing in the areas of library, counselor, language arts coach and other key positions. The collaboration and mutual support being created through this proposal will contribute and reinforce the development of the skills and knowledge base of the Adams and Oyster staffs as we create the dual language middle school at Adams.

Timeline for Implementation

School Year 2006-7 will be a year of planning and preparing for full implementation of the dual language middle school at Adams effective SY 2007-08. This will give the parents of the 39 students living in the Adams school boundary time to determine if they wish to participate in the new model or move to another DCPS school in SY 2007-08

A planning committee of the principals, teachers, and parents from both schools as well as the assistant superintendent and staff in Academic Services will begin meeting in late June of 2006 to highlight the necessary steps that must be taken in order to prepare for the full implementation of the dual language middle school at Adams. The committee will develop a timeline of specific activities and deadlines for completing and implementing the proposal.

Immediate next steps include, but are not limited to:

1. outlining staff development activities, such as the DuFour “Creating a Professional Learning Community” model, that will be provided to staff from both schools in the summer of 2006 to begin the process of establishing a middle school campus at Adams;
2. establishing a facilities subcommittee to review and make recommendations for preparing the Adams site to be reconfigured as a middle school;
3. establishing an instructional subcommittee, guided by staff in Academic Services, to begin a review of current research and literature in the field of dual language instruction and best practices in middle school education to begin making recommendations for programmatic development. DCPS curriculum standards and instructional practices will be applied as appropriate to the new model; and
4. preparing teachers from Adams interested in teaching in the new middle school to begin coursework to develop the necessary knowledge base and skills for teaching in a middle school dual language classroom.

Background Information

Oyster Bilingual Elementary School

Oyster is a special school within the District of Columbia Public Schools with a unique and academically successful dual language program. They have just celebrated the 30th anniversary of this program and will continue to maintain a high level of standards and expectations. The school utilizes team teachers for each grade level, from Pre-Kindergarten through sixth grade. In every classroom, two teachers, one teaching in Spanish and the other teaching in English, share the instruction and students learn all subjects in both languages. Besides the classroom subjects, the students also have special classes such as Art, Library, Physical Education and Music, once or twice weekly.

Goals of the Oyster Community:

1. To develop strategies for protection of the integrity of the dual language program at Oyster Elementary.
2. To find methods to relieve over crowding / pressure by opening seats at Oyster. How to open opportunities for other segments of the population to have access to the Oyster program.
3. To create a middle school dual language model for the Oyster students to transition into after leaving Oyster.
4. To develop a long-term strategy for the expansion/ replication of high quality dual language programs across DCPS and thereby increase school choice for parents.
5. To develop a systemic and concerted plan for addressing these issues that will vest all concerned stakeholders in the process.
6. To develop a timeline for conversion plans for involved schools.

Adams Elementary School

John Quincy Adams Elementary School is a sixty seven year old inner city school providing educational experiences and opportunities for students from head start through the sixth grade. The school is located in Adams Morgan, one of the city's most multicultural neighborhoods. The student population is ethnically, economically and socially diverse. There are more than 20 languages represented in the language minority population. Forty two percent (42%) of the students are Latino, 38% are African American, 16% are Asian Pacific Islanders, 3% are White and 1% is Native American. Over 52% of Adams' students are provided with ESL services to develop their English Language proficiency. Adams has experienced a dramatic drop in their student enrollment over the past years and has been struggling to attract new students into its classrooms.

Goals of the Adams Community:

In order to attract more students, the principals of Adams and Oyster have come together to discuss possible initiatives that would attract more students to Adams. They developed a plan to replicate the Oyster dual language model at Adams. The plan calls for the implementation of the Effective Schools Model in both schools, thus providing the teachers at both schools with a common language and common practices. The plan includes a staff development module for the Oyster and Adams faculty and staff to build capacity and to assist in the implementation of a quality dual language program. This comprehensive teacher-training program module would support both the Oyster and Adams teachers through the transition phase and that would institute the use of best practices and parallel structure. A committee of teachers, parents, and community members will develop the long range plans for the expansion/replication and development of a K-12 continuity dual language program for DCPS.