



Fontana Unified School District

Every Student Successful, Engaging Schools, Empowered Communities

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sept. 9, 2024

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Fontana Unified Elementary School Program Aims to Strengthen Cultural Bonds through Fostering Bilingualism

FONTANA, CA – Redwood Elementary School students are benefitting from language development and increased cultural awareness and connection as part of the school’s popular dual language immersion (DLI) program.

Each year, Redwood Elementary School holds a lottery for its dual language immersion (DLI) program with about 100 families applying for the 50 seats offered to kindergartners entering the program.

“This illustrates how much interest the parents and community have for a program like this,” Redwood Elementary Principal Dr. Jorge Arauz said of the lottery. “Parents love the program and get very excited about it, especially parents who are third- or fourth-generation Latin American, who understand the language but don’t really speak Spanish fluently and lack the Spanish biliteracy. They want to ensure their kids have an opportunity to change that!”

Redwood Elementary celebrates its 75th anniversary this school year, while also entering its sixth year of implementation of DLI. The program runs from kindergarten through fifth grade and will expand to sixth grade in 2025-26.

DLI is part of Redwood’s goal to help students strengthen their cultural understanding and connection to their community. School staff balance DLI classes between native and non-native Spanish speakers, leading to cross-cultural awareness for all students. Among its many extra-curricular activities, Redwood Elementary offers a traditional, Ballet Folklorico group; the school also actively participates in cultural celebrations each year, like Hispanic Heritage Month, Black History Month, and more, Dr. Arauz said.

“We make sure we highlight the importance and make sure the kids get to celebrate what’s important to them and their families,” Dr. Arauz said. “The sense of community is vital at a school like Redwood, which has been around for 75 years. We have grandparents who attended Redwood and now have grandchildren coming here, and several of our teachers were students here when they were little. This makes us a very special community.”

Fontana Unified School District completed its full, K-12 DLI pathway as the program expanded into Jurupa Hills High School this year, with Dolores Huerta International Academy and Sequoia Middle School also offering DLI in the District.

FUSD’s DLI program is designed to facilitate biliteracy as students develop the ability to speak, listen, read, and write proficiently in two languages.

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Simultaneously, the program promotes academic achievement and cross-cultural competence, according to Assistant Director of Multilingual Programs and Services Eduardo Gomez, who helped bring DLI to Redwood in 2019 during his tenure as school principal from 2011 to 2021.

“The dual language Immersion program in Fontana Unified is a vision of a multilingual future that values and builds upon the cultural and linguistic assets our students and community bring,” Gomez said. “The program focuses on fostering positive cross-cultural attitudes and behaviors. Students are developing an appreciation for cultural diversity, which includes understanding and respecting their own cultures as well as the cultures of others.”

The [U.S. Department of Education](#) credits DLI for having many cognitive, educational, sociocultural, and economic benefits for students, including improved learning outcomes in various subjects, increased graduation rates, greater economic opportunities with higher earning potential, enhanced connection to heritage cultures, and increased empathy development.

FUSD has already felt the impact of DLI, Gomez said, pointing to the District’s increase in graduates who earned the California State Seal of Biliteracy. More than 640 Fontana Unified seniors earned the state Seal of Biliteracy in Nov. 2023, up from 495 in 2021-22.

“Our families are investing in their students and their futures through this program,” Dr. Arauz said. “We are helping them connect with what’s important to them, their families, and allowing opportunities to biliteracy while developing well-rounded citizens.”

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

FUSD_REDWOOD1: Redwood Elementary School’s dual language immersion program is designed to facilitate biliteracy as students develop the ability to speak, listen, read, and write proficiently in two languages, while also helping them strengthen their cultural understanding and connection to their community runs from kindergarten through fifth grade

FUSD_REDWOOD2: Running from kindergarten through fifth grade, Redwood Elementary has offered a dual language immersion (DLI) program for six years. DLI is credited with having many cognitive, educational, sociocultural, and economic benefits for students.

FUSD_REDWOOD3: Redwood Elementary School holds a lottery for its dual language immersion (DLI) program each year, with about 100 families applying for the 50 seats offered to kindergartners entering the program.

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