

## Dual language immersion learners head to high school



*Chinese dual language immersion student, Saige I, pictured in kindergarten when she started **Caesar Rodney School District's** program at **McIlvaine Early Childhood Center** and in 8th grade at **Fifer Middle School** ([more pics](#)).*

Kindergartners who began learning in two languages in 2012 as part of the state's first cohort of dual language immersion learners are now moving on to high school. More than 100 students from immersion continuation programs at Fifer Middle School and **Postlethwait Middle School** (Chinese - Caesar Rodney School District), **Selbyville Middle School** (Spanish - Indian River School District), and **Skyline Middle School** (Spanish - Red Clay Consolidated School District) are transitioning to the next phase of their immersion education. Caesar Rodney students will continue at **Caesar Rodney High School**, Selbyville students at **Indian River High School**, and Skyline students at **A.I. duPont High School**.

Students who grew up in the program say they enjoyed the experience. Postlethwait M.S. student London P. says she has enjoyed her middle school immersion experience mostly because it allowed her to learn "different people's perspectives on why or how things happen" and also "a little more of the language." Fifer's Abigail M. says she enjoyed challenging herself the most.

Students also say they are looking forward to continuing their language learning in high school.

"What I am looking forward to the most is meeting new people and maybe teaching them some of my language or learning new language from others," Skyline M.S. student Sianni L. said.

At the high school level, immersion students will have a variety of options to continue to strengthen their language proficiency while applying learning in real-world academic

and career contexts. Ninth grade immersion continuation students will be able to take the AP Language and Culture course in their immersion language, if they are ready to do so. These students can earn the [Delaware Certificate of Multiliteracy](#) in their ninth grade year as well.

These language skills, students say, will benefit them in the future.

“As I plan to work in the medical field, knowing a second language can be greatly beneficial as I would be able to communicate with Chinese colleagues and assist patients with a low level of English proficiency,” Fifer M.S. student Isabella A. said.

Me beneficiará en mi carrera en el futuro de ser una enfermera que habla los dos idiomas, porque en el hospital, casi no hay muchas enfermeras que hablan los dos idiomas, y yo quiero ser una de ellas para ayudar a las personas que no pueden hablar muy bien en el inglés," said Skyline M.S. student Areli T. [*Translation: This will benefit me in my future career as a nurse who speaks two languages, because in hospitals, there are hardly any nurses who speak two languages, and I want to be one of them so that I can help people who don't speak English well.*]

Dual Language Immersion teachers have been the key to helping students deepen their immersion language skills and cultural competencies. Skyline Middle School immersion teacher Antonio Amores Ortiz has taught his current cohort of students since they entered sixth grade.

“Since I’ve gotten to know them, these students have done their best to bring a smile to class, to bring joy to a fellow classmate who is feeling down,” Ortiz said. “They make immersion class a place where everyone is accepted.”

Families of immersion students have also seen students benefit from learning in two languages over the years. Jeff Forjan, a Selbyville Middle School administrator and parent of immersion learners, said the Spanish Immersion program at Indian River School District has offered his four children and hundreds of others an amazing opportunity to become bi-literate.

Forjan's oldest son is a member of the original JMC Spanish Immersion cohort. "It amazed me how quickly he surpassed my level of Spanish from what I learned in high school and college," Forjan said.

Next year, as a freshman at Indian River H.S., Forjan's son will have an opportunity to take AP Spanish. In his sophomore, junior and senior years, he can then qualify to participate in a dual language immersion bridge program. A bridge program is a series of courses that provides students with opportunities to extend their immersion language and content knowledge into college and work environments. Bridge programs may include dual-credit/dual-enrollment courses with the University of Delaware or Delaware State University, or immersion-specific Career and Technical Education pathways.

"To say that I am proud of the growth that these students have made is an understatement," Forjan said.

Caesar Rodney S.D. Supervisor of Instruction Darren Guido says the Delaware Dual Language Immersion pathway teaches students much more than language skills.

"Our Immersion program is preparing our students to be leaders in our world where it is imperative that we are able to recognize the similarities in our different cultures and to celebrate the uniqueness that we all possess," Guido said.

*For more information about Delaware's Dual Language Immersion programs, check out the [DDOE Dual Language Immersion webpage](#) or contact Lynn Fulton, Education Specialist, Dual Language Immersion at [lynn.fulton@doe.k12.de.us](mailto:lynn.fulton@doe.k12.de.us) or Gregory Fulkerson, Education Associate, World Languages and Dual Language Immersion at [gregory.fulkerson@doe.k12.de.us](mailto:gregory.fulkerson@doe.k12.de.us).*