

2016 Regular Session

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 136

BY REPRESENTATIVE MORENO

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To urge and request the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to study the feasibility of establishing two-way dual language programs in public schools and to submit a written report of its findings and recommendations to the House Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Education not later than sixty days prior to the 2017 Regular Session of the Legislature of Louisiana.

WHEREAS, the Constitution of Louisiana provides that it is the goal of the public educational system "to provide learning environments and experiences, at all stages of human development, that are humane, just, and designed to promote excellence in order that every individual may be afforded an equal opportunity to develop to his full potential"; and

WHEREAS, the state constitution requires the legislature to provide for the education of the people of the state and to establish and maintain a public educational system; and

WHEREAS, in fulfilling this constitutional responsibility, it is important that more instructional programs are provided for students from diverse cultural and educational backgrounds with limited English proficiency; and

WHEREAS, although the state's total population of students with limited English proficiency is still below five percent, in the last three years some schools have seen dramatic increases in the number of such students they have served; and

WHEREAS, as of October 2015, five public school districts reported total limited English proficient student populations above five percent including Jefferson (13%), Union and St. Mary (6.5%), East Baton Rouge (5.9%), and Orleans (5.6%); and

WHEREAS, Louisiana's English language learners receive support through a variety of instructional models including:

(1) Structured English immersion programs that teach the students in English at the level they can comprehend and that focus on grammar, vocabulary, sentence structure, and pronunciation skills.

(2) Transitional bilingual education programs that provide students with instruction in their native languages from bilingual teachers who gradually transition to English.

(3) Push-in and pull-out programs that provide support for students through tutors or teachers who assist the students in their regular classrooms and provide more targeted support outside of the classroom; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana currently offers one-way dual language programs in various parishes in which the majority or all of the students in the class are native English speakers who receive instruction in English and another language including the following:

(1) Spanish immersion settings in fourteen schools in Calcasieu, East Baton Rouge, Jefferson, and Lafayette for students in prekindergarten through grade eight.

(2) French immersion settings in twenty-seven schools in Assumption, Calcasieu, East Baton Rouge, Iberia, Jefferson, Lafayette, Orleans, St. Landry, and St. Martin parishes and the International School of Louisiana, L'Ecole Bilingue, and Lycee Francais de la Nouvelle Orleans, serving over four thousand students in prekindergarten through grade twelve.

(3) Mandarin immersion programs in East Baton Rouge and Lafayette, serving approximately sixty students; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana does not currently have any two-way dual language programs that provide all content instruction to English language learners and native English speakers in two languages; and

WHEREAS, researchers Wayne Thomas and Virginia Collier's eighteen-year longitudinal comparison study of English only, transitional bilingual, and dual language classes in twenty-three districts across fifteen states found that two-way dual language models maximize benefits for English learners and English proficient students alike including:

(1) Eliminating the achievement gap between English language learners and native English speakers.

(2) Developing school cultures that are more inclusive of cultural differences.

- (3) Increasing parent involvement; and

WHEREAS, a more recent study of the impact of two-way dual language programs in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school district from 2007-2010 found that students in two-way dual language programs consistently outperformed non dual language programs and that the two groups of students who benefit most from dual language instruction are English language learners and African American students with both groups testing higher in reading and math than their non dual language peers; and

WHEREAS, these studies identified that success across dual language programs varied depending on the extent to which programs implemented specific practices and recommended that all dual language programs include the following:

- (1) A minimum of six years of bilingual instruction with English learners not segregated.
- (2) A focus on core academic curriculum and not remedial skills.
- (3) A high quality language arts curriculum for both languages.
- (4) A separation of the instruction of each language such as avoiding translation or repeating the same instruction in both languages.
- (5) Use of non-English language at least fifty percent of the instructional time and as much as ninety percent in early grades; and

WHEREAS, districts and schools planning to implement two-way dual language programs must consider increased initial start-up costs, teacher training and recruitment, community demand, student demographics, and evaluation methods among other factors; and

WHEREAS, the recently reauthorized federal Every Student Succeeds Act increases the number of years before English language learners are required to take assessments in English thereby providing the state and districts with the flexibility to foster both native language and English language instruction; and

WHEREAS, in order that every student may be afforded an equal opportunity to develop to his full potential as provided in the state constitution, including students from diverse cultural and educational backgrounds with limited English proficiency, it is imperative that proven methods such as two-way dual language programs are implemented in public schools.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to study the feasibility of establishing two-way dual language programs - also referred to as dual language, two-way immersion, or dual immersion programs - in public schools and to submit a written report of its findings and recommendations to the House Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Education not later than sixty days prior to the 2017 Regular Session of the Legislature of Louisiana.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the president of the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE