

Lalor North Primary School leads Victoria in Bilingual Education.

Our Macedonian Bilingual Program began in 1985 and has now reached its highest ever enrolment. Our Greek Bilingual Program began in 1977 and is the oldest continually operating Bilingual Program in Victoria. Our two bilingual programs coexist with great unity, with our teachers working, planning and collaborating across our three programs (Macedonian, Greek and standard) and our students learning, playing and interacting with great warmth, connection and respect across the school.

Our Macedonian Bilingual Program enjoys tremendous support from our local community as well as being internationally recognised by the government of the Republic of North Macedonia.

Many studies have shown that speaking two or more languages is a great asset to the cognitive process. The brains of bilingual people operate differently than single language speakers and these differences offer several mental benefits including improvement in memory and in decision making skills, staving off Alzheimer's and dementia, boosting confidence, deepening your connection to other cultures through communication and appreciation for the traditions, religions, arts and history and seeing the world through opportunities to study or work abroad.

Like many things, language learning is best started young, while children have the ability to learn a language completely and easily.

Our bilingual programs offer content-based immersive teaching in English and Macedonian, which are delivered by qualified language teachers. Our programs operate under the guidelines set by the Department of Education and Training. Children are immersed in the target language from the start of their schooling for half of each day. Through targeted, explicit teaching in fun, real life learning situations, children quickly acquire vocabulary and begin to respond in the target language. As children progress through the school, the expectations increase in regard to the production of the language. Teaching at students' point of need enables each child to learn at their own pace.

Learning a second language does not interfere with the development of the first language. In the early stages of second language acquisition, children hearing two languages can sometimes mix words from two languages but this is temporary. In the long term, the second language will provide thinking, social, cultural and economic advantages.

You do not need to be of Macedonian background to enrol in the Macedonian Bilingual Program. New students are welcomed at all year levels.

We continue to accept enrolments for the Macedonian Bilingual Program for 2020 and are now accepting enrolments for 2021.

School tours are held at 9:15 am on Thursday mornings, with places booked by contacting the office on 9465 4922. Tours are also available by appointment at other times.

A school tour provides a wonderful opportunity to see classrooms in action, meet students and teachers and ask questions about our approach to teaching and learning. Please come and visit our program and be enlightened at how your child can become a bilingual speaker and open their door to a world of opportunities.

Curriculum areas are identified for their suitability to our bilingual programs. Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening and Mathematics are all addressed through the Macedonian language in Prep, One and Two. As students move into the senior half of Primary School (years 3-6), our Inquiry topics (covering science, the humanities and personal and social learning) are also taught in Macedonian; whilst Mathematics is taught in English.

Will learning a second language interfere with development in the first language?

The answer is no, definitely not. Mixing words from two languages often temporarily occurs among children. Generally, becoming bilingual has positive effects on language development, including on the first language. For example, when learning two languages, the child may become more sensitive and aware of language itself. There may be more sensitivity in communication and more awareness of the needs of listeners. Having two (or more) words for each object, idea or concept will expand rather than contract the mind.

The development of two languages can be seen as a dual iceberg. Two icebergs are separated above the waterline. A bilingual's two languages are separate when speaking (and on the 'exterior', separate when reading and writing). Below the surface of the water, they are fused. A bilingual's two languages are joined together beneath the surface in the operating area of the brain.

So, rather than a second language interfering with the development of the first language, it is more likely to provide thinking advantages, social and cultural advantages, even economic advantages in the long term.

Source: Baker, C. (2014), A Parents' and Teachers' Guide to Bilingualism (Fourth Edition), Multilingual Matters, Bristol, UK, pp50-51.

Why Your Child Deserves A Bilingual Education

Every child should have access to a bilingual education. Numerous research studies of bilingual education indicate that it is a great advantage to learn through two languages and that a bilingual education enhances a child's skills and understanding across a broad range of curriculum areas.

Learning a second language enhances a student's first language, as the student's brain is constantly comparing the similarities and differences between the two languages in relation to vocabulary, grammar, spelling rules

and sentence structures. This creates a better understanding of both languages no matter how different the languages are from one another. The greater the understanding of the second language, the greater the benefits and enhancement towards the first language.

Language teachers and educational psychologists have long held the view that learning another language increases and enhances students' deductive and problem-solving skills. Having frequent practice in working out meaning, making links and drawing conclusions in the language class enhances these skills in a broader sense in other areas of the curriculum and in life in general. Recent and current research involving scientific analysis of brain activity in bilinguals compared to monolinguals strongly supports the assertion of language enhancing cognition. Students exposed to a bilingual education do as well if not better in other subjects compared to students only taught in a single language.

Knowledge of more than one language has long-term cultural, social and economic benefits. Tolerance, respect and co-operation are all improved through bilingual education, while being bilingual enhances future job prospects. Studies show us that, regardless of your child's ability, learning another language can:

- Stimulate brain development: Learning through language helps develop essential areas of children's brains. It also helps them to think more creatively, connect ideas and solve problems more easily.
- Significantly enhance English literacy skills: Learning through language means more than just memorising lists of words. Languages all use different systems. Children automatically compare and contrast the system of the new language they are learning with the language that they already know. This gives them insight as to how English works, which can then accelerate their ability to read and write.
- Improve memory, concentration and numeracy skills: Learning through language strengthens children's memory for sequences and their ability to concentrate and build connections.
- Improve overall performance at school: Learning another language is associated with excellent, long-term academic results. Studies show that in the world's highest-performing school systems, all students in all year levels learn one or more languages.
- Encourage respect and understanding of other cultures: Our Bilingual Program is strongly supported by both the school and our wider communities. It allows the students' first language to work in partnership to strengthen and enrich their repertoire of literacy practices – in other words, what we learn in one language helps us with any other languages we encounter.