



Information on Work of Two Way Immersion Task Force

We are proud of the long-standing commitment of our district to providing bilingual programs that promote bi-literacy and biculturalism. That is why we have embarked on a process to improve the TWI program for our students and to keep the community informed of our progress.

Background:

Two Way Immersion (TWI) programs are currently offered at Rosa Parks, Cragmont, and LeConte Elementary Schools, operating in a strand of classrooms within each of these Berkeley public schools. Thousand Oaks offers a transitional bilingual program serving primarily English Learners.

In May, 2011, the Board of Education received a study entitled “English Learners and the Achievement Gap: Effectively Implementing Two-Way Immersion in Berkeley.” The primary recommendation put forth in the study was to consolidate the TWI classrooms from the three elementary schools into one TWI school in order to offer the most effective TWI program model for our students and families.

Several research and evidence based findings stated in the study’s recommendations for consolidation of the three Berkeley TWI programs into a TWI school include:

1. A well-implemented TWI program will address the needs of our Spanish speaking English Learners, a significant Berkeley subgroup that has increased in recent years and is affected by the achievement gap.
2. A TWI program consolidated at one school will ensure:
 - a. Fidelity with one effective TWI program model,
 - b. Direct, targeted interventions designed around the needs of TWI students,
 - c. A strong professional learning community in which all TWI teachers work together to build a cohesive program, and
 - d. Bilingual resources.
3. The positive effects of immersion in a bi-literate and bicultural setting created in our current TWI classrooms can be fully realized in all other aspects of school life.

As the study also states, there are many steps and considerations involved in changing the current model to a TWI school. The full study is available online and includes detailed findings about the benefits of such a change.

What is the charge of the Superintendent’s TWI Task Force?

The charge of the TWI Task Force is to thoroughly analyze the conditions that must be met for a successful consolidation of the TWI programs into one TWI school. The Task Force was formed based on action taken by the School Board in May, 2011 to plan the consolidation of the TWI programs at one school site and to bring recommendations forward to the Superintendent, who will then make a recommendation to the Board.

Who is on the Task Force?

The voting members of the Task Force consist of the principals at Rosa Parks, LeConte, Cragmont, and Thousand Oaks, as well as two parents and one teacher (and an “alternate” teacher) from each of these four schools. The parent representatives were recommended by the *Friends of TWI* group as well as

principals and other district staff, and include parents who have children in the TWI and Bilingual programs as well as some parents who serve on the District English Learner Advisory Committee (DELAC). There are several non-voting members who bring specialized expertise to the group (see website for full membership list). The operational structure of this group is similar to one that has been successfully used for the Superintendent's Budget Advisory Committee.

All families are stakeholders in this process; however, the most impacted families are those whose children are currently in the programs, particularly those whose children are English Learners.

What is the timeline for consolidation?

The Task Force will present its findings and recommendation to the Superintendent in April/May of 2012. The Superintendent will then work with staff to review the recommendation and take a final recommendation to the Board for action. The earliest date for opening a TWI school given the current timeline would be Fall, 2013. A general timeline is available on the dedicated TWI Task Force Webpage.

The process and timing of the implementation need to be determined and then done carefully so as to ensure the success of the new school and the continued success of the schools that will lose the TWI programs.

Where will the TWI school be located?

The Task Force only just began the inquiry phase. There is currently no decision on the location for a TWI school. Several possible district facilities are under consideration.

The TWI Task Force is currently gathering information from other districts that have also consolidated TWI programs into one site and the considerations they went through in selecting a site. Sites for which the Task Force has requested information to discuss at the November 1st meeting are: Adult School (previously Franklin Elementary), LeConte, Thousand Oaks, Cragmont and Rosa Parks.

Will the consolidation of the TWI program affect the Thousand Oaks Bilingual Program?

Thousand Oaks (T.O.) Elementary also offers a bilingual program serving Spanish-speaking English Learners. While the Task Force is receiving information about the bilingual program at TO, there are no plans at this time to consolidate the T.O. bilingual program with the TWI school.

Will students be asked to move schools?

This is only the beginning of the information gathering phase. It will take time to consider how to best consolidate the TWI program. There are no plans to involuntarily transfer any students from their current schools. The Task Force, Administration, and School Board are committed to providing regular updates throughout this change process.

More information:

- Visit the webpage dedicated to this work:
www.berkeleyschools.net/superintendents-two-way-immersion-task-force/
- Familiarize yourself with the research in the study on effective TWI programs
- Talk to your school's teacher and parent representatives on the Task Force
- Attend Task Force meetings
- Contact Maya Hernandez, Office of Family and Community Partnerships at 644-8991