

# UCPS Splash! Immersion Programs

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### 1. What immersion programs does Union County Public Schools offer?

Union County Public Schools (UCPS) offers seven Spanish and two Mandarin Chinese elementary foreign language immersion programs at 9 sites in the county. The seven Spanish programs are total immersion. The two Mandarin Chinese programs are partial immersion. In total immersion, all core subjects, including reading/language arts, are taught in the target language. In partial immersion, most core subjects are taught in the target language. Since Mandarin Chinese is a graphophonic language, English instruction is offered beginning in kindergarten. Each immersion program gives preference to students who reside in the school attendance zone upon initial registration.

Mandarin Chinese Immersion Locations- Marvin Elementary and Kensington Elementary

Spanish Immersion Locations- Antioch Elementary, Poplin Elementary, Shiloh Elementary, Sun Valley Elementary, Unionville Elementary, Western Union Elementary and Weddington Elementary.

### 2. Who can participate in the immersion lottery process? Can students entering Grades 1-5 participate in the lottery?

- a. **First preference** is given to rising kindergarteners in the host school's attendance zone. Any rising kindergartener in the assigned school zone may participate in the immersion lottery for the host school. For students entering Kindergarten, approximately 24 or 48 seats are available depending on the program (24 for one class, 48 for two classes). A random lottery will be conducted to assign seats. For students entering Grade 1, seat availability varies year to year and admission is contingent upon student readiness and teacher/administrator approval. Admission for grades 2-5 is determined by language proficiency and available space, student readiness and teacher/administrator approval. If more students are interested than spaces available, names will be placed on a waiting list in order they are drawn for possible future consideration if space permits. Sibling preference will be given to rising Kindergarteners that have students in the current program and reside in the host school's attendance zone.
- b. **Second preference** will be given to other interested rising kindergarteners within the host school's cluster. Sibling preference will be given to rising Kindergarteners that have students in the current program. If the class does not reach capacity after the initial registration period for the host school's attendance zone, any remaining spots will be determined with a random lottery. A registration period will be determined by the host school and communicated to the schools within the cluster. A random lottery will be conducted to assign all seats. If more students are interested than spaces available, names will be placed on a waiting list in order they are drawn for possible future consideration if space permits.

- c. **Third preference** will be given to other interested students within UCPS (all clusters) who have an approved transfer from UCPS Central Office. A registration period will be determined by the host school and communicated to all schools within UCPS. A random lottery will be conducted to assign all seats. If more students are interested than spaces available, names will be placed on a waiting list in order they are drawn for possible future consideration if space permits.
- d. **Lottery Guidelines**
  - a) “Late” Applications received after communicated deadline will be date/time stamped and entered at the end of each school’s waiting list in the order received. Filing applications prior to the lottery deadline is strongly encouraged. Early placements assist with course scheduling and appropriate planning at the school.
  - b) Lottery drawings will be held the following Monday after the registration window closes.
  - c) Response to an offer-
    - i. Parents should contact the school within one week of acceptance to determine next steps for official enrollment into the program.
    - ii. If you change your mind about an acceptance, your student is to enter the school within his/her attendance zone.

**3. Are younger siblings or students currently in the immersion program in grades K-2 guaranteed a seat in that program?**

- Younger siblings of students currently in the immersion program (who reside in the host school attendance zone) in Grades K-2 are given preference, where appropriate, for that program on a space-available basis.
- Any younger sibling of students currently in the immersion program wishing to transfer from another school attendance zone within the cluster, or another cluster, are given second preference, where appropriate, for the program on a space-available basis.

**4. How can I participate in the lottery? Where and when can I get a form?**

Rising Kindergarten students must be enrolled (for the 2016-17 school year) at their home school prior to expressing interest in an immersion class. Parents may obtain a Splash Immersion Registration form for each child interested in participating in the lottery. See Preferences outlined in #2 of this FAQ.

**5. When are parent information meetings for each of the programs?**

Interested parents can attend parent information meetings hosted by the host schools during the months of February and March. Please contact the host school or visit individual school websites for dates.

- Thursday, January 28-6:00 pm Unionville (**Spanish**)
- Tuesday, February 2-6:30 pm Kensington (**Mandarin**)
- Monday, February 8-6:00 Poplin (**Spanish**)
- Tuesday, February 9-6:00-7:00 pm Weddington (**Spanish**)
- Thursday, February 18-6:00-7:00 pm Shiloh/Sun Valley AT Sun Valley (**Spanish**)
- Tuesday, February 23-5:30-6:30 Western Union (**Spanish**)

- Thursday, February 25-5:30-6:30 pm Antioch (**Spanish**)
- Thursday, March 3-6:00-7:00 Marvin (**Mandarin**)

**6. Is transportation to these programs provided?**

UCPS provides transportation to students who are living in the attendance zone of the host school. If a transfer from another school attendance zone is granted from the UCPS Central Office, parents/guardians are responsible for providing transportation to the school outside of their attendance zone. It is important to consider transportation options and responsibilities.

**7. What factors are considered in the lottery?**

Depending on the program, there are approximately 24 or 48 seats available in the lottery for students entering kindergarten. The available seats in the lottery for students entering Grades 1-5 are those vacated by students who withdraw from the program. All assignments are made by a random lottery process.

**8. When will we be notified of lottery results for the 2016-2017 school year?**

The following deadlines have been created to guide the lottery process for all schools within UCPS that host a language immersion program.

February 9-March 31-

Kindergarten registration and initial marketing of the 2016-2017 immersion class occurs. All host schools will provide a parent information meeting during this window. The First Preference registration window will close March 31. If all seats are assigned for the class at this time, parents will be notified of their status by mid-April. If there are seats available after this window closes, all registered students from the host school have secured a spot.

April 1-April 30-

The Second Preference registration window opens. If any spots are remaining from the First Preference registration period, all schools within the host school's cluster will be notified and a random lottery for remaining spots will occur. If more students are interested than spaces available, names will be placed on a waiting list in order they are drawn for possible future consideration if space permits. Parents will be notified by mid-May.

May 1-May 31-

The Third Preference registration window opens. If any spots are remaining from the First Preference and Second Preference registration periods, all schools in UCPS will be notified and a random lottery for remaining spots will occur. Parents will be notified by mid-June.

**9. Considerations:**

- UCPS will continue to monitor student interest and commitment to continue the immersion program, which will inform course offerings and staffing decisions. Adding subsequent courses at other school sites, and keeping current courses at existing school sites will depend on sustained enrollment indicators. In addition, immersion classes may be larger than regular classes and may be operated as multi-grade combination classes. This program could be altered or relocated depending on District or program needs.

- Support services for students shall only be available in English. Of primary concern is for students to learn fundamental curriculum concepts. If any student seems to be struggling with math or reading concepts, then additional assistance will be provided to those students in English to assess whether the difficulty is with the language or the core concepts. If the student does not understand the concept in English, the parents, teacher, and administrator will meet to discuss the student's needs.
- Special Education and English as a Second Language (ESL): It is recommended that parents of students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency who are interested in submitting an application for an immersion experience first visit the program. Students with disabilities will be afforded an equal opportunity to participate in the admissions process, and the IEP Teams will thoroughly consider the immersion program as part of the continuum of program and placement options.
- Immersion may not be the optimal learning environment for every student. Parents who feel that their child may have significant communication delays in their first language should make an appointment with school staff to weigh the pros and cons of enrolling their child in an immersion program. Additionally, if a teacher and/or parent has concerns about a child's progress in the immersion program, the concerns are discussed in a meeting, and in-class assistance may be provided, as it would in any traditional program. If there is an extreme circumstance in which the child is demonstrating significant struggle, then the teacher, administrator(s), and parents will meet to determine the appropriate interventions, referrals, and program options.
- The current structure of immersion makes it difficult to separate twins or students with peer issues.

## **10. Future Considerations**

- a. In grades 6-8, a minimum of an advanced language study course will be made available.
- b. If applicable and workable within student scheduling, a content course will also be made available in the target language.
- c. Students in the 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade may be eligible to receive HS credit in the target language using Credit by Demonstrated Mastery (CDM) as defined by NCDPI.
- d. In grades 9-12, students may select to continue advanced language study through blended learning, advanced placement course selections or may begin study of a third language.