



Dual Language Program LaVenture Middle School



Program Overview: Mount Vernon School District's middle school Dual Language (DL) Program is based at LaVenture. Our program is built on three pillars: bilingualism and biliteracy, high academic achievement, and sociocultural competence.

Students take on challenging, justice-centered coursework in Spanish while building strong skills in both languages. We honor students' linguistic identities and cultural strengths while preparing them for multilingual futures.

Program Structure: DL students take a portion of their core classes taught in Spanish. The amount of Spanish instruction decreases slightly across grades as students take on more electives and specialized courses.

6th Grade: 50% instruction in Spanish	7th Grade: approximately 40% instruction in Spanish	8th Grade: approximately 33% instruction in Spanish
• Dual Social Studies/Spanish Language Arts Block, 2 periods (year-long) • Dual Science (year-long)	• Dual Social Studies (year-long) • Spanish Language Arts (year-long) • Dual Science (one semester)	• Dual Social Studies (year-long) • Spanish Language Arts (year-long)

Note: Note: DL students in a yearlong music elective are automatically enrolled in online Independent PE outside of school hours. Students will log physical activity hours on Canvas. The course is supervised by an LVMS teacher, and students must pass it to stay in their yearlong music elective. Details will be shared in the first weeks of school.

High School Credit Opportunity: Students who show advanced Spanish proficiency on the AAPPL assessment can earn up to four high school credits by winter of 8th grade. This can also set students up to enter Spanish 2, 3, or 4 when they start at Mount Vernon High School.

6th grade Curriculum Highlights: The examples below reflect current units and projects aligned to the MVSD curriculum. Specific content is subject to change.

Spanish Language Arts & Dual Social Studies (6th Grade): Students build biliteracy and critical thinking through a justice-centered curriculum. Each unit is anchored by an essential question in both English and Spanish. Themes build across the year — from identity to transformation to action to self-reflection — grounded in Latin American history, literature, and lived experience.

Standout texts and projects include:

- El Soñador (Pam Muñoz Ryan) and Sin Fronteras — narrative writing including a letter to a loved one
- Environmental justice research — culminating in a Newsletter and Campaign (argumentative writing)
- Merci Suárez se pone las pilas (Meg Medina) — paired with informational and reflective writing
- Amoxltli (student-created books) — a culminating literacy project

Dual Science (6th Grade): Students explore life, physical, and earth science through a bilingual lens, with a focus on real-world connections and scientific writing in Spanish. Writing builds progressively across the year using the Claim-Evidence-Reasoning (CER) framework.

Highlights include:

- Microbiome and human body systems
- Traits, reproduction, and genetics — connected to social justice learning about race, culture, and identity
- Earth's changing climate — grounded in student reflection on environmental impact

Common Threads Across All DL Courses, grade 6-8: Across all courses and grade levels, DL students at LaVenture are building academic language in Spanish through the Marco DALE framework, making connections across science, social studies, and language arts, and engaging with texts and projects that affirm their identities and challenge them to think critically about the world.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: My child has been in the DL program since kindergarten. What stays the same in middle school?

The heart of the program stays the same — bilingual instruction, culturally rich curriculum, high academic expectations, and a community that values your child's full linguistic identity. Your child will continue building Spanish proficiency and biliteracy with teachers who are committed to the program's three pillars.

Q: What's different about DL in middle school compared to elementary? The biggest shift is structure. Instead of one or two teachers, your child will have multiple teachers throughout the day — each a specialist in their subject. Spanish instruction happens across content classes (Social Studies, Science, and Spanish Language Arts). This is a normal and exciting part of middle school, and our DL teachers work closely as a team to support your child through the transition.

Q: Are all DL classes required, or can my child opt out of some? All DL courses are required as part of the program, with the exception of students who have an IEP, who may take most but not all program courses. This structure ensures students meet the Spanish proficiency benchmarks needed for the AAPPL assessment and potential high school credit. If you have concerns about a specific class, please reach out to your child's teacher and counselor.

Q: Can my DL student also take Advanced ELA and/or Science? At this time, Advanced ELA and Science are not available to students in the DL program. Because DL students already carry a full Spanish language arts course, adding Advanced ELA creates scheduling conflicts that affect the whole building. DL Language Arts is designed to be rigorous and meaningful. Additionally, students in 6th and 7th grade take Science in Spanish as part of the DL program.

Q: Will my child still be able to participate in electives, clubs, and activities? Absolutely. DL students are fully integrated into campus life at LaVenture — the same electives, clubs, athletics, student government, and school events as all other students. We intentionally structure the program so that DL is not a barrier to belonging. It's an asset our whole school community benefits from.

Q: How can families stay involved in the DL program? Family partnership is essential. You can volunteer in classrooms — our DL teachers welcome family presence and support. Connect early and often with your child's teachers; with multiple teachers instead of one or two, proactive communication matters more than ever. And join our Parent Group, made up of families who are passionate about the DL program and want to stay engaged. Staying involved looks different in middle school, but it matters just as much.

Contact Information

- Tracy Hancock, Counselor Last Names A–L — thancock@mvsd320.org
- Phil Stahly, Counselor Last Names M–Z — pstahly@mvsd320.org
- Amanda Rodriguez, District DL Teacher on Special Assignment — Amanda Rodriguez
amandarodriguez@mvsd320.org