



WESTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

Bilingual/Bicultural/ESL Education

Department of Educational & Interdisciplinary Studies, College of Education & Human Services

Bilingual/Bicultural Education

Established in 1973, Western Illinois University's Bilingual/Bicultural Education program prepares students to meet Illinois requirements for certification as bilingual teachers. Students are trained in a Standards-based program designed to prepare them to teach children in the 21st century.

Each year, more and more children enter public schools in the United States with limited or no English language proficiency. Illinois public schools are home to speakers of 139 distinct languages, and they rank fifth nationally among school populations classified as English Language Learners (ELL). Of all the ELL students in Illinois, at least 81% speak Spanish as their first language. In recent years, the number of ELL students has increased in both urban and rural areas, creating a critical need for teachers trained in bilingual education. To meet this demand and provide quality education for linguistically diverse students, this program offers student teacher certification in Bilingual/Bicultural/Elementary Education (Spanish emphasis).

English as a Second Language Component

Because teachers cannot be prepared in all languages, a related area of the program is English as a Second Language (ESL). Students are trained in special teaching strategies designed to include speakers of other first languages in meaningful learning experiences. The department provides an established teacher preparation program designed to suit the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse students.

Student Composition

One of the program's objectives is to prepare teachers who will reach out to multiple populations and include them in the educational process. The program's ethnic composition is representative of the diversity within the career field. Traditionally, 35 to 40% of the students in the program are members of linguistically and culturally diverse groups. Such diversity lends itself to insightful academic and societal discussion throughout the certification process.

Academic Program

To obtain bilingual/bicultural certification and the ESL endorsement, students combine quality coursework with practical clinical experiences prior to student teaching assignments. Through clinical experiences, students complete 100 hours of observation and instructional time in school districts with bilingual and ESL programs. The language requirements include appropriate courses that lead to oral and written Spanish fluency. In addition, students complete elementary methods and bilingual and ESL coursework prior to the culminating student teaching experience.

The student teaching experience for students majoring in bilingual/elementary education is a 16-week placement in a bilingual or dual language classroom. During this experience, students gradually assume complete responsibility for the planning, instruction, and daily maintenance of a classroom under the supervision of mentoring teachers.

To increase Spanish language literacy and cultural experiences, students are required to spend a semester abroad (preferably in a Spanish language country). Additionally, they may also study abroad during the summer session to enhance their linguistic and cultural experiences. Credits toward graduation will be earned during these experiences. By following the required and recommended schedule of courses, students may expect to graduate with certification in bilingual and elementary education in four and one-half years or in four years by completing some general education coursework during summer sessions.

HIGHER VALUES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Bilingual/Bicultural Faculty

Faculty members of the Department of Educational and Interdisciplinary Studies (EIS) possess a wide variety of areas of expertise and reflect the diversity of ideology and ethnic background of the students they serve. They conduct field trips to bilingual and ESL classrooms and accompany students to professional conferences and cultural events. In addition, faculty members are actively involved in the surrounding area public school districts, frequently hosting bilingual/bicultural/ESL teacher practitioners in their classrooms and providing professional development services.

Extracurricular Opportunities

The Bilingual/Bicultural Education program has its own organization. The Association of Bilingual/Bicultural Education Students (ABBES) provides students with opportunities to participate in service activities, field trips, and career-related outings. Professional development activities geared toward working in the bilingual/bicultural field are fostered by this service/social organization. Newly enrolled students are partnered with upperclassmen as a part of the association's mentor program. Mentors provide experience-based advice, offer language assistance in English or Spanish, and answer the concerns of the association's newest members.

Technology

In an age of rapid growth, Western provides the most current technologies to students. Bilingual majors become skilled in the use of tools to promote teaching and learning.

After Graduation

Recent post-graduation surveys of the Bilingual/Bicultural Education program indicate a high demand for bilingual/ESL educators. Employed in every level along the educational track, graduates report experiencing very little difficulty securing teaching positions.

Career paths are not limited to Illinois alone. Many students make use of the reciprocity of their certification to teach in other states. Graduates are also qualified to seek careers in international education or to continue their education, pursuing master's and doctoral degrees.

Financial Aid

Various financial aid packages are available at Western. Although some options consider financial need, others are based on academic success, potential, and commitment to an academic program. Each year, approximately 100% of students enrolled in this program receive some form of financial assistance. In addition, Western offers numerous student employment opportunities. Interested students should contact Student Services at (309) 298-1814. Students interested in financial aid may check with Western's Financial Aid office for more information.

Applications for the Teacher Shortage Scholarship (\$5,000 annually) are available to Western's Bilingual/Bicultural majors. Please see www.collegezone.com for more information.

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