Overview of Stamford American School’s English/Mandarin Bilingual Program

Program Goals
The overall goal of the Elementary School’s Bilingual Program is to provide an opportunity for students to be bilingual, bi-literate, and bi-cultural. This means that we want students to be able to read, write, and communicate orally in both Mandarin and English. In an effort to further this goal, all teachers in the Bilingual Program are also bilingual, bi-literate, and bi-cultural. Students are assessed using the same external benchmark assessments as all other Stamford students, including Northwest Education Association’s Measures of Academic Process® (MAP®) testing for Math and Reading and the STAMP assessment for Mandarin.

Program Model
The Bilingual Program at Stamford is a 50-50 Mandarin/English dual immersion model, using simplified Chinese characters. This means that students spend approximately 50% of their time with the homeroom teacher fully immersed in Mandarin and approximately 50% of their time with the homeroom teacher fully immersed in English. Math, STEMinn (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math & Innovation), Units of Inquiry, Morning Meeting, Show and Share, and Closing Circle are conducted approximately half of the time in English, and half of the time in Mandarin. The daily read aloud is conducted in Mandarin twice a week. All students enrolled in our Bilingual Program will also participate in Stamford’s daily Foreign Language Block by attending Mandarin class with a language teacher. This daily Mandarin instruction is an important part of their language development. All other specialist classes are conducted in English.

Expectations for English and Mandarin Language Skills
Language learning requires a long-term time commitment. Research on bilingual programs indicate that students will achieve a high level of proficiency in the immersion language, if a long-term commitment to the language is made. Research across bilingual program models also indicates that many students will experience a lag in their English language development during the first two years of immersion. However, this lag disappears in the third year and students can be expected to meet or exceed their monolingual peers on standardized assessments in both math and verbal skills in English.

Curriculum
The English/Mandarin Bilingual Program also follows the curriculum that is taught in the monolingual classes of the same grade. The only difference is the language in which the content is taught. The Bilingual Program teachers continue to meet with their grade level teams to plan together. The Bilingual Program teachers also meet regularly with the Mandarin teachers to ensure consistent language development in Mandarin, both with the homeroom and Language Block teacher. The Bilingual Program teachers also follow the same educational philosophy and classroom management approach as is standard at Stamford. This means that Second Step, STEMinn, and other school-wide programs are all the same.

Student Background
Students do not need to be native speakers of Mandarin to participate in the Bilingual Program. Students must have proficient academic, self-management and social skills.

Demands on Students
Participating in a Bilingual Program is tiring. Language learning requires a huge amount of concentration as students watch, listen, and actively participate in order to gain an understanding of both the language and the content. Students will most likely come home more tired than they have in previous years. This tiredness will decrease as their language skills increase throughout the year.

Parent Support
At Stamford, it is expected that parents support their child’s learning at home. When the child is enrolled in the Bilingual Program, it is of utmost importance that parents support their child’s English reading by reading to and with them daily. Extra support in Mandarin at home may also be beneficial.
Benefits of Bilingual Education

- Learning a language positively impacts the structure and cognitive functions of the brain.
- Bilingualism can lead to respect of multiple cultural heritages and languages that build friendships that cross class language boundaries.
- Bilingualism increases the marketable skills in a global society.
- People who speak two languages often outperform monolinguals on general measures of executive function.
- Researchers have found that actively using two languages seems to have a protective effect against age-related dementia — perhaps relating to the changes in brain structure.
- In studies covering six states and 37 districts in the U.S., researchers found that, compared with students in English-only classrooms or in one-way immersion, dual-language students have somewhat higher test scores and also seem to be happier in school. Attendance is better, behavioral problems fewer, parent involvement higher.
- Bilingual education helps improve students’ sense of belonging and increase parent involvement in their children’s education.

Questions?
Should you have any questions about Stamford’s Bilingual Program or any other aspects of our curriculum, our Admissions Team would be happy to speak to you at admissions@sais.hk or (+852) 2500 8688.