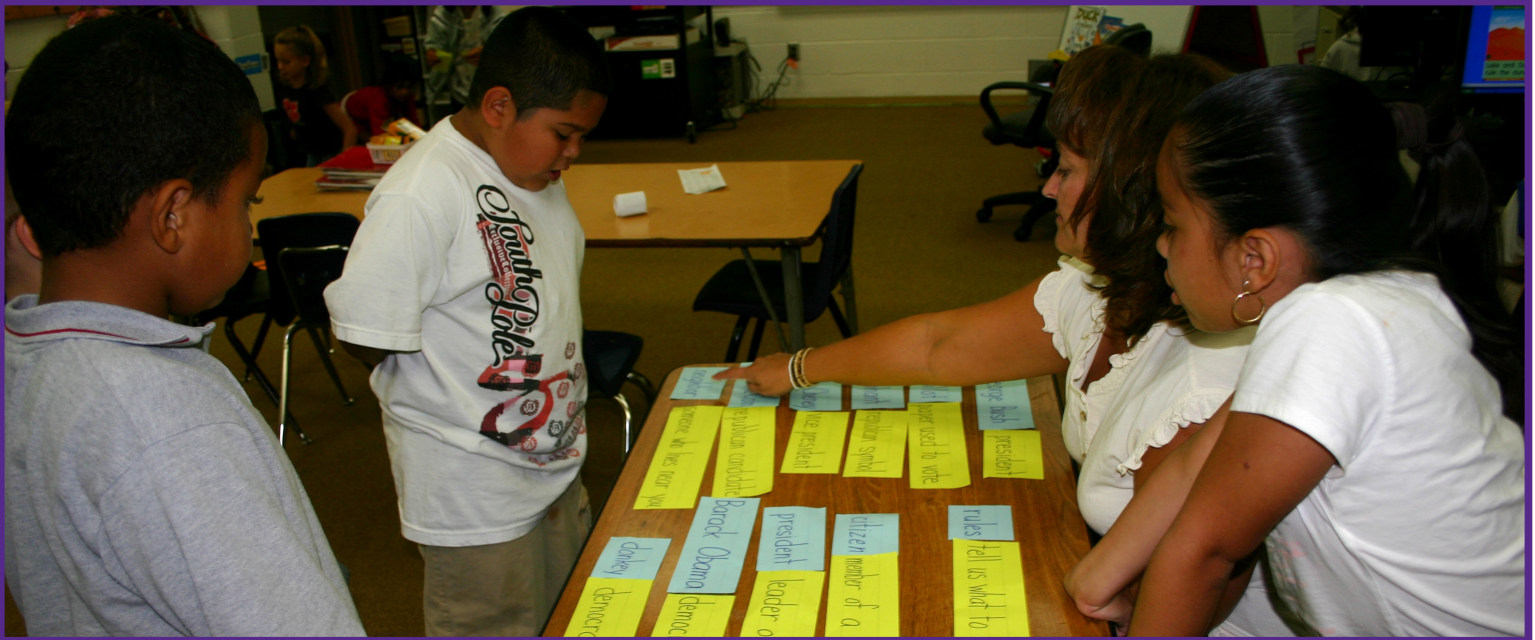


# Bilingual/ESL Education

Department of Educational Studies, College of Education & Human Services



## Bilingual/ESL Education

Established in 1973, Western Illinois University's Bilingual/ESL 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 144 distinct languages, and they rank fifth nationally among school populations classified as English Language Learners (ELLs). Of all the ELL students in Illinois, at least 81 percent 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 licensure in Elementary Education with endorsements in Bilingual/ESL education.

## Bilingual Track

Students who pursue this track graduate with licensure in Elementary Education with two endorsements: one in bilingual education and the other in ESL education. Students in this track are required to complete nine hours of foreign language study in a state-approved language. The majority of WIU students pursue Spanish as their choice, but there is an increased need for other languages.

## ESL (English as a Second Language) Track

Because teachers cannot be prepared in all languages, a concentrated track in ESL is available in the program. Students who pursue the ESL track graduate with licensure in elementary education *and* an ESL endorsement. In this track, students complete nine hours of coursework specifically focused on linguistics and teaching methods designed to meet the needs of English learners from diverse language backgrounds.

## 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 percent 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 educational program.

## Academic Program

To obtain bilingual/ESL 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/ESL education is a 16-week placement in a bilingual/dual language or ESL 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 second language literacy and cultural experiences, students are encouraged 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 licensure in elementary education and a bilingual and/or ESL endorsement in four and one-half years or in four years by completing some general education coursework during summer sessions.

*The WIU Bilingual Education program has molded me into a confident and competent bilingual educator. The program has enabled me to learn far beyond the limitations of a textbook and has allowed me to become more culturally aware. The classes have prepared me for my career and have offered a wealth of resources.* –Jennifer Biamonte, B.S.Ed., 2012

## Bilingual/ESL Faculty

Faculty members of the WIU Department of Educational Studies (ES) 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/ESL teacher practitioners in their classrooms and providing professional development services.

## Extracurricular Opportunities

The Bilingual/ESL 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/ESL 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/ESL majors become skilled in the use of tools to promote teaching and learning.

## After Graduation

Recent post-graduation surveys of the Bilingual/ESL 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 percent 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/ESL majors. Please see [collegezone.com](http://collegezone.com) for more information.

## For More Information

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