

Episode Title: Dual Language: A Conversation with Cesar Chavez

You are listening to the Maryland EdCast. On Maryland EdCast, State Superintendent of Schools, Mohammed Choudhury, discusses education practices, priorities, and policies with a wide range of Marylanders. Superintendent Choudhury is laser focused on transformational education, research, and best practices to ensure all Maryland students realize their full potential.

Superintendent Choudhury: Welcome. I am Mohammed Choudhury, State Superintendent of Maryland Schools and the host of the Maryland EdCasts. Today, I will be exploring high quality educational practices related to two-way dual language immersion programs with the students, staff, and families connected to the Cesar Chavez Dual Spanish Immersion School.

Prince George's County Public Schools. Throughout the conversation, we'll prioritize the most impactful practices and think through the implications for policymaking. Today I have with me a student and his mom as well as staff from the school, and I'm gonna let them introduce themselves before we jump right into the question.

So, with that, I'll start off first with our student. Abner. Please introduce yourself.

Avner Adepetu: Hello, my name is Avner. I like this school.

Superintendent Choudhury: What grade are you in?

Avner Adepetu: Fifth Grade.

Superintendent Choudhury: Have you been there since kindergarten? How, how, how long have you been at Cesar Chavez?

Avner Adepetu: Six years.

Superintendent Choudhury: Six years. Okay. So, thinking back to Pre-K, how many languages do you speak?

Avner Adepetu: Two.

Superintendent Choudhury: Two. There you go. That's more than a lot of people, and that's why we're here today to learn more about how you are able to speak two languages and, and how that helps you learn and become both a better person for the world that we live in, as well as just, just also just better as a student when it comes to doing reading, math, science, and history.

So, thank you for being here. With that, we'll pass it on to your mom.

Abiola Adepetu: Hello, I'm Abiola Adepetu, Avner's mom.

Superintendent Choudhury: And we'll move on to Isela, who is the academic dean. Please introduce yourself.

Isela Vidals: Good afternoon. My name is Isela Vidals. I am currently the academic dean here at Cesar Chavez. I've been at Cesar Chavez for 13 years. I was previously a classroom teacher, um, in first grade, third grade and sixth grade at the school. Um, following that, I moved on to being a program coordinator for the Spanish immersion program and now I am the academic dean.

Superintendent Choudhury: Do you know how long the dual language immersion school at Cesar Chavez has been around?

Isela Vidals: It's about eight years now.

Superintendent Choudhury: Eight years. Okay. Approaching a decade. So, lots of lessons learned so far. With that, we'll jump right in. So, I want to set the context of why we're here today. So, you know, as a multilingual first-generation college student myself, who has spent all his life working in school systems, in California and Texas, where a vast majority of the communities that I both grew up around as a student, both as a and then grew up and became a teacher, and then ultimately a district official where predominantly districts that serve high high populations of multilingual students. And so, this work is personal to me.

My parents wanted to make sure that I spoke our language. And then on top of that, I also navigated many languages back in Los Angeles. When I was a kid, I had to know what they were saying about me. So, I needed to make sure that I can engage.

And, you know, for me, this work is going to be very important. Our English language learners, our multilingual learners are the. Fastest growing demographic in the state of Maryland, we have over a hundred thousand and it's fast growing and it's all across Maryland and not just Prince George's County and Montgomery County.

It is in the shore as well as the West and Southern Maryland. And so multilingual learners are truly going to shape the future of Maryland and be the face of Maryland and frankly, the face of our country. And so, we need to get it right. And fortunately, it's not a mystery, as I like to say, on how to get it right when working with our multilingual learners.

I think in Maryland, it still feels new to many folks. And so, I'm not used to that. So as state superintendent, I'm just like, okay, got to start at the beginning in some, some, some regards, but that's okay. We'll get there. Fortunately, we are in what I call the blueprint generation. So, our state is investing Billions of dollars over the next 10 years to get it right.

And one of the things it did, knowing that it didn't have answers on how to get it right for our English learners, as well as multilingual students, it decided to create a work group, and it was called the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. Work group on English learners in public schools. The work group met 16 times over right when I first started.

It was the very first thing I personally chaired and it had members from our school systems and researchers and we invited national experts and ultimately they laid out nine recommendations on what it would take to elevate our work when it comes to supporting our English learners. And one of those recommendations' recommendation 3-A, is to scale dual language immersion programs. Uh, we know that the research is clear, uh, being able to both communicate, think and feel, um, and learn into

language is powerful. It's an academic strategy. It's not just the strategy to be able to engage people from different parts of. Different cultures and different parts of Maryland.

And so today we're here because we don't have many dual language immersion programs. We only have two districts, Montgomery County and Prince George's County. And that's why you're here today, because I like to nerd out on school models that are doing great things for our kids. And then ultimately my job.

With the state board of education is to bottle that up and make it policy and make it scale. Right. So, it could touch more students and staff. And so, I'm excited that you guys have joined us today. And so, we're going to learn about what is so amazing about two-way immersion programs, like the ones that says our Chavez, and then ultimately what the implications are for policies and get your ideas for how we can get better.

So, with that, I'm going to start at my first priorities for this podcast is practice, right? Practice is about how you do things. And so, I want to start off from each of your perspectives on, on what your experiences has been like at Cesar Chavez's, uh, dual language immersion program. So, I'm going to start with Avner.

And I want to want you to tell us what you like about your school and how your experience has been because you've been there six years. So, you're a pro now. You're an upperclassman. Give us details about what you like about it. So don't leave things out. And I might ask you a follow up question if I feel like I want to learn more about it.

So, with that, I'm going to hand it off to you.

Avner Adepetu: The bathrooms are clean. They serve edible cafeteria food. As well, the teachers are nice and the students are nice, too. The two languages make it more fun instead of regular old school. And also, the two languages help me interact with other people that can't speak English and they can only speak Spanish.

Superintendent Choudhury: Got it. Can you tell me how it's like, like, how does it work? Like, how does your day start off? Like, does your day start off in Spanish or does your day start off in English? You guys switch it up. Can you tell me, like, do you learn all subjects in Spanish or some subjects and then you switch to English? What does that look like?

Avner Adepetu: So, they want to keep a balance between English and Spanish because there are some kids that that come from English, so they still need to learn some English. So, we start the day off with. A little bit of math, then Spanish, then math again, and math is in Spanish. So, we do around five minutes of math, then we do social studies, then we do two more hours of math, and then after that, we go to English in the afternoon, and then we do science and health in English as well. And also at the semester, we go back to our homerooms.

Superintendent Choudhury: Okay. What kind of specials do you have? Do you have electives, P. E., art? What does that look like?

Avner Adepetu: So, we have music, P. E., library, art, the counselor, and that's it.

Superintendent Choudhury: Okay. And all those subjects that you just named happen in both 50 50, half and half in Spanish and English?

Avner Adepetu: Specials are usually spoken in English. They only speak a little bit of Spanish if they're from a Spanish country.

Superintendent Choudhury: With that, I'm going to go over to your mom, miss a day pet too. Can you tell us. Why you put him in Cesar Chavez? Well, what was it about that school that made you want to go to a school that you have to get in through a lottery, right?

It's I'm assuming unless I'm assuming it's not your neighborhood attendance on school Maybe and so you wanted to put them in there aside from the fantastic bathrooms, we've already got in five-star reviews on that. So, let's put that aside.

Abiola Adepetu: Yes, yes, so what made me want to have Abner attend this school was Abner has two older brothers who attended this school as well, and they actually attended the school when it first started with the Spanish immersion dual program.

So, they were the first group of his brothers were the first group of students.

Superintendent Choudhury: The pioneers.

Abiola Adepetu: Yeah, pretty much. I wanted him to go to the school, um, because it's really a good school. I see how my older boys, what they've learned, how confident they are. I appreciate the size of the school, because the school is not terribly big.

Um, everyone pretty much knows each other. Um, the staff is very good with follow up, with assignments, with work. So, I just wanted to maintain that consistency, so I said, Avner, you gotta go to Cesar Chavez. And he was happy to go.

Superintendent Choudhury: Are you a Spanish speaker yourself or is it, or you're not, but you just fell in love with it with your other kids and you're like, he's going to do it. And so that's one of my questions. And two, have you picked up Spanish as a result of your kids going to Cesar Chavez? If not already.

Abiola Adepetu: So, I'm not a Spanish speaker at all, but I wanted them to learn another language. One of my friends had a child that participated in the French immersion. So, when they decided that they were going to do a Spanish immersion and it was 50 50, you had an option for full immersion or 50 50, I said, why not try it? And so. Since then, I have picked up on Spanish, um, not as fluent as I could be, but they can't talk about me without me knowing, like I would know.

Superintendent Choudhury: Got it. Got it. That's good. That's good. And then I'm assuming just enough to know that they did their homework and didn't like dupe you or anything and like, got it. Got it. That's, that's great. Thank you for sharing that. So, it runs in the family. He is following in the footsteps of his siblings. And so, and that is great to hear.

Isela, why don't you tell us a little bit more about the model and the mechanics of how things work and, and, and, and any changes you guys have made along the way and where you guys are anything else you would want to know in terms of the number of students, et cetera. I'm assuming all of the kids participate in the. Immersion program. It's not a subset of kids. So please let us know any details that you think would be helpful for our listeners.

Isela Vidals: So, the school originally was the regular neighborhood school. So, eight years ago, um, it's when the whole program started, and it was a faced-out program. Um, so we had kids who were still part of the neighborhood, but then we started the first cohort, which was, um, you know, that first, um, like Miss Adepetu said that it was her kids that joined that first cohort.

And then eventually the Program continue with every year, adding on to the next cohort until we were able to have K to 5. So right now, our program is a K to 5 program. Um, so then we move into, you know, within the 2-way immersion program. It starts with. The students who are coming in, so we do have 50 percent of the students who are coming into the program have to be native Spanish speakers, and then we have the other 50 percent of the students who may speak other languages other than English as well.

So then, within that, then we move into that instructional component, which is that 50 percent of the instruction, which is half of the days in English and half of the days in Spanish so then that means that math. Spanish language arts and social studies. They're all taught in Spanish and then English language, art, science, health.

It's all in English. So, then that's how we divide the 50 50 percent of the instruction within the program. So, like all the curriculum, the resources. Um, in terms of like, um, they're all in Spanish. If there aren't enough resources that are not in Spanish, then you know we do have to work together to try to figure out where do we find those resources for that particular language?

But, um, in terms of like the Spanish language arts and the English language arts, all of those resources, they're all in English or they're all in Spanish when it comes to the instruction and the teachers have the specific curriculum for each. of them following the common core standards as well. Um, the same thing for math and social studies.

Um, we are, because we are a lottery program, parents typically apply to get into the program through the county and then pupil accounting handles the whole lottery process in terms of, you know, in their application, who was the native Spanish speaker, who is the English speaker, and then they do. The random selection of what students get to come into our program within our boundary as well.

So, like we, we are a boundary school, but not so much. We're a boundary, but in terms of the lottery.

Superintendent Choudhury: Got it. Got it. Are our students, are you, do you only take the lottery at, um, um, you know, the research says starting earlier is best, right? But do you only take students at the Pre-K K, or do you take some at the other grades as well? If you have room.

Isela Vidals: We only start in kindergarten with the whole lottery process. Um, students are able to test into the program starting from first grade up to we don't recommend a fourth to fifth grade

because it's usually like later on into the program where you know most of the acquisition of the language ends up happening in um, in the early stages of the language.

Superintendent Choudhury: Got it, got it. So, when you say test in, what does that mean? So, we can, our listeners can understand for the other grades.

Isela Vidals: Um, so with in testing in parents who would like to join a Spanish immersion school, whether it's the 50 50 model or the 90 10, um, have to submit an application requesting to be tested in.

And then usually June, July. June, July or late May. They, um, they receive a notification from the immersion office that they have a set date to be tested in. So, to be tested in, students have to demonstrate proficiency in the language in whatever level they're in. So, if it's a first grader, then they are supposed to be demonstrating proficiency levels at a first-grade level.

And the immersion office has those proficiency levels in terms of like that's. The testing that they use in order to see, you know, if the students qualifies to, to navigate through the program too, because, you know, um, a lot of the times it's that our program is more of content knowledge. It's not of, you know, vocabulary of like the days of the week, the, the, the, the months of the year or the colors is more of content versus, you know, the regular that Spanish acquisition of, you know, just, um, Playground vocabulary, you would say it's more of academic language that's being taught.

Superintendent Choudhury: Another question I have for you about the staff. So, is it difficult to staff a dual language immersion school? How do you go about making sure you're fully staffed? And when you do have a vacancy, do you have a strategy, a partnership or? Where are your staff coming from? Are they coming from, you know, Prince George's County, or are they coming from the rest of Maryland, the United States or the world, as I say, because.

That's what we did back in, when I was in the house, we in San Antonio and in Dallas, we had a partnership with other countries as well, because we, there was a shortage of being able to get them from just Texas and Texas is huge. And even then, we had a challenge and you're also competing against other districts, so how do you guys go about. Recruiting for your staff?

Isela Vidals: That's one of the biggest hurdles that we have encounter is trying to find those bilingual teachers. Um, you know, the immersion office actually does do recruiting and they sometimes go to Puerto Rico as well. We do have a lot of staff members that are from Puerto Rico that are moving to Maryland.

So that's been very helpful that you know, a lot of the teachers are coming for Puerto Rico into our district and wanting to teach at our district. I don't think the county has any with other countries. It's more within the states and within the county and also our own teachers help us to recruit as well.

You know, one of the things that I think also has helped is, is our own teachers are helping to recruit teachers. But we do struggle with trying to find those bilingual teachers and finding, um, that it takes, it takes a while. And when we do have encountered those different situations where we haven't been able to fulfill the vacancy, um, um, I tend to go into the classrooms to, to support or, you know, um, also with Paris, you know, trying to help us with the teaching.

Like I'll do the planning. We'll work together so that, you know, there's a combination of, of trying to make sure that our students are getting what they need. I tried to make sure that, you know, I think one of the Things to is to get more teachers into is like building that culture and, you know, building that support system that, you know, we do have supports put in place that are going to help you to feel successful as well.

Superintendent Choudhury: Got it. We'll shift to some other questions. So, we just shifted from practice. Um, we're going to move to priorities and policies. Uh, I'm always thinking about with the state board. How we can take the most effective things, things that are working and make them true across our systems and schools, right?

And so, Avner, I want to start with you. And so, I want to know why should more students be able to attend a school like Cesar Chavez where they can learn in two languages? Why do you think it's important to be able to learn in two languages? And If you have an idea for me, please provide it on how we can get more students to be in schools, like Cesar Chavez and your school, that is, sounds like an awesome place.

Avner Adepetu: So, Spanish is important because it helps you understand English. Because Spanish and English both come from the same language. So, it can help you understand the English language better. Because, for example, an "oficio" is a Spanish word that means building in English. There's another synonym for building called edifice in English.

And if I said the word and a fecal sound similar, so let's hope to understand that they both come from the same language. This is Latin. Also, a lot of people are looking for bilingual people these days. They need someone to speak Spanish since maybe they need more spread speaking people to do the job so it can open a lot of opportunities.

The way to do it is by telling them that bilingual people earn a lot more money because they usually do. They earn like around 10,000 more money and help you be more successful. So, that the enroller can.

Superintendent Choudhury: Okay. All right. He dropped a bunch of knowledge there. We could potentially just drop the mic right now, but I still got some time.

So, I got to fill those minutes and I want to get pick your brain more. So, so one Spanish helps you learn English. That is a powerful statement. And, and, and, and there's a lot of connections. And so, he just gave you some examples of that. He talked about the power of bilingualism, not only to be able to open up more opportunities, but he also said that if you like getting paid more, you should learn another language. It will help with the world that you're in. What do you think we could do to create more schools like this? What do you think we need?

Avner Adepetu: There are a lot of websites and apps already that let you learn Spanish, like, like all these popular ones, they're making a lot of money because a lot of people are learning Spanish for a reason, so they can, so they can open their horizons.

So, you can start building schools in other places. So, all those schools that have one-star reviews, maybe you can start turning them into a Spanish immersion school. And instead of letting them get torn down, you can have new staff and new funding come to those one-star schools to go fix them up into Spanish immersion schools.

Superintendent Choudhury: Wow. There you have it. Everything he said has a lot of policy implications there. You can turn around and transform one-star schools. So, you heard that. I don't know if I could promise people more money though, but, but I, I do like the, I do like the spirit and the energy behind that. And so. But the promise of, of a high-quality education where you can become multilingual puts, gives you that much of an edge.

I'm going to go to your mom, Ms. Adepetu, please tell me what you think we can do more at the state level to provide more additional supports to families to be able to have options like this, right? This has clearly been a great option. For your family, is there something that Prince George's did that helped you find this school?

Like, how did you end up becoming a pioneer parent? You know, what can we do to help to scale programs like this more and help families while after they enrolled their students to be successful? Clearly, it has done wonders and is doing wonders for all of your children.

Abiola Adepetu: You know, when I heard about the program, it was through word of mouth through a friend. I feel like better marketing. I feel like more families need to know what's out there and what their options are as far as, you know, lottery programs, public school immersion programs, whatever it is, just making sure that everyone is aware of it. Outside of speaking with my friend, I had never heard of it.

I had never heard of it. So yeah, I think better marketing, making sure everyone knows what Prince George's County offers as far as education.

Superintendent Choudhury: Got it. Got it. What would you say to people who say, well, they kind of learned English, but I can't have them being distracted by learning another language. Why would you want to put your children in a school where they're not just 100 percent of the time just focused on English? What would your statement back be to that person?

Abiola Adepetu: I would say don't underestimate your Children. If you could have them learn one, that's great. But if you can have them learn too why not? Um, don't be discouraged. Don't allow your fears to stop your children from excelling.

Superintendent Choudhury: There you have it. Don't allow your fears to keep your children from excelling. I appreciate you saying that. There's a lot of truth and power in that statement. Isela, I'm going to shift to you. When it comes to priorities and policies, what could help schools like Cesar Chavez's dual immersion program and help scale programs like this? What would you say?

Isela Vidals: I think, you know, going back to what Ms. Adepetu said to piggyback on that, um, a lot of the times we feel discouraged with the progress that the programs are making and sometimes, you

know, it, you are not going to see changes happening right away. It does take a while for programs to build. It does take a while for even parents to see. That the progress of their Children that they're making and how much knowledge and how much gains they're gaining from just being exposed to a different language to, um, a different set of students as well into two different cultures that are around, you know, surrounding these type of programs.

So, it's just seeing um, and pushing through it's what's one of the things that I would say that it's the most beneficial and not giving up because a lot of times, you know, when we see that we're struggling, or we see that there's something that's hinder us from making that progress. You know, we tend to be like, well, it's not working.

Why isn't it working? And like, Sometimes, you know, it's like maybe we should just shift completely and not continue with we're building the program or building our kids are building our parents because part of like being an immersion program, it's a community effort, right? It takes, you know, the whole village to make.

The program work and it takes not only the school leaders, but the teachers, the students and the parents at the same time, you know, part of our program is not necessarily having all of our students who are native Spanish speakers, but also having students who speak multiple languages. And, you know, it's like, what supports are we putting in place for those parents?

What supports are we putting in places, um, for those students who, who are, are not acquiring the language or is taking them longer to acquire the language? So, it's a lot of different steps that have to, um, put in place, but we also have to work together in order for it to be successful.

Superintendent Choudhury: What is one or two practical pieces of advice you would give a county who is looking to start make the jump to launching a dual language immersion program. What, what, what is one or two things you would give them in terms of practical steps?

Isela Vidals: Uh, with parents, I think a lot of the, um, you know, Ms. Adepetu had, you know, the courage and she was like, I want my kids to do this. And then we do have some parents that are like, yes, I want them, I want them to try it. But at the same time are, are scared to, to continue into the program or jump into the program. So, I think just, um, showing parents that, you know, the advantage of it, just like Abner said, you know, what are the benefits are being a bilingual student?

How is that going to help, you know, them to be successful in the long run? Because sometimes, you know, we look at the short-term goals versus long term goals. And I think just showing the parents in in, you know, working probably even like having other students come in and talk about their experiences. Um, With the immersion program thing that would benefit other immersion schools to and then just touring our schools and, you know, asking for that support to I think would be beneficial and in terms of, you know, curriculum and instruction, you know, um, search, searching out, you know, what are those best practices for because there's there are numerous of programs, you know, like, like Texas has various ones, you know, and we have our own style to doing the immersion program to it.

So, I think just. And, and even, you know, when we start, you know, certain things work, certain things didn't work. And then how can we amend those and how can we put it all together to make it

work and, and, you know, continuing to push through because, you know, they were, there were years where, you know, okay, like, you know, here's our next phase of moving into first grade.

So how is this going? And we figured out the setup for first. So now moving into first grade and like, how do we work together, you know, with the admin team with, with the teachers and providing those supports for, for teachers too, because it's also a shift with, um, pedagogy and like, how do, what, what supports are we putting in place for the teachers to also support the teachers in supporting second language learners, because not only are, are, you know, do we have ESL students, but now we have whatever we Language we have is that support that we have to put in place for those students as well, because they're also second language learners too.

Superintendent Choudhury: Got it, got it. So, if there is, what is your guys' biggest challenge now, you know, coming out of the pandemic, of course, you've been doing it. For about eight years, you've already had a full class go through and now you have another class and Avner's class is going to leave soon, right? Like, what do you, what has been some of the challenges that you guys have had like one or two and, and what are you doing about them as a dual language immersion school?

Isela Vidals: Um, our biggest struggle has been, um, finding those bilingual teachers and then the training, providing that, that training because, you know, sometimes, you know, um, when we do have some teachers coming in from out of state or out of, uh, out of, you know, um, it's, it's, it's, it's just, it's a shift to within, you know, adjusting to Maryland expectation and, and Prince George's expectation to, so, um, yeah.

You know, it's, it's, it's finding those bilingual teachers and, and providing those, those supports to target everyone, right? Because, you know, all the teachers are at different places too, in terms of like their pedagogical knowledge. And, and then, you know, how do we find that common ground to provide those supports for everyone too?

Um, and, and then just, you know, finding bilingual teachers, I think, uh, finding educators has been. Our biggest challenge.

Superintendent Choudhury: Got it. Got it. Let's go on to my last question that I asked. I call it the million-dollar question. So, Avner if I told you that you have a million dollars. To spend at your school, what would you spend it on?

What would you spend it on in your school to, to, to make it better? If you had a million dollars and you had to spend a million dollars, what would you go shopping with for the million dollars to support those are Chavez and even becoming that much better. We know that you will not spend it on bathrooms because the bathrooms are fine.

So, let's go on to the next things that you would spend it on.

Avner Adepetu: Transportation mostly. I also spend it on most things, but transportation.

Superintendent Choudhury: So, tell me why. Say a little more about transportation. Why would you spend it on transportation?

Avner Adepetu: Because the car riders, there's a busy road outside the school, so it's hard to come inside the school.

And as well, the buses take, sometimes they take five hours to get to all the stops because of a shortage of bus drivers. And also, there's a lot of traffic, and people, they just get sick of the traffic, so they start, um, banking into cars.

Superintendent Choudhury: Anything else you would spend it on? So, you would spend a million dollars to build traffic safety all around your school, and make sure, like, that's where most of your money would go. And that is a very specific detail, and I, it sounds like something that is, needs to be done just to ensure better safety and make it less hectic. Anything else you would spend it on?

Avner Adepetu: Maybe better devices and as well, maybe some maintenance to like clean up the school and all that stuff just to make it a bit better and use the money to raise the teacher's pay and bribe more teachers into coming to the school.

Superintendent Choudhury: Got it. Got it. So, I heard transportation. Upgrading your devices, uh, supporting maintenance, and paying your teachers more, uh, so all of those are good things, um, and, uh, definitely, uh, a lot can go into a million dollars, but definitely it could be spent down really quickly given the needs. Thank you for sharing that.

Miss Adepetu, what would you spend a million dollars on in your school community to make things better if, if you had the ability to do so?

Abiola Adepetu: Um, I agree with Abner, you know, paying the teachers more. I think we all realized the amount of effort and patience that our teachers have during COVID. So, increasing the teachers' pay, increasing, increasing school staff's pay.

is essential. I also would spend more money on security safety. Um, with this day and age, you want to make sure that our Children are always say, I don't know if that will require staff. I don't know if that will require in house police or a better security system. I'm not sure all the details, but just beefing up security to ensure that our Children stay safe. While at school.

Superintendent Choudhury: Got it. Got it. Thank you for sharing that. Isela what would you spend it on?

Isela Vidals: I'm gonna say two things. Um, number one, I think it's building a bigger campus for our school. Um, we have such a small building that sometimes, you know, we have to share spaces and we don't have enough space.

So, building a bigger campus would definitely very beneficial, um, to our school and our community. Our students, um, definitely be. And maybe even like within the bilingual program to building a campus or an area where, you know, we do have the elementary school and then we do have the middle school somewhere closer to the same building where the elementary started.

And that's where we're going to feed our students to, um, that way, you know, we encourage more parents to continue into the program because I think that also sometimes, um, as. You know, students

go through the K to five program and then moving into the middle school program and then into the high school program.

I think that sometimes to with the distances of where the programs are and where the feeding schools are. I think it's sometimes that discourages parents because you're so far away from where they're from. And so, you know, just Wishfully thinking that if we had a campus where we had, you know, all three campuses close by would definitely be very good for immersion.

Um, my second thing would be to provide opportunities for high school students. To have the pathway to become bilingual educators. Uh, I think, you know, we do have a lot of bilingual students that are, you know, I was like, like you, you know, we went through high school and I, we all had that, um, passion for teaching and the passion to help support all the other students who are just like us and continue to flourish and continue.

Um, you know where we immigrated from a different place and I think providing those supports for high school students, um, and have that, um, knowledge that you guys can start the program in high school, and then it'll take you a couple of years and maybe, you know, with, um, scholarships and, you know, tuition reimbursement and, you know, if you work for a county, you know, this many years, you know, our district or would pay, you know, half of your, your, your tuition.

So, I think just providing those opportunities for us, high school students to have those different programs in all high schools, because, you know, I know that in our district, you know, they're, they're, they're. Doing different pathways where they have the dual enrollment with Prince George's Community College where they do have those pathways, but I think providing those opportunities for all the high schools, not just, you know, your selected few schools that have these different programs.

But if all these programs were around all of our high schools, I think it would be very beneficial. We would, we could possibly have more educators, um, I think.

Superintendent Choudhury: All great things. I want to thank you guys as we wind down our episode. I want to just summarize what I heard, right? We are really focused on practices, priorities, and policies, right?

Practices. I heard that, you know, you are a school that is able to teach core content, math, science, English, and history, all of that through both languages. Our, our students are able to, and both languages help you. Each other to be able to learn and master it. As you heard, Avner talked about how Spanish helps you learn English and the ability to also have a lot of cultural competence, right?

That's something that doesn't always appear on a standardized test score, but the ability to. Build that skill in in our fast-diversifying world is absolutely crucial and essential. You know, you, you heard, you know, if you had a chance, I remember mom said it, she said it straight up. She said, "Hey, if you have a chance to have your child learn 2 languages. Why wouldn't you?" Why, why not? Like, don't, don't hold that back. And, and so, and, and there's the power in being able to do that, even if you yourself don't speak that language. Right. And, and so, and, and, and Spanish is one of those languages that is

worldwide. It is a power language, as I like to say, it is something that we all should know a little bit about and in order to navigate the world and.

Yeah. And dual language schools can help us know a lot about it. And so, priorities, right. I heard a lot of different things, but you know, being able to make sure that our schools are properly staffed, our teachers can be paid what they're worth. Cause we're definitely not where we need to be with that.

Our bilingual educators are also crucial to this model. And so, you gotta have, you gotta take a long-range strategy and what is sometimes known as grow your own. So have future high school students become teachers and be able to support them all along the way to make sure that, you know, it could be something, there's an incentive, such as being able to graduate debt free, and then being able to one, say, promise a job, right, and come back going off of what Abner said, being able to say, if you speak two language.

We can promise you more money. We can promise you more opportunities. And so, and you know, one of the things that we also heard today is just like any other school, a dual language immersion school has other challenges, right? They have challenges with space and challenges. With making sure that, you know, schools can be a place where you can get to without having a car accident along the way and being able to handle those things and manage those things.

And so just like every other school, they have their challenges, but unlike many other schools, Cesar Chavez is truly, truly, truly building our next generation of leaders who can think, write, and speak in two languages. And that's a powerful thing. And, and those are the kinds of people I want here in the department.

Those are the kinds of people I want to making policy decisions because we're all going to be better off for it. With that, I really thank you guys for, for being here today. And with that, I want to thank our listeners for tuning in on this episode of Maryland EdCast. And we will make sure that we will keep talking about dual language because multilingualism is an asset, and we are all better for it.

And we cannot sleep on the power of it. And you have my promise as state superintendent, that is something that will be front and center each and every day as I make decisions with the state board of education. Thank you very much.

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