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ELEMENTARY

One Community, One Vision: Excellence

Immersion Parents FAQ

What is language immersion education?

The focus of dual language immersion programs is to help students become proficient in the target language while mastering subject content across all disciplines. In immersion programs, language is not taught as a subject it is the medium in which core instruction is delivered. Research shows the most effective way for children to acquire a second language is to integrate instruction into the standard curriculum children are already learning. Furthermore, students in immersion classrooms outperform students in traditional language classes, do as well as or better than non-immersion students on standardized tests and have a greater appreciation of cultural diversity.

What immersion model is used at our school?

Our instructional delivery model is one-way full Spanish immersion. These programs typically serve children coming from English-speaking homes in an environment where the target language is used exclusively. Content is delivered in the target language, and English Language Arts is introduced in grade 3. The students become bilingual, biliterate and bicultural and are equally proficient in both languages, with near-native fluency in the target language.

I don't speak another language so I won't be able to help my child at home.

The most important thing you can do at home is read to your child in English. Reading in any language supports the acquisition of reading skills such as fluency, vocabulary building, and comprehension. Your child's homework should support what he has learned in class, so students should be able to tackle the assignment on their own. You will be able to identify what skill is being addressed and support learning in the skill, even if you can only help in English. Homework should not be a struggle if it is, please talk with your child's teacher.

What else can I do to help?

There is a lot you can do! Be a strong parent advocate. Start an immersion parent group to support and educate one another, share successes, challenges and ideas to make the program outstanding at your school. Recruit for your school. Spread the word. Tell all your friends what you know about the program. Post it on your Facebook wall. It will be important for the health of the program at your child's school to maintain healthy numbers in the immersion classrooms. Your school should have a waitlist at all times so that any vacancies are immediately filled. Fundraise for a bilingual

library a school can never have enough Spanish books. Host a holiday book drive. Purchase books for the classroom or school library and encourage other parents to do the same.

Also, check in with your teacher regarding volunteer activities. It is important that volunteers maintain the no English in the immersion classroom rule to prevent inconsistent practices and to build the children's confidence that they can learn to understand in the immersion language. We don't want adult visitors or volunteers to send the message that speaking English is an option in the immersion classroom. Here are some ideas for volunteers who do not speak the target language:

- Select activities and games in which a volunteer may be able to help in the classroom using only non-verbal communication.
- Provide tasks that can be completed outside of the classroom, such as materials preparation, bulletin board preparation and newsletter formatting.
- After English instruction has been introduced, suggest after school one-on-one or small group tutoring for children struggling with English language arts concepts.

How will I know if my child is making progress in English and Spanish?

Learners in the Spanish Immersion Program will be assessed in their mastery of the curriculum. This content mastery will be reported to parents via progress reports and report cards. Three times a year our students will be administered NWEA MAP (Measure of Academic Progress) in English. Testing in MAP is from K-5th Grade beginning in English in K-2. The state assessment, STAAR, will also be administered in grades 3-5. In addition to classroom assessments that measure content knowledge, Every Spanish Immersion student K-5 will also be given a Spanish Reading Assessment at the beginning, middle, and end of year.

What supports are available if my child struggles in the program?

Tiered intervention supports are available to all students. Following the national Response to Intervention (RTI) model, the student's first level of support is the classroom teacher. Teachers will provide additional instructional interventions to promote academic success. This support may increase or decrease based on the student's response to the intervention. If the student experiences success, interventions may be continued, or the child may move to a monitored status. If the child continues to have difficulty, additional classroom interventions, or specialized services may be provided, increasing the tiered support. Interventions beyond those provided by the classroom teacher will focus on the native language.

My child will be in second grade next year. Can he/she join the immersion program?

Admission can either occur in Pre K or Kindergarten in full immersion programs, new students are not admitted beyond the first 6 weeks of Kindergarten.

Is an immersion program only appropriate for high-performing students?

Research shows that immersion education can be effective for a wide variety of learners, including academically/intellectually gifted students, native English speakers, students with some exceptionality and students from varying socioeconomic backgrounds.

Will my child be able to speak English in class until she learns enough vocabulary to communicate?

In Kindergarten, you will often hear children speaking or responding to teachers in English. However, their teachers will be speaking only in the target language to them, using a lot of gestures and tools to convey messages. Good immersion teachers will encourage new language learners to respond in the target language by giving them the needed vocabulary to mimic. Teachers will not revert to English unless safety or emergency necessitates. Good immersion teachers, by the middle of first grade, will insist on no English in the immersion classroom. Students will quickly realize an easy way out if they are able to speak any English (except in emergencies) with their teacher.