

Special Immersion Program at Open House

Oct. 10, 2000

At this year's Open House, we offered a special opportunity for parents and families to meet, without their kids, and ask questions of the kindergarten and first grade immersion teachers in English. For many of the parents it was the first time they had gotten to hear their children's Spanish immersion teachers speak in English since they always speak Spanish when the children are present. After the meeting, the parents retrieved their children from the gym and went with them to the immersion classrooms to hear and see what exciting things they've been doing so far this year in Spanish.

Here are some highlights from the meeting:

Maria (kindergarten Spanish immersion teacher) reported that the kids are doing an excellent job adjusting to the classroom routines. Many are beginning to use Spanish words (such as "I have to go to el baño [the bathroom].")

Dolly (1st grade Spanish immersion teacher) reported that things are going really well now. It was a little hard at the beginning of first grade because the children felt frustrated [i.e. not being able to understand everything in Spanish]. Now they are getting into the routine and can say things in Spanish, such as where they are going next (e.g., to music, PE, etc.).

Q: Is there a protocol for parent/teacher communications, for example, when a parent is working in the classroom or has a question?

A: (Dolly) Yes. We need to step outside the classroom to speak English (with no children present).

Q: Do you have suggestions for what we can do to help our kids in Spanish without putting pressure on them?

A: (Maria) They love reading books and listening to music. You can do anything they like or enjoy. Just don't pressure them to speak, especially at the early stage, which is called the "Silent Period."

Q: We have some favorite videos and tapes in Spanish. Is there some way to share these?

A: Yes, we can compile a list of resources and make them available to families.

Q: We lived six years in Spain, but it's hard now for our child to keep up her Spanish. Is there a way to reinforce the Spanish?

A: Yes, make it play-oriented.

Q: It's difficult to know what's going on in the classroom. Could we have a newsletter?

A: (Dolly) Yes, we'll be sending out updates every two weeks.

Q: How are the kids managing the transition from class to class?

A: (Maria) We review their take-home folders each morning and pass on any notes you send to the appropriate teacher. We are exchanging information with each other every day. The kids need to bring their folders back to school each day. (Margretta, 1st grade English teacher) The kids are being quite responsible with their folders.

Q: What Math skills are the children learning?

A: (Maria) In kindergarten we're working on patterns, number sense, and graphing. We'll send a letter home each week telling what we're working on.

Q: How will the Parent/Teacher conferences work?

A: This first conference will be just for adults (no kids) so that you can meet with both teachers (English and Spanish) and speak freely in English. Since we're doing joint conferences, we've added extra days in November to allow for the extra time needed.

Final Comment from a parent: My child is doing great with the transition. He loves it. Recently he was showing a grocery clerk how high he could count in Spanish.

Reported by Michele Anciaux