

DUAL IMMERSION AT CTA LIBERTY ELEMENTARY

In today's world, increased conversations about globalization permeate the work force. Dual language immersion education is taking center stage as the most effective and efficient program for preparing linguistically and culturally competent students who can successfully compete in a complex global economy. To achieve this goal for CTA Liberty students, the Spanish Dual Immersion curriculum model engages students in two different languages throughout their elementary school learning experience: Spanish and English. In order to maximize proficiency in writing, reading and speaking of the second language, the plan will be to offer the Spanish language acquisition program in junior high at ACP Erie and ACP Oakland; discussions with Willis Jr. High, Perry High School, and Chandler High School have already begun. The expansion implementation will begin at junior high as we move our first group of students into 5th grade.

Why Spanish?

Spanish is spoken in 21 countries and on four continents. It serves as an official language of the United Nations, the European Union, World Trade Organization, and North American Free Trade Agreement.

It is the third most commonly used language on the Internet after English and Chinese, and the third most spoken language in the world.

Why Begin a Second Language in Primary Grades?

The young child's brain is developmentally ready to learn language. A child has twice as many synapses (connections) in the brain as an adult. The young brain must use these connections or lose them. There is a window of opportunity in which a child learns a first language normally. After this period, the brain becomes slowly less receptive. Young children can learn as many spoken languages as you can allow them to hear systematically and regularly at the same time. Children just have this capacity. When children wait until high school to start studying a foreign language, the job is much harder.

Why is CUSD Choosing Immersion?

There is no other type of instruction, short of living in a second-language environment, that is as successful as a dual immersion program to help students attain high levels of second language proficiency and well-developed cultural skills, while maximizing their achievement in their primary language. The cognitive, socio-cultural, and economic benefits are great. Young children especially thrive in this type of instructional environment. Economically, the Spanish dual immersion model is also the least expensive and most sustainable way to deliver second language instruction.

Language immersion is an approach to second language instruction in which the usual learning activities are conducted in a second language. This means that the new language is the medium of instruction as well as the object of instruction. Immersion classes follow the same curricula, and in some instances, use the same materials (translated into the target language) as those used in the non-immersion schools of their district. The goal of the language immersion classroom is language acquisition.

In the early years, immersion teachers realize that students will not understand everything they say. Teachers use body language, visuals, manipulatives, exaggerated facial expressions, and expressive intonation to communicate meaning. In kindergarten, it is common for students to speak English with each other and when responding to their teacher. As the years progress, students naturally use more of the immersion language. (Fortune and Tedick, 2003)

According to the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA), at the University of Minnesota, immersion programs are the most effective type of foreign language program. Students can be expected to reach higher levels of second language proficiency than students in other school-based language programs.

A great deal of research has centered on second language acquisition in various school settings. Over the past thirty years, due in large part to the success of immersion programs, there has been a shift away from teaching language in isolation and toward integrating language and content. This shift is based on four principles:

- Language is acquired most effectively when it is learned in a meaningful social context. For young learners, the school curriculum provides a natural basis for second language learning, offering them the opportunity to communicate about what they know and what they want to know, as well as about their feelings and attitudes.
- Important and interesting content provides a motivating context for learning the communicative functions of the new language. Young children are not interested in learning language that serves no meaningful function.
- First language acquisition, cognition and social awareness go hand in hand in young children. By integrating language and content, second language learning, too, becomes an integral part of a child's social and cognitive development.

Formal and functional characteristics of language change from one context to another. An integrated language and content model in an elementary school setting provides a wide variety of contexts in which to use the second language. Immersion students typically develop greater cognitive flexibility, demonstrating increased attention control, better memory, and superior problem solving skills as well as an enhanced understanding of their primary language. Current research shows that being bilingual boosts brainpower.

Is Language Immersion a New Concept?

Immersion has been used in Canada for over 35 years. Immersion schools in the United States are gaining popularity as an effective method of language learning. In reality the immersion concept has been around for thousands of years since it is the way all of us learn our native language. In immersion, language learning is done in such a natural way that students are comfortable with the instruction. Children are excellent mimics. They are eager, curious and less self-conscious than adults in experimenting with and acquiring new languages.

What are the Cognitive Impacts?

There is a well-established positive relationship between thinking skills and being a fully proficient bilingual who maintains both languages. National data trends show students in K-6 immersion programs score at or above their non-immersion peers on standardized tests. Fully proficient bilinguals outperform monolinguals in the areas of divergent thinking, pattern

recognition, problem solving, awareness of verbal and non-verbal cues, listening, and have a greater ability in learning additional languages.

Is Immersion a Realistic Option for All Children?

At CTA Liberty, the Spanish immersion program will be launched starting in first grade in 2015-2016. Kindergarteners will receive 30 minutes of instruction in Spanish twice each week to prepare them for the program in 2016-2017. Sixth grade students will also receive a Spanish class each day to promote an easier transition to the junior high and high school Spanish programs. Open enrollments will be available based on interest and program availability.

In 2016-2017, the Spanish immersion program will be available to incoming kindergarteners, continuing first graders, and continuing second graders.

Our goal is to target families who value proficiency in a second language at an early age and commit to program progression.

Immersion is not for everyone, however. Many parents want children to master the English language before learning a second language. Many students don't have a passion for language; their passions lie elsewhere. There will be students who want to study French, German, Japanese who will wait until middle school or high school to begin a language.

Parents know that each child is unique, and children develop talents in many areas: music, language, numbers, visual arts, movement, science, and social intelligence. Language is only one of the Multiple Intelligences human beings possess. At Liberty, there are many paths to excel, wherever a student's talents and academic interests lie. Parents are encouraged to focus on the educational program that will be a good fit for their child. No matter what choice they make, it is a good choice if that choice is based on the temperament, learning style and other needs of each child. Each child will benefit from the Chandler Unified School District's excellent teachers in all of its many educational programs.

The Spanish immersion program is designed for children of families who do not speak Spanish. Home-school communication will be conducted in English and families are not expected to speak Spanish at home.

What percentage of class time would you say is expected to be in the Spanish language?

In the first grade program, instruction will occur in a 50%/50%-Spanish/English daily instructional model. In Mrs. Molly Garrison's classroom, she will instruct the English language arts in English for 50% of the day. Students will then spend the other 50% of the day in Mrs. Kristie Moreno's classroom receiving instruction in Spanish for math, science, and social studies. Immersion classrooms will be held to the same content standards and curriculum as all other classrooms. Students will naturally ask questions in English, but teachers will most often respond in the second language (with many gestures, pictures, and visual cues). Students will have the normal specials schedule that include, music, physical education, technology and media center time with specialists in those areas; specials are taught in English.

How do Children Learn English along with Spanish?

The dual immersion instruction will take place in a 50/50% - Spanish/English daily instructional format. Students may use English during their Spanish instructional time, but their classroom teachers will respond in Spanish. As students become more accustomed to hearing and understanding the Spanish language, they are encouraged to express themselves in Spanish. Direct instruction in Spanish/English and reading strategies begin in the primary grades. Students work on spelling rules, parts of speech and writing skills in both languages.

Long-Term Effects of Immersion Education?

A growing body of research on immersion education has shown that immersion students consistently meet or exceed academic expectations in the following areas:

- **Second language skills:** Immersion students by far outperform students in traditional foreign language classes. They are functionally proficient in the immersion language and are able to communicate according to their age and grade level.
- **English language skills:** In the early years of English instruction (K-2), there may be a lag in English reading and writing skills. By 5th grade, however, immersion students do as well or better than students in English-only classes.
- **Content areas:** Immersion students achieve in academic areas as well as students in English-only programs.
- **Cultural sensitivity:** Immersion students are more aware of and show positive attitudes towards other cultures. A survey of top international business executives done by the Center for Applied Second Language Studies at the University of Oregon in 2007 showed that multinational businesses are looking for potential high-level employees with cultural sensitivities and the skill to perform in a foreign environment. “What really counts for multinational businesses is employees’ ability to effectively communicate in a variety of cultures and contexts. Bilingual employees are valuable, not only for their language skills, but also for their ability to interact effectively with people around the world in either their first or second language.”

Assessment

Students in the Spanish immersion program will participate in state assessments assessing all content areas in English. Students are expected to study the same content-area curriculum and reach the same level of proficiency as do students who are not in an immersion program. Formative assessments will be used to monitor day-to-day progress in the target language. We will use the NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements to assess progress in Spanish proficiency. Summative Language Fluency Assessments include interviews at the K-2 level and online or paper assessments in grades 3-6.

Immersion at CTA Liberty Elementary/Junior High/High School Program Strand

The CTA Liberty Elementary Spanish Language Immersion Model will be unique in Chandler Unified, as a school-within-a-school option. The program will begin in 2015-16 with two first grade classrooms. Each successive year, another grade level will be added through sixth grade. Families who enroll their children in first grade in 2015-16 are asked to make at least a 6-year commitment to the immersion program. Families who enroll their children in kindergarten for

2016-17 and thereafter are asked to make at least a 7-year commitment to the immersion program. The program goal will be that our immersion students will successfully progress through twelfth grade, and the Chandler Unified School District is committed to supporting world language growth through graduation.

At grade 7, students move to a middle school where students transition to partial immersion. Instruction in the second language will occur in the students' social studies and world language classes at junior high school. The rest of the junior high school class instruction will be in English.

At grade 9 students will have a very strong foundation in the second language class and will have likely have one class in their target language, with the rest in English. We anticipate that many students who stay with Spanish through high school will also graduate with significant progress toward an undergraduate minor in Spanish at ASU as well as at several western area colleges and universities.

Key Components of the Elementary Program

- The second language is the language of instruction for 50% of all classroom instruction in kindergarten through grade 6.
- The curriculum parallels the district curriculum in all subjects. Students will be taught to read, speak and learn in the second language.
- Students will continue to be taught the other subjects in the second language through 6th grade.
- After two or three years in an immersion program, students demonstrate fluency and their comprehension skills are comparable to those of native speakers the same age.
- Research, however, has found that immersion students' second language lacks the same grammatical accuracy, variety and complexity produced by native speakers. To attain that skill level is a long-term process. Native-like proficiency in every skill area is unlikely.

Long Term Benefits

- Immersion students are better prepared for the global community and job markets where a second language is an asset. Why not give our children an increased opportunity to compete in this drastically evolving economic and cultural landscape?

Frequently Asked Questions

Is the Program Open to All Kindergarten Students?

Yes. Generally, any kindergarten child whose family values learning a second language may enroll in the program. The immersion programs will be designed for students to develop proficiency in a second language and not for students who are already fluent in one of the immersion languages. All students are eligible to participate, but students with language processing disabilities are less likely to be successful in a second language and an immersion program may be inappropriate for those students.

If I Don't Enroll My Child in Kindergarten, Can I Enroll My Child Later, Perhaps First or Second Grade?

Entrance to the immersion program is generally restricted to those who enter in the beginning of the program at kindergarten. However, students may enter in later grades provided they meet specific standards and pass appropriate assessments demonstrating appropriate proficiency in the second language. For example, students who transfer into the District from another immersion program should have the appropriate language proficiency to enter in an upper grade; however, an immersion setting would not be as effective for a 3rd grader who has never had any education in the second language.

How Many Students Would Be Enrolled in Language Immersion?

We would have a capacity of 50-52 students in the two classrooms.

What Role do Parents Play in the Classroom/School?

A long-term commitment is essential for children to experience the great benefits an immersion education yields. Parents can support their child in these ways:

- Make a long-term commitment to immersion.
- Develop an understanding of immersion education.
- Provide experiences outside of school to develop English language skills.
- Encourage the use of the second language outside of school.
- Most importantly, be sure your child attends school every day.
- Volunteer at school and in your child's classroom.

Various volunteer opportunities will exist in the program, just like the normal English-only classroom experiences. Parent involvement in school activities shows the child that education is very important to the family. Outside of school, parents are asked to read to or with their child every day in English, which is the same advice given to non-immersion students' families. At every grade level, reading to and with the child at home is imperative for the child's language development.

Are Teachers Native Speakers?

Some immersion teachers may be native speakers, although this is not a requirement. Teachers must be highly qualified and have a valid Arizona teaching license.

Will you Require Elementary Language Immersion Teachers to have a Certificate in Language Immersion Education?

Language immersion teachers will have to be certified in elementary education and also demonstrate a high level of proficiency in the second language.

Links and Sources

<http://www.actfl.org/>

<http://www.carla.umn.edu/>

<http://utahspanishdualimmersion.org/>

