

About language immersion programs

Language immersion is an educational approach to second language learning in which the second language is not only the medium of instruction but also the object of instruction. Immersion programs offer an early start to second language learning at an optimal developmental period when young brains are keenly receptive to language acquisition. Learning a second language early provides students with the time to reach high levels of language proficiency, acquire native-like pronunciation, appreciate other cultures and gain marketable skills and for the 21st century global economy.

Bilingual speakers achieve above average test scores on standardized English tests and SAT's. Likewise, those who are studying English as a second language (ESL), and continue to study their native language while learning English "excel academically" (*Dual Language Spanish Immersion Program* pamphlet.) Language immersion programs fine tune listening skills, and promote critical thinking and creative problem solving.

Immersion programs are "school-within-a-school programs in neighborhood schools and immersion students achieve the same academically as their monolingual English peers. Students have a 'team' of two teachers, one an English speaking teacher and the other, a speaker of the target language. (Spanish, Japanese, or Russian) For one half of each day, students are immersed in the second language while receiving instruction in the local district curriculum. Students learn content, i.e. math, science, social studies, while becoming bilingual and biliterate in a second language (Spanish, Japanese, or Russian.)

Families are an important component to the parent, student, teacher 'team' by supporting the program and actively participating with their children in the bilingual curriculum. A parent orientation is often required for those who have children entering an immersion program.

The elementary programs for all language immersion programs continue into middle and high schools. A minimum seven-year commitment is required for veritable results, but a twelve-year education is best! The immersion process must start in Kindergarten or at the latest, during the first semester of first grade for English speakers, though older bilingual students who meet literacy standards may enter on a space available basis through the lottery process.