

## **K-12 Heritage Program**

### **Literacy Squared/Southwest Middle School/Sweetwater Union High School District**

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Languages/Dialects taught: Spanish, English  
Grades: 6/7-8

**Purposes and goals of the program:** To maintain and improve the Spanish-language ability of heritage-language Spanish speakers and other community members who are not Spanish-dominant, as they learn English

#### **Type of program**

- Immersion
- Bilingual
- Content-based

Founded: 2001

#### **Program Description**

For five years, the program was funded by the US Department of Education. Now it is part of the curriculum under the district and state.

**Parents' expectations for the program:** Parents expect that their children will be fluent and literate at a high level in both English and Spanish.

**Staff's expectations for the program:** Teachers are expected to teach at a rigorous level in the language of the class; students take three out of six classes, 100% in Spanish.

Our students perform higher academically than their peers; they and their parents are proud to communicate in Spanish, which is not a language of high social status in this country.

#### **Students**

First-generation immigrants 25%

Second-generation immigrants 25%  
Third-generation immigrants 25%  
Children of interethnic marriages 22%  
Non-ethnic background 3%

**Countries of origin:** Mexico, United States

**Total student enrollment:** 110

**How the program identifies who is a heritage speaker:** Identifies students who are of any ethnicity with Spanish as the heritage language. The program administers a home language survey: Parents fill out a questionnaire regarding language(s) used in the home; students are given standardized and program-specific assessments of their Spanish.

#### **Assessment**

- Placement test
- Teacher observation

**Percentage of students who complete the program:** 95%

**Percentage of students who continue to study the heritage language after completing the program:** 75%

**Possible reasons for students withdrawing from the program:** Most commonly they move away. Some students cannot keep up with rigorous classes in Spanish.

**Students' attitudes toward the language varieties they speak:** They are proud and feel that it is a great advantage. They are also, for the most part, confident of their ability in both Spanish and English.

#### **Staff**

**Number of staff in program:** 8

**Languages in which staff members are proficient:**

- Bilingual English/Spanish (5)
- Monolingual English (3)

All the bilingual teachers have been tested by the state and are highly proficient.

#### **Credentials:**

- Teacher certification from California: Bilingual certificate of competence, (Bilingual) Cross-cultural Language and Academic Development; mathematics, English language arts, Spanish, general science, social studies, Spanish for Spanish speakers
- BA, All teachers have a bachelor's degree in their discipline.
- MA in Education (Policy Studies in Language and Cross-Cultural Education); K-12 Administration

- Doctorate, Education (Policy Studies in Language and Cross-Cultural Education)

**Professional development opportunities teachers have:** GLAD (Guided Language Acquisition Design), SLOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol); many district-sponsored workshops

**Professional development opportunities teachers need:** Language teaching methods

### Instruction

**Hours per week students receive instruction:** 30  
Students are grouped by grade (7th grade and 8th grade).

### Language Skills

English skills

- Listening
- Speaking
- Reading
- Writing

Heritage Spanish Skills

- Listening
- Speaking
- Reading
- Writing

**Levels of language proficiency students reach by the end of the program:** Most become proficient at the advanced level in both English and Spanish. They take Advanced-Placement courses in both languages starting in the ninth grade. Our first cohort has just passed the California High School Exit Examination on their first attempt in the tenth grade. This is in comparison with 67% of the total school population.

### Culture

Aspects taught:

- History
- Customs
- Traditions/beliefs
- Folktales
- Social and cultural norms
- Cultural appropriateness
- Literature

**Other culture-related topics or activities:** Students are aware of both of their cultures and have appropriate behavior and attitudes.

**Student identity the program fosters:** Students are proud to identify with both of their cultures.

### **Methodologies**

**Methodologies and instructional strategies:** We use sheltered language content instruction; teachers have been taught to utilize all relevant language teaching strategies in their content courses.

### **Materials**

Textbooks: We use the textbooks adopted by the State of California and the Sweetwater Union High School District in both English and Spanish.

Other materials used for instruction: Teachers, particularly of World Cultures and Spanish Language Arts, use many supplemental resources in Spanish.

Technology used in the program: In Spanish Language Arts, World Cultures and English Language Arts, students create PowerPoint presentations. In Mathematics, students use a supplementary computer-based program. These programs are in Spanish, except for English Language Arts.

### **Assessment**

- Weekly quizzes
- Chapter tests
- Mid-term tests
- Final exams
- School/District developed tests
- State testing:
- Standardized test: California State STAR Assessment, CAT/6, SABE/2, SUPERA, Spanish LAS
- Teacher's observations
- Performance-based tasks
- Portfolios
- Other: Students take the CAHSEE to graduate from High School.

### **Articulation**

- The program is connected to local schools and receives students from Nestor Language Academy, other South Bay Union School District schools, and other

schools in San Diego County. Students continue their study at Southwest High School; 50% stay in the program in HS.

- The program is also articulated with schools outside the United States.
- Other: Our first group of students has just passed the tenth grade; they are on the way to good universities, taking Advanced Placement and other rigorous classes with success.

**Home-school connections and parent involvement:** Parents are vitally involved in every aspect of our program. They have helped to keep it on track when administration tried to reduce the amount of instruction in Spanish. We meet formally once a month with parents; parents visit and call frequently; teachers also call parents and invite them for parent conferences to discuss their children's progress or any problems that they may have.

**Opportunities students have for using the language and developing cultural knowledge outside the program:** Our school is in a highly Spanish-speaking area. Students find opportunities to use their Spanish, for example, helping to translate for monolingual persons in stores and other commercial venues. Parents are proud of their students' participation in this way in the community.

#### **Financial support**

**US government:** We had a grant from the US Dept. of Ed. That grant ended this year. It was mainly used for professional development of teachers. A group of three teachers solicited the federal grant.

**Other types of support:** With the end of the federal grant, we solicited and will now receive a minimal amount of district support. We also get support from parents and community members when our students have fundraisers to go on trips or take part in other events. We get advice and moral support from the Policy Studies Department at San Diego State University.

**Assistance or collaboration the program would like to receive from other entities:** We would like to get more support from the district. We are disappointed in the amount of support that they give our program, given the successes that we have had, especially with students with limited English.

**System for graduating students and granting credit:** We graduate all of our students from the program. We have seen that students who were struggling in middle school are successful in high school if they stay with the program. The students' overall academic achievement has been monitored for four years. We have found that they achieve above their peers in the district and the state.

**Research on or evaluation of the program:** Our program is evaluated by Dr. Kathryn Lindholm-Leary, who is one of the principal authorities on dual-language education. We present the findings in conference presentations and published articles.

**Challenges the program has experienced:** A major challenge has been uneven support by the school and district administrations. We have observed that this coincides with the low socio-economic status of our students and their families. We have learned that our greatest support comes from the parents of our students. Many of these people are struggling to survive, but they don't want their children to lose their heritage language as they learn English, which is what happens if the students are in the regular school program. These are enlightened people, and they are our greatest resource besides their children. Another thing that we have learned is that we need to be very strong in the face of the English-only attitude that prevails, despite much research to the contrary. The other great resource, which is highly important, is the teachers, who interact with the students every day. Teachers have to be committed to the program and willing to do the extra work involved (curriculum development, planning meetings, etc.).