



Community-Based Program

Background Information

Institution: El Círculo Juvenil de Cultura

Program address: Department of Modern Languages, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA 15213-3890

Telephone: (412) 268-1895

Contact person

Name: Mariana Achugar

Title: Associate Professor

Email: machugar@andrew.cmu.edu

Telephone: (412) 268-1895

Fax: (412) 268-1328

Languages/dialects taught: Spanish

Grades taught: Grades 1-5/6

Program Description

Purposes and goals of the program: El Círculo Juvenil de Cultura supports the maintenance and development of Spanish as a heritage language and cultural literacy for children of Latino families in the Pittsburgh community. The program provides a space where families and children can develop social networks with other Latino families in the community.

Other goals are the following:

- Create a service learning opportunity for Spanish heritage- and native-language undergraduate and graduate students at CMU, and for local Spanish-speaking teachers and artists
- Establish a community network of parents, students, educators, and other community members and service providers, businesses, and educational institutions

- Create a laboratory for research on heritage language and culture development in the United States -- There is a dearth of good heritage language and culture educational materials and professional development opportunities.

El Círculo promotes heritage language and culture development by creating an environment in which bilingual children can explore and maintain their identities and cultures. The program aims to strengthen students' awareness of the relationship between the arts and society through music, poetry, stories, songs, theater, art, and dances. Through interaction with Spanish-speaking professional teacher-facilitators and college students, children are encouraged to develop and be proud of their heritage language and cultures and appreciate the social and cultural value of being bilingual-bicultural citizens of their new country, the United States.

Type of program: Heritage language program founded by a university

Program origin: The program was founded on September 2007 by faculty members of the Modern Languages Program at Carnegie Mellon University who are members of the Hispanic community in Pittsburgh.

Parents

Parents' expectations for the program: Parent expectations include maintaining a space where children can develop and use Spanish in a naturalistic environment while they make friends and learn about their family's culture.

Staff

Instructors' and administration's expectations for the program: To promote heritage language development and cultural pride in students and to help them develop a positive bilingual identity. Instructors at El Círculo work closely with the local arts community to use local resources and construct a space for community members to gather and create projects.

Students

Students: About 12-24 students

1st generation, 50%
2nd generation, 50%

Countries of origin: Spain, Venezuela, Colombia, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Uruguay, Argentina, Peru, Mexico, and the United States

How the program identifies heritage speakers: The program considers heritage speakers to be those who identify themselves as heritage speakers.

Students' expectations of the program: Students expect to produce a project at the end of the program and to be able to share their achievements and projects with others. Students also arrive expecting to play and interact with the curriculum and establish friendships.

Instructors

Number of instructors in the program: 2

Languages in which instructors are proficient: Spanish and English

Professional development opportunities instructors have: Instructors may attend a short summer professional development program to develop skills and plan courses.

Instruction

Total contact hours per week: 2 hours once a week

Student grouping: Students are placed into multi-age and multi-level groups.

Language skills

Skills developed by the program: There is no explicit language instruction. The workshops are project-based. The program offers opportunities for the students to read, though some children are still learning to read, so this emphasis is not as strong yet.

Heritage language skills: Listening, speaking, and writing

Culture

Aspects of culture taught: Culture instruction is an integral part of the work. Students carry out "ethnographic" interviews of their families to learn about their culture; read books; see films; and invite guests to come in to talk about music, art, and other cultural practices.

Methodologies

Methodologies and instructional strategies used in the program: Project-based, theater, experiential learning, language experience approach

Materials

Other materials used for instruction: Authentic materials: songs, music, poetry, plays, art, as well as student-generated materials

Technology used for instruction: Technology is used to support the students' project development (video, computers, etc).

Assessment

Assessments used to evaluate students' progress: There is no language assessment. All students are accepted into the program and are provided with the opportunity to improve their language skills by working with more advanced peers and tutors. There is an assessment for the final project performance.

Articulation

Financial support the program receives: The program receives support from cultural organizations, tuition, universities, and foundations.

Special challenges

Challenges the program has experienced: Our biggest challenges include locating adequate funding, publicizing the program to the community, and finding more instructors.

Additional comments: We would like to receive more support in our publicity efforts. For now we are depending mostly on volunteers.