



Community-Based Program

Background Information

Institution: Escola Portuguesa Novos Horizontes

Program address: 1130 Dupont St., Toronto Ontario, Canada M6H 2A2

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Contact person

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Title: Teacher

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Languages/dialects taught: Portuguese and English

Grades taught: K-12 and adults

Program Description

Purposes and goals of the program: Escola Portuguesa Novos Horizontes allows students to have a formal education in their mother tongue. The program is especially useful for students who lack opportunities to speak the mother tongue outside of the household. The program provides the opportunity for students to become biliterate and bilingual and strives to improve students' and literacy skills in Portuguese with formal education in the language.

Type of program: Heritage Portuguese

Program origin: The program was founded in 1993.

Parents

Parents' expectations for the program: Most parents show a high interest in taking advantage of the opportunity to give their children formal contact with Portuguese. Parents appreciate the formal aspect associated with the instruction students receive and enjoy the social aspects of the program as well. Students constantly interact with

other students, forming friendships and ties that allow them to express themselves in Portuguese.

Staff

Instructors' and administration's expectations for the program: Instructors expect to offer an education that is focused on quality. Rather than overwhelming students with a very intensive approach, the instructors expect to be able to focus on the individual needs of students and gear the course to their levels. Instructors expect to create links within the community by hosting traditional dances and events. They also aim to maintain a professional learning community among teachers and students to allow for the exchange of ideas and practices so that they can be improved upon.

Students

Students: About 80-100 students

How the program identifies heritage speakers: A heritage speaker is someone with at least one parent of Portuguese descent, or someone with a cultural, family, or linguistic link to Portuguese.

Possible reasons for student withdrawal: Students tend to withdraw as they become older and enter the higher levels, because they feel confident with their skills. The program hopes to communicate to the older students that cultural enrichment is an important part of language learning, to encourage their continued involvement. Other reasons for withdrawal include moving to a different area and time conflicts.

Students' expectations of the program: Students expect to relate to other students and the curriculum through a shared cultural background. This connection is enjoyable and fun for the students.

Instructors

Number of instructors in the program: 7

Languages in which instructors are proficient: Portuguese, English, French

Proficiency level: All instructors are fluent speakers of Portuguese and English, and some are proficient in French.

Credentials: Instructors have been trained in Early Children Education in Portugal. There are also two elementary school teachers and two high school teachers on staff from Portugal.

Professional development opportunities instructors have: Instructors have access to professional development programs offered by the Toronto Catholic District School

Board of Education and the Toronto District School Board. There is also a connection with an educational coordinator at the Portuguese Consulate in Toronto.

Professional development opportunities instructors need: The program mostly needs new and creative educational materials. The books that have been ordered from Portugal do not always meet the needs of the students. A demand for materials that meet the educational needs of heritage Portuguese speakers is high, so the program has been developing their own materials for the students.

Instruction

Total contact hours per week: 4 hours a week on Saturdays

Student grouping: Students are grouped by age at first, and then by language skills as they become older.

Language skills

Skills developed by the program: The program concentrates on introducing a lot of reading.

Heritage language skills: Reading, writing, oral communication

English skills: English is only used to facilitate the learning of Portuguese.

Additional comments: Students are not discouraged from using both languages.

Culture

Aspects of culture taught: History, music, traditional folk dance, folklore, food

Kind of student identity program fosters: The program seeks to foster student confidence with speaking the language. There is often a disconnect between more fluent speakers and second- or third-generation speakers, who may be less confident about speaking Portuguese within the community. The program tries to create a place where students at different levels can help each other feel comfortable and self-assured when speaking. In this way, students are more able to explore their culture and identity.

Methodologies

Methodologies and instructional strategies used in the program: For each level materials are adapted to meet the needs of students. The program uses a number of visual and interactive materials, such as music and dance, to keep the students interested and engaged.

Materials

Other materials used for instruction: Most of the materials used are textbooks developed by Portuguese publishing companies. Year to year the textbooks are either changed, adapted, or enriched by the instructors. Materials are modified to create very thematic lesson plans relating to holidays, seasons, and events (e.g. Halloween, Christmas, Autumn).

Technology used for instruction: Instructors use the Internet to find resources for more materials.

Assessment

Assessments used to evaluate students' progress: Grades and report cards are given 3 times a year. At the end of each year there is a final examination. More routine assessment depends on the instructor and may include quizzes, spelling tests, oral communication, and reading skills assessments.

Articulation

How the program develops home/school connections or promotes parent involvement: Parents are always invited to program events, and there is a close relationship with the instructor. For Christmas, the program hosts a dinner party that welcomes all parents. Parents are also involved in the classes by helping to prepare plays and songs and by presenting and speaking to the students on various topics.

Opportunities for using the heritage language and developing cultural knowledge outside the program: Outside the program, a lot of the students play on local soccer teams and are involved in folklore activities. Parents take great pride in being able to speak to other families in Portuguese and believe strongly in making connections with the Portuguese community, and they encourage their children to speak with others regularly.

What the program has in place

Financial support the program receives: The program is funded by tuition fees.

Solicitation of funding: The program tries to advertise its presence to the public and to increase the number of students.

Assistance or funding the program would like to receive: The program would like to receive more recognition and help from the Canadian or the Portuguese government.

How students graduate and/or how they receive credit: Students receive a diploma from the program, though it does not have an official value. Students are prepared to take the Centro de Avaliação de Português Língua Estrangeira (CAPLE) examination

and may receive certification of Portuguese as a second language through this assessment program.

Special challenges

Challenges the program has experienced: The biggest challenge is acquiring materials. It is a challenge to adapt materials to the appropriate ages and language levels. Another challenge is keeping students interested once they reach the higher levels.

Insight: Programs should create their own materials. Our program has created binders that work well with each class. We try to use the most resources from there so that we eventually become independent from materials in Portugal.

Additional comments: We would like to receive support from the community itself. Our program is in a community center, and it is a financial challenge to keep it there. Parents and adults in general in the community should also support the students' efforts and avoid criticizing or correcting them.