



K-12 Program

Background Information

Institution: Beardstown CUSD #15 Dual Language Enrichment Program

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Languages/dialects taught: Spanish

Grades taught: PreK to 5th grade

Program Description

Purposes and goals of the program: To promote additive bilingualism, biliteracy, and multiculturalism for all students including the heritage Spanish speakers. Graduates of Beardstown High School will be well equipped to participate in the multi-lingual life of Beardstown and be prepared to be successful in their chosen careers in an increasing global society.

We do this by:

1. Encouraging parents and community members proficient in other languages to work with their children, and to maintain and develop their heritage language as much as possible
2. Providing high quality instruction in the home language at school whenever possible, and challenging students to acquire English for social and academic purposes

3. Encouraging kindergarten students who speak English at home to acquire Spanish as a second language by voluntarily participating in the dual language program

4. Constantly seeking to improve and expand both our foreign language courses and our English as a second language programs so that we achieve our mission

This mission is founded on the belief that the various language abilities of our students are a wonderful human resource and are vital to the economic and social well being of our community.

Program mission statement: Heritage Spanish speaking & English speaking students (30% Spanish dominant, 40% bilingual, 30% English dominant) are integrated in the same classrooms for at least 80% of the school day. Students receive at least 50% of their instruction in Spanish. Language Arts in both languages are integrated into content area instruction in Math, Science and Social Studies alternating between languages.

Type of program: This dual language immersion program is a heritage, world language, and transitional bilingual program.

Program origin: The program was founded in 2003 as a heritage and dual language program. The transition to dual Language began gradually and informally. The present model was implemented in the 2006-2007 school year at grades K-3 - Third grade students were then promoted to 4th grade Dual Language and 85 new students started - mostly in Kindergarten, though about 10 new students began in first grade.

Parents

Parents' expectations for the program: Parents expect students to learn to read, write, speak, and understand Spanish for academic purposes while also maintaining grade level academic standards in English.

Staff

Instructors' and administration's expectations for the program: Staff are expected to elevate the status of Spanish at school by promoting its use whenever possible in school and by using it exclusively during Spanish language instructional times.

Students

Students: 30% are first generation immigrants who are primarily from Mexico. 40% are second generation immigrants, balanced bilinguals in English and Spanish when they begin kindergarten. Most students come from Mexico. Some are from El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico.

Total student enrollment is over 300. 210 out of these 300 students (70%) are heritage Spanish speakers. 75 students out of 300 students are in kindergarten, 75 students are

in the 1st grade, 55 students are in the 2nd grade, 45 students are in the 3rd grade, and 60 students are in the 4th grade.

How the program identifies heritage speakers: Heritage language speakers are identified according the results of a "Home Language Survey" administered at enrollment.

Students' expectations of the program: Students expect they will be able to use both English and Spanish at school, at home, and in the community of Beardstown. Older students talk about using their language skills to get a good job or to go to a good college.

Instructors

Number of instructors in the program: 18

Languages in which instructors are proficient: 10 out of the 18 instructors are bilingual in Spanish and English. Eight instructors have varied levels of proficiency in Spanish. The expectation is that all will become endorsed as ESL teachers and continue to improve in Spanish.

Professional development opportunities instructors have: Free tuition for bilingual/ESL endorsement classes are offered on site by a cooperative arrangement with Western Illinois University. In addition Three- four week summer immersion scholarships to study Spanish in Mexico are available to Dual Language teachers, 4-5 teachers per summer)

Instruction

Total contact hours per week: 50% of the school day and 2.5-3 hours per day are instructed in Spanish. Spanish as a separate language class does not exist. Instead, we focus on instructing the content of the Illinois Learning Standards in Spanish. We align instruction to the Spanish Language Arts Standards developed by the WIDA consortium (www.wida.us) and integrate these standards into the instruction of Math, Science, and Social Studies in Spanish.

Student grouping: Spanish-and English-speaking students are integrated for all instruction. Instruction is delivered in cooperative groups, differentiated learning centers, and hands-on practice. Students are often paired with proficient speakers of the language to facilitate peer interactions around academic tasks.

Language skills

Heritage language skills: Listening, speaking, reading, writing, and other skills. Knowledge of the history and geography of the home countries are emphasized as well.

Culture

Aspects of culture taught: We hope to do much more with Art and Music in Spanish related to the home countries of our heritage speakers. Both our Music and Art teachers are going to Mexico for three weeks this summer to develop new lessons and learn Spanish.

Methodologies

Methodologies and instructional strategies used in the program: Content-based language instruction through two-way immersion strategies. These strategies heavily focus on cooperative learning, active discovery learning, and a strict separation of languages (by instructors primarily). Students use Spanish and English regularly to help each other and express their new learning.

Materials

Other materials used for instruction: Saxon Math textbook series. Selections from district Science and Social Studies texts in Spanish are integrated according to themes chosen for each grade level. Other materials include leveled Guided Reading books in Spanish, Reading A-Z.com books which are online resources for printing out take-home books in Spanish.

Assessment

Assessments used to evaluate students' progress: Weekly quizzes, chapter tests, state testing, standardized test (MIDE Spanish reading benchmark assessments, NOELLA online assessments grades 3-5), student self-assessment instruments, teacher's observations, performance-based tasks or assessment, and others. Report card checklists of standards are being developed for kindergarten – Grade 5.

What the program has in place

Financial support the program receives: US government and local/state government

Other support the program receives: Foreign Language Assistance Program (FLAP) and Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE)

Assistance or funding the program would like to receive: We would like to see "Foreign Language" and "Bilingual" researchers join forces and especially begin to develop a common language and vision for promoting multi-lingual and multi-cultural education. We would like to see terms like "American" instead of "Foreign" languages become more widely used - as well as "Heritage" instead of "Native" language speakers. Furthermore we would like to see an integration of the Foreign Language Standards with the TESOL standards.

How students graduate and/or how they receive credit: Students are promoted to the next grade based on achievement of grade-level standards.

Special challenges

Challenges the program has experienced: The "English-only" movement is an outspoken minority that clouds and challenges our efforts. The racial tensions between the English speaking community and Spanish-speaking immigrants are also sometimes a problem. Convincing some heritage families that their children will learn English just as well as they would in English-only programs and convincing many of our families (77% low income) that children can easily learn in two languages is sometimes difficult to do. We need to let all parents know that knowing two languages is a very valuable skill.

Additional comments: I'd like to share with others who are interested in learning more about our program, and people disillusioned by "remedial" bilingual programs that heritage and two-way immersion programs are a wonderful "enrichment" opportunity.