

Menlo Park City School District

Spanish Immersion and World Language
Laurel School



2018-19

Welcome to the Menlo Park City School District World Language and Spanish Immersion Program! According to new [Pew Research Center data](#), only 20% of US students in Kindergarten-12 grade learn a foreign language. I am extremely proud to report that Menlo Park City Schools are in the 20%. This year all students, pre-K to 8th grade, have access to learning a second language.

Students enrolled in the Early Learning Center participate in some weekly Spanish language exposure through songs and games. All K-5 students will engage in language learning either through an exploratory level or a more immersive experience. Our 6-8th graders are offered a choice of beginning Spanish, advanced Spanish or French.

Along with learning the language, we also aim to create a globally minded climate throughout the whole school, increase multicultural experiences, strengthen bonds with our Spanish-speaking students, and lay a foundation for future language learning.

Students participating in the Spanish Immersion program receive all academic content in Spanish daily. The goal for all Immersion students by the time they complete 5th grade is to meet or exceed grade level proficiency in all academic standards in both English and Spanish.

Regardless of which language option you choose, the Encinal staff looks forward to working together to support your child as they learn to think, speak, read and write in Spanish and develop a deeper understanding of the Latino culture.

Dr. Tami Girsky
Coordinator Spanish Immersion and World Language
tgirsky@mpcsd.org

World Language

The goal of the K-5 Spanish Specialist Program is to create a globally minded climate throughout the whole school, increase multicultural experiences, strengthen bonds with our Spanish-speaking students, and lay a foundation for future language learning.

At Laurel, all K-5 Students participating in the Spanish Specialist program receive between 45-60 minutes a week of Spanish instruction from a Spanish specialist teacher.

The Middle School World Language Program begins in the 6th grade and offers both Spanish and French as an elective. Hillview students have several language options. Some are able to complete up to Spanish 2 or French 2 over the course of their three years or they can choose to participate in an advanced "Spanish for Spanish Speakers" elective (also starting in 6th grade).

This elective class, although available to native or advanced Spanish speakers, was designed to meet the demand created by the K-5 Spanish Immersion classes matriculating to the Middle School.

Spanish Immersion at Laurel School

In 2018-19, Laurel School will continue the process of growing two Immersion K-5 strands. There will be two Immersion classes of Kindergarten-2nd grade class at Lower Laurel. Two 3rd grade classes and one 4th and 5th grade will be offered at Upper Laurel. Once the Laurel transition to K-5 is complete, both lower and upper campus will offer two K-5 Immersion classes.

All students receive their core academic instruction in Spanish from a BCLAD credentialed bilingual teacher, and as students move through the grades, there are incremental increases in the instructional time in English such that by the fifth grade, core academic instruction is delivered in both English and Spanish equally.

Depending on student academic and social-emotional needs, other models for foreign language acquisition at the elementary level may be considered in the future.

General Description and Immersion Program Goals:

A variety of successful models for foreign language acquisition were evaluated when the Board originally established District goals for elementary foreign language in 2007. The District selected at that time to pilot a Dual Immersion approach in which native Spanish speaking students are combined with English speaking students in the same classroom for academic content instruction in both target languages.

However, due to a 2016 district enrollment policy change, the model was changed to a One Way Immersion approach in which there is no deliberation given to native language spoken. In a One Way Immersion program, both groups of students are believed to benefit from the cross-cultural classroom environment. The goals of the program are to promote:

- Proficiency in speaking, reading and writing in both Spanish and English for all program participants
- High academic achievement in all curricular content standards
- Positive cross-cultural understanding, attitudes and behaviors for all students.

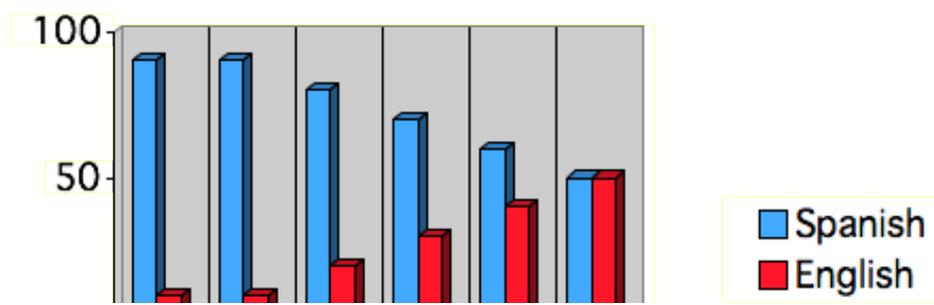
Considerations:

Families who choose to enroll their children in the immersion program should know the following:

- Laurel School is committed to operating the immersion program in a manner that avoids any financial encroachment over the K-5 life of the program. As a result, immersion class sizes may be larger than regular classes and may be operated as multi-graded combination classes
- Support services for students with learning disabilities may only be available in English
- Immersion may not be the optimal learning environment for every student
- The current structure of immersion makes it difficult to separate twins or students with peer issues
- As per District regulation, siblings of children who entered the program after 2015 do not have the benefit of sibling priority.

Overview and Description:

In Kindergarten and 1st grade, 90% of an Immersion student's day will be in Spanish with 10% of the day in English. The amount of English instruction increases to 20% in 2nd grade. The Spanish/English ratio grows each year until 5th grade when 50% of the day is in Spanish and 50% in English. In order to receive maximum benefit from an



Immersion Language program it is very important to remain in the program through 5th grade.

According to research, the benefits of the Immersion Bilingual Program are educational, cognitive, sociocultural, and economic (Calderon & Carreon, 2000; Cloud et al., 2000).

Educational: Students acquire high levels of proficiency in both their first and second language while developing high level academic skills.

Cognitive: Bilingual students are able to problem solve more creatively. Their knowledge of the structural properties of the language allows them to decode academic language more efficiently.

Sociocultural: Bilingual people are able to understand and communicate with members of other cultural groups. They are also able to respect the values and customs of the speakers of other languages.

Economic: There are jobs that call for bilingual or multilingual proficiency. Bilingual students' knowledge of another world language is a valuable resource that can contribute to the nation's economic relations with other countries.

In the Spanish Immersion Program, English and Spanish speakers are learning the curriculum in either their first or second language, depending on grade level and subject area. Because many students learn content through a language they do not speak natively, techniques that make instruction more comprehensible are necessary. Teachers of Immersion Programs use a variety of strategies to “shelter” instruction and make it more understandable.

In general, these strategies include the following:

- ❖ hands-on activities
- ❖ student interactions in whole group discussions
- ❖ slowing down speech, pointing to illustrations or objects
- ❖ pantomiming and gesturing by teacher or students
- ❖ thematic units of study which develop a concept in depth over weeks
- ❖ peer interaction and cooperative learning activities
- ❖ multiple cues that give students the opportunity to master concepts such as graphic presentation, followed by a discussion, an experiment, or a field trip.

Throughout the year, teachers plan lessons that provide opportunities for students to work in a variety of learning experiences. Additionally, the curriculum in the Spanish Immersion Program is aligned with the Menlo Park City School District curriculum adoptions and the California Common Core Standards.

Program Assessment:

The Menlo Park City School District uses multiple forms of assessment to determine student's academic abilities across all grade levels.

- We conduct reading, math, writing, and oral language assessments to measure students' academic progress throughout the year.
- Beginning in 2014-15, all students, third grade and above, will be assessed for English language arts and math through the Smarter Balance Assessment.
- STAMP assessment for academics in Spanish beginning in third-fifth grade.
- Assessment information for all academic areas is communicated with parents during conferences, and report card period.

Kindergarten

Kindergarten students will spend the majority of the school day immersed in the Spanish language, 90% of the time. Your child will learn that his/her teacher understands everything said in English but will respond only in Spanish. While it may take a period of adjustment, which can vary from a few weeks to a few months, gradually the kindergarten students become comfortable and successful as their interactions are encouraged. Generally by the end of the first trimester, your child will be able to understand the majority that is said in the classroom. By the end of the year, your child will be reading short phrases, writing simple sentences, and singing songs.

First Grade

The second year of language acquisition continues developing as it began in kindergarten. Students are gaining conversational ability and by the end of the year, they understand what they are learning in the context of thematic lessons and activities. They comprehend face-to-face discussions and teachers are still using situations, gestures and intonation to support their understanding. As students gain a solid foundation in phonics, they learn to read in Spanish. They will also read for understanding using context clues. Additionally, students will write sentences in Spanish independently and will retell a known story or write about a personal experience. Teachers cover the mathematical concepts in the California Common Core Standards for first grade.

Some of the first graders begin the year reading while others have not yet started, which is normal. The teachers help the students develop their literacy skills through a variety of activities that meet the students at their developmental level. Such activities include, guided reading, choral reading, and silent reading.

In writing, the students participate in Writers Workshop where they practice shared, independent and guided writing activities every day. Additionally, the teachers help expand the children's vocabulary by organizing instruction around science and social studies themes.

In first grade, you may see your child using their second language more often but they may still be shy to use it outside of the classroom. Some of the English speakers participate in classroom discussion in English as well as in Spanish. As they make more progress, they will be more comfortable using their Spanish.

Second Grade

By second grade your child has conversational skills in the Spanish language. Vocabulary development is essential and the students are expected to use their Spanish to communicate in the classroom. The teacher will motivate students to speak more and use various strategies to elicit conversation.

Second grade reading comprehension and fluency in Spanish are essential for the successful addition of English reading and writing in third grade. Students develop fluency in their oral reading, including intonation and expression. The focus is on reading strategies that will transfer between languages. Writing becomes more focused on structures and conventions.

The students begin to develop English skills through a Word Study program which is a daily study of learning word patterns.

Math builds on addition and subtraction facts learned in first grade. Other strands include geometry, fractions, money, and the introduction to multiplication. Problem solving and word problems are essential thinking skills that continue to be developed.

Third Grade

By the third grade your child has conversational skills in the Spanish language. Depending on the language of instruction, students are expected to speak the target language. All students can communicate in Spanish by this time. Students are expected to take risks and apply the target language in meaningful learning experiences.

Students are expected to use their Spanish and English to communicate in the classroom during designated times. English instruction is 30% of the student's' school day, while Spanish is 70%. Students begin to transfer the reading comprehension skills and fluency into English. Now students begin formal instruction in reading and some writing in English.

Third grade math focuses on multiplication, large number re-grouping, geometry, and problem solving.

Fourth Grade

By this point students are expected to participate and express themselves in both languages comfortably, both orally and in writing. Students are still developing their language skills and are expected to respond in either Spanish or English as the assignment dictates. English instruction is 40% of the school day while Spanish is 60%. Reading fluency continues to develop with a focus in comprehension in both English and Spanish.

Math goals include multiple digit multiplication and division, geometry, problem solving, and critical thinking.

Fourth grade becomes much more demanding in both language and academic expectations. Parents and teachers need to be sensitive to this transitional period and help students adjust to the increasing demands of the program. Teachers are often the primary coaches in writing and editing assignments. Parents can support their students by teaching them organizational skills with projects and supporting reading at home in both languages.

Fifth Grade

Fifth grade students continue to develop language skills. They use both languages with ease and are capable of making corrections and revisions in improving their work and expression. Half of the school day is taught in Spanish while the other half students are instructed in English. Teachers are encouraging students to analyze and compare, differentiating the intricacies of language and spelling in English and Spanish. Problem solving and reading comprehension, in both English and Spanish, continue to be important. Students also read a wide variety of literature.

Frequently Asked Questions

My child wants to read in English. Should I let him/her?

We encourage that you maintain the practice of having your child read in Spanish daily. After that, if your child is interested in reading in English, allow him/her to explore and enjoy English books.

What do I read to my child if I only speak one of the two languages?

Reading together as a family is the single most important way that you can support your child in school. For English and Spanish speaking parents reading aloud from picture books and short chapter books that are interesting and age appropriate will develop your child's vocabulary and comprehension in your native language.

Why won't my child speak the second language when I ask him/her?

Typically, anytime a child is learning a new language, there is a receptive language development phase. Your child may not cooperate with your requests to show how well they speak a new language but you may observe a developing understanding as you see your child interacting with the teacher, classmates and others in the community.

My child is spelling using Spanish phonics. How long will it take for him/her to become better at spelling in English?

Generally students progress at their own rate. However, you should observe growth throughout the year and improved spelling by the end of the year. Spelling and other language skills will continue to grow in the subsequent years.

Do I need an extra tutor to support my child catch up in English?

No. Extra help is not usually necessary. Most literacy skills developed in Spanish transfer easily to English skills. It is usually the phonics and complex spelling patterns in English that are confusing to students at first. Most students transition easily from Spanish to English. As with any class, students learn at different rates. If you see that your child is struggling, meet with the teacher to develop a plan for support.

How do I know whether or not my child's writing is up to par in a language I don't speak? How can I help with his/her writing?

Some students are more prolific writers than others. It is normal to find it more challenging to write in a second language because it is harder. However, some students continue to develop and grow in their ability to write and the teacher will document and discuss your child's writing progress throughout the year. The teacher is your child's primary writing teacher but parents play a key role in helping organize their child's ideas. A dictionary and thesaurus in English and Spanish are great tools.

Some people in my child's life question why my child is not reading and writing in English. What should I say to them?

This is a common issue for Immersion parents. Kindly pointing out that your child reads and writes in Spanish usually sets the tone for an interesting discussion about the benefits of being bilingual and the long term goals of the program. The Immersion Program design is to introduce English literacy skills in the third grade. Extensive research supports your decision. Native Spanish and English speaking students do as well or better than students in English programs on tests in English, and have the added benefit of bilingual and bi-literate skills in a second language.

Laurel Elementary School

95 Edge Road

Atherton, CA 94027

(650) 324-0186