

Español Newsletter- Otoño (Fall)



¡Hola! The students are off to a great start to the school year and I wanted to share what we've been up to. I will be sending a home report after each topic so you can take a look at what vocabulary, songs, and books the children are learning.

In **3rd grade**, the students made rules and expressions posters en Español, which are posted all around the room. They used expressions such as *¡séntate!* (sit down), *silencio* (quiet), *escúchame* (listen to me), *respeto* (respect), *levántate* (stand up), *basta* (enough), *diviértense* (have fun), *y yo terminé* (I'm done). We are now learning how to say what their teacher's name is (*Se llama _____*) or My name is (*Me llamo es _____*) and also telling time so we can read the book "Chumba la Cachumba" in time for Halloween.

In **4th grade**, the students also made rules posters and did diálogos that exemplified them. We are now drawing "amigos" (friends) or "monstruos" (monsters) in time for Halloween. They will be able to introduce their amigo and say a sentence describing them. We will then be performing the poem and making art work about the book "Chumba la Cachumba."

In **5th grade** the students made rules posters as well and performed skits about them. We have also been making vocabulary flashcards and practicing at home the poem "Caballito blanco" and the rules we learned in class. After every new topic we will be making flashcards to take home and practice. Now we are learning how to introduce un amigo o monstruo and describe them using adjectives such as *inteligente* (intelligent), *bajo* (short), *alto* (tall), *cómico* (funny), etc, and how they change for a boy and a girl. We will then be performing "Chumba la Cachumba" and learning about el Día de los Muertos (The Day of The Dead).

Español Newsletter- Otoño (Fall)

I would like to enclose some information and research about learning language at a young age and how beneficial it is to them:

Top Ten Benefits of Early Language Learning (from Early-advantage.com)

Ten Great Reasons to Start Learning a Language Now

Learning a new language at any age is an enormously rewarding experience in many ways. While language learning is an enriching experience for all ages, children have the most to gain from this wonderful adventure. Quite simply, starting early offers the widest possible set of benefits and opportunities.

Children understand intuitively that language is something to explore, to play around with, and to enjoy. Their enthusiasm is both infectious and effective. The quickness with which they pick up their first language is nearly miraculous—and such a joy to watch as a parent. As children grow, all parents can attest to how much fun their children continue to have as they sing new words they hear and even invent new ones with a huge, bright smile. The joy with which children explore their first language makes childhood the ideal time for a second language—even if all the other reasons for an early start didn't exist!

But there are many other reasons, and while this list does not exhaust the number and variety of advantages starting a language early can provide, these are some of the most notable benefits.

Higher test scores: Numerous reports have proven that students who have studied a foreign language perform much better than their monolingual peers on many standardized tests, including all sections of the SAT. In fact, the 2007 College Bound Seniors report, issued by the College Board, which administers the SAT, vividly demonstrates the significant benefits of studying a foreign language. The report shows that students with 4 or more years of foreign language study score on average 140 points higher (out of 800!) than students with half a year or less experience on the Critical Reading section, and almost another 140 in the Math section and over 150 points higher on Writing.

Better and more advanced reading skills: A study undertaken by York University in Canada suggests that bilingual children's knowledge of a second language gives them an advantage in learning to read. Their ability to apply the insights and experiences of one language to the other as well as their wider experience of language gives them a big leg up. As they grow older, this advantage continues and grows. Plus, being able to read two languages is pretty impressive all by itself!

Greater confidence: Children are always discovering new things, but learning a new language is a uniquely rewarding experience—at any age. For children, the feeling of accomplishment that comes with their first steps toward a second language can spur them on to a deeper and broader passion for learning in general. And because children are at a special "window of opportunity" in which language learning is intuitive and natural, the ease and pleasure of the experience may boost their confidence and their desire for new discoveries.

Gives brains a boost: In a recent article in *The New Yorker*, Malcolm Gladwell quotes James Flynn, a renowned scientist, as saying "The mind is much more like a muscle than we've ever realized... It needs to get cognitive exercise. It's not some piece of clay on which you put an indelible mark." Research into the effects of bilingualism on children suggests that exposure to more than one language is an excellent way of flexing those brain muscles—and building them up too! Bilingual children in one study reported in *Nature* showed a significantly larger density of "grey matter" in their brains. And those who had been exposed to a second language from an early age proved to have the most grey matter of all. Grey matter is responsible for processing information, including memory, speech and sensory perception. And if it can be increased by exposure to a second language, then language learning would be just like taking your brain to the gym!

Natural-sounding, native-like accent: **Children are always mimicking what they hear, and are surprisingly good at it! They are uniquely attuned to slight differences in tone and sound. Their sensitive ears help**

Español Newsletter- Otoño (Fall)

them pick up on and duplicate the tricky sounds adults and even adolescents often stumble over. For adults just beginning a new language, this difficulty can be discouraging—trying to speak Spanish like Antonio Banderas from *Evita* only to end up sounding like Jack Black in *Nacho Libre* isn't exactly the best language experience. A study conducted by researchers from UCLA and the University of Hong Kong, however, shows that even adults with significant exposure to a language in childhood can end up speaking like a native. **By starting early, your children can speak smoothly and confidently from the first.**

Greater opportunities for college and careers: Colleges now place an increasingly high value on knowledge of more than one language. **As the admissions process becomes more competitive across the board, knowing a second or a third language adds a new dimension to an applicant's resume. And as the economy becomes more and more globalized, English-only becomes less and less of an option.**

Bigger view of the world: Traveling abroad is an experience which can benefit anyone, offering not just new sites to see, but new frames of mind and new perspectives. But going abroad and feeling comfortable in the language of your destination means you're doing more than just traveling—going from your home to another place, and then back home. You can feel as if you're a part of the culture and the life of this new world, as if you aren't a total stranger just visiting. Like reading a poem in another tongue you know, you will hear more than just the language—you will hear the music behind it as well, and the life.

Greater grasp of one's first language—including a bigger, richer vocabulary: Most of the time we use our first language with little thought to grammatical rules or constructions. This is perfectly natural, but the experience of learning a new language can bring greater understanding and perhaps even better grammar to our first language. Knowing the way another language works encourages us to examine our own language's mechanics in a positive way. By being able to compare the two, we learn more than we ever would as a monolingual. Or as Nancy Rhodes, Director of Foreign Language Education at the Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington, DC says, "The more children learn about a foreign language, the more they understand about their own language." Children use what they learn in one language to reinforce concepts and terms they've learned in the other. They can solidify their gains in their native tongue by matching them to their new adventures in another language.

Building and keeping cultural connections: Some of us are lucky enough to have a relative who still speaks their mother tongue frequently. To be able to communicate with them in that language builds a bridge—not only to that person, but to the heritage and history they represent. To maintain that connection keeps alive so much—memories, stories and traditions—and brings to life new memories, stories and traditions as well.

An all-family activity: Modern life is hectic; its demands are frequent and often contradictory. Learning a language together as a family provides a unifying activity which doesn't require you to drive your kids anywhere, and doesn't make it necessary to be in ten places at once. Starting this process early with your child or children provides your family with an activity and an experience it can return to and grow with over the years.

Your child and your family will benefit—in these ways and others—from learning a second language. You will find new and even unique uses; opportunities and ideas open up as you adapt your language learning process to your and your child's needs and aspirations. Starting now means the possibilities are wide open!

There is evidence that early language learning improves cognitive abilities.

Foster, K. M., & Reeves, C. K. (1989). Foreign Language in the Elementary School (FLES) improves cognitive skills. *FLES News*, 2(3), 4.

This study looks at the effects of an elementary school foreign language program on basic skills

Español Newsletter- Otoño (Fall)

by looking at the relationship between months of elementary foreign language instruction in French and scores on instruments designed to measure cognitive and metacognitive processes. The study included 67 sixth-grade students who were divided into four groups that differed by lengths of time in the foreign language program. There was a control group of 25 students who had no French instruction and three groups of students who had participated in the program for different lengths of time (6.5 months, 15.5 months, and 24.5 months). The students who did receive foreign language instruction had received 30 minutes of French instruction daily after 30 minutes of basal reading in English. The control group received an additional 30 minutes of reading instruction in place of foreign language instruction. The results of the analysis showed that the groups who received foreign language instruction scored significantly higher in three areas (evaluation on the Ross test, total score of all cognitive functions on Ross test, and total score on Butterfly and Moths test) than the control group. **In particular, the students who had received foreign language instruction scored higher on tasks involving evaluation which is the highest cognitive skill according to Bloom's taxonomy. The linear trend analysis showed that the students who had studied French the longest performed the best.**

Landry, R. G. (1973). The enhancement of figural creativity through second language learning at the elementary school level. *Foreign Language Annals*, 7(1), 111-115. From Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts database.

The main hypothesis of this study is that the experience of learning a second language at the elementary school level is positively correlated to divergent thinking in figural tasks. This study is concerned with flexibility in thinking through experience with a foreign language. Comparisons are made between second language learners and single language learners. **The second language learners score significantly higher than do the monolingual students. Second language learning appears; therefore, not only to provide children with the ability to depart from the traditional approaches to a problem, but also to supply them with possible rich resources for new and different ideas.**

Bamford, K. W., & Mizokawa, D. T. (1991). Additive-bilingual (immersion) education: Cognitive and language development. *Language Learning*, 41(3), 413-429. From ERIC database.

Examination of a second grade additive-bilingual (Spanish-immersion) classroom, compared to a monolingual classroom for nonverbal problem-solving and native-language development, found **significant differences in problem solving in favor of the bilingual class** and no significant differences in native-language development.

Barik, H. C., & Swain, M. (1976). A longitudinal study of bilingual and cognitive development.

Met, M. (1991). Elementary school foreign languages: What research can and cannot tell us. In E. S. Silber (Ed.), *Critical issues in foreign language instruction* (pp. 63-79). New York: Garland Publishing, Inc.

Examined are some issues in elementary school foreign-language instruction, including concerns about when to begin such instruction, which language(s) to teach, learning methods, & measures of competence among children. The cognitive, academic, & attitudinal benefits of early language learning are discussed, along with factors that may affect the beginning grade level

Español Newsletter- Otoño (Fall)

(resources, etc.). **In general it is asserted that the earlier the language is introduced, the more rapidly children stand to reap the benefits.** FLES & FLEX instruction programs are considered as models, & content-based instruction is cited as most effectively transmitting the communicative & semantic nature of a foreign language to children. It is further suggested that both immersion & FLES learning programs may provide the best vehicles for producing research data on the effectiveness of primary school foreign-language study. 39 References. M. Chamberlain

Stewart, J. H. (2005). Foreign language study in elementary schools: Benefits and implications for achievement in reading and math. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 33(1), 11-16. From PsycINFO database.

Educators and policy makers in many countries have been expressing concern about how to improve students' achievement in reading and math. This article explores and proposes a solution: **introduce or increase foreign language study in the elementary schools. Research has shown that foreign language study in the early elementary years improves cognitive abilities, positively influences achievement in other disciplines, and results in higher achievement test scores in reading and math.** Successful foreign language programs for elementary schools include immersion, FLES, and FLEX programs. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2006 APA, all rights reserved) (Journal abstract)

As delineated above, learning a language early not only improves children's cognitive ability in general, it also opens their mind to new experiences, thereby making them more adaptable and open as a person. It is important to practice at home with your child to reinforce and support what is done in class, and also to show them how important and linked to the "real world" it is. I have enclosed some songs that we sing in class that you can have your child sing or recite to you:

Cada vez que nos juntamos:

Cada vez que nos juntamos, nos juntamos, nos juntamos

Cada vez que nos juntamos, alegres nos ven.

Mi amigo es tu amigo,

Español Newsletter- Otoño (Fall)

Tu amigo es mi amigo

Cada vez que nos juntamos, alegres nos ven.

Cabeza, hombros, piernas, pies

(As students sing the name of the body part, they touch it)

Cabeza, hombros, piernas, pies,

Piernas, pies, piernas, pies,

Cabeza, hombros, piernas, pies,

Ojos, boca nariz

Me volteo

Me volteo, me volteo, (spin around)

Y me hago un caracol. (curl up body like a snail Shell)

En el cielo las estrellas (Reach both arms above your head look up and point to the stars).

Y en la tierra soy yo (point to yourself).

El tren de los días de la semana

¡lunes! ¡martes! ¡miércoles! ¡jueves! ¡viernes! ¡sábado! ¡domingo!

¡Chu! ¡Chu!

Español Newsletter- Otoño (Fall)

Los meses del año:

(This is done with the actions and tune of "La Macarena")

enero, febrero, marzo, abril,

mayo, junio, julio, agosto,

septiembre, octubre, noviembre, diciembre,

Los meses del año