



Elementary Spanish Immersion Pilot Program Information Guide



FCASD SPANISH IMMERSION WEBSITE:
si.fcasd.edu

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Welcome to the Fox Chapel Area School District Elementary Spanish Immersion Pilot Program!



SPANISH IMMERSION
FOX CHAPEL AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Thank you for considering Fox Chapel Area School District's Elementary Spanish Immersion pilot program for your child. Please use this Information Guide as a way to learn more about Spanish Immersion in general and the details associated with the pilot program here at Fox Chapel Area School District. The guide is intended to answer your questions about Spanish Immersion in our district. We hope this guide will provide you with information you need to make a decision on whether Spanish Immersion is right for your child. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me at anytime time should you have any questions regarding our program.

Sincerely,

Ashley Nestor



General Questions About Immersion

Q: What is a Spanish Immersion Program?

Spanish Immersion is a method of instruction in which the regular school curriculum is taught through the medium of the Spanish language. Students learn subjects in the target language through a variety of techniques.

Q: What are the benefits of immersion and bilingualism?

Studies have shown that immersion students do as well as, and may even surpass, non-immersion students on measures of verbal and mathematical skills. (Languages and Learners, 2016)

Studies have found that dual immersion students outperformed their peers in reading in English by seven months in grade five and by nine months in grade eight. (American Councils for International Education, 2017)

Dual language students have (1) higher test scores, (2) are more fulfilled with school, (3) have higher attendance rates, (4) have fewer behavioral problems, and (5) have higher parent involvement. (NPR ED, 2016)

During the last decade, multiple research studies have demonstrated that there are significant cognitive benefits associated with early language learning, in addition to the potential long-term educational and career benefits that bilingual students accrue. (American Councils for International Education, 2017)

Q: Does immersing children in a second language confuse them or negatively impact their native language skills?

Your child's ability to communicate in English will not be affected. They will continue to develop their English language skills by participating in the general community, at home with you, and through their special area classes, which will continue to be taught in English. Formal English reading instruction will also begin in 3rd grade.

Q: If my child is learning content in Spanish, will this negatively impact his/her assessment scores on standardized measures? Will they be able to take the assessments in Spanish?

Standardized assessments will be taken in English. There may be a slight dip in grade-level English reading and writing skills, but this gap disappears typically after the 3rd grade year and students participating in immersion tend to perform as well or even better than their non-bilingual peers.

Q: Are kids learning grade level content in the curriculum?

Yes, students will continue to participate in and achieve the goals of the FCASD curriculum. They will have exposure to the same English Language Arts, Mathematics, STEAM, and Social Studies curricular resources as their non-immersion peers at that grade level.

Q: I don't know Spanish at all. Is this a problem for my child in the program? How will I help them with homework?

You do not need to know any Spanish to support your child in the Immersion pilot program. It will be important that you read with your child in English every night for 20-45 minutes, depending on grade. Any homework that cannot be completed at home due to the child's understanding will be addressed and/or retaught by the classroom teacher the next day.

Q: Why Spanish?

Spanish is the 2nd most spoken language in the world as well as in the United States. The United States has more Spanish speakers than Spain. The U.S. has now an estimated 52.6 million people who can speak Spanish, which is second only to Mexico's 121 million (16% of the population and growing). The United States will have an estimated 138 million Spanish speakers by 2050, making it the biggest Spanish speaking nation on Earth. (Instituto Cervantes, 2015)

Q: How will my child understand what to do in the classroom?

Students will learn to use a variety of visual and auditory cues to learn about classroom expectations, academic content, and language structures and meaning.

FCASD Immersion Questions

Q: How does Immersion work at FCASD?

Spanish Immersion will be a program in grades 1-5, located at Kerr, but with enrollment from all schools. Below please find a chart that details the timeline for the opening of pilot program classes:

School Year	FCASD Spanish Immersion Classes Offered
2019-2020	Grade 1
2020-2021	Grades 1 and 2
2021-2022	Grades 1, 2, and 3
2022-2023	Grades 1, 2, 3, and 4
2023-2024	Grades 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5

Q: Can my child join the program at any grade level?

Enrollment happens only during the Kindergarten year. However, if an opening occurs during the first semester of the first grade year (September-January), the next student on the waitlist will be invited to fill the opening.

Q: Does it cost extra to attend?

No, there is no cost to attend or participate.

Q: We do not attend Kerr Elementary. Is my child still eligible for the program? How will he/she get to school every day?

Yes, students from all of our elementary schools are eligible provided they meet the FCASD Readiness Criteria. In order for Spanish Immersion students to arrive to and from school, buses will be provided for them from their current/home school bus stop.

Q: If one of my children gets into the program and not another, won't it be difficult for me to have children in two schools?

You will have the option to send your other children to Kerr Elementary to reduce the complications of traveling to multiple buildings daily.

Q: May I observe a class?

Our team will be hosting several informational sessions where you can receive all the information about the program and view a mini-lesson. You can get more information about upcoming meetings at si.fcasd.edu.

Q: Is there required parental involvement in the program?

Parents should do the following to support their child in the program:

- Attend parent workshops throughout the course of the year*
- Develop English reading, writing, speaking and listening skills*
- Practice reading and writing skills at home (20-45 minutes daily)*

Q: What are the main objectives of the program?

- Academic Achievement - Demonstrate high levels of academic achievement in English and Spanish (at or above grade level)*
- Language Proficiency - Demonstrate high levels of age-appropriate language proficiency in English and Spanish*
- Cross-Cultural Competency - Demonstrate positive cross-cultural attitudes and behaviors (products, practices, and perspectives)*

Students will...

- Achieve the curricular expectations maintained for all FCASD elementary students*
- Demonstrate academic achievement at or above grade level as measured by formal and informal assessments*
- Demonstrate progress in the development of English and Spanish language acquisition skills*
- Demonstrate content specific knowledge and proficiency in Spanish reading, writing, listening, speaking, and mathematical skills*

Q: What amount of time will my child be learning in Spanish?

Timeframe	Language Allocation
Grade 1 (Semester 1)	80% of instruction in Spanish
Grade 1 (Semester 2)	100% of instruction in Spanish
Grade 2 (Semester 1)	100% of instruction in Spanish
Grade 2 (Semester 2)	100% of instruction in Spanish
Grades 3-5	80% of instruction in Spanish

Q: What common challenges should I anticipate?

Your child may be confused, frustrated and tired initially. Learning a new language can be cognitively exhausting. This is totally normal for new immersion student and will eventually go away as the child becomes accustomed to the environment.

Q: Can we read books in English?

Yes, reading in English at home is a required component of this program. Please read with your child for at least 20-45 minutes daily.

Q: Do they have an opportunity to interact with other children in their grade level?

Yes, students will be able to interact with other students during their special area classes as well as during lunch and recess.

Q: What happens if my child struggles? What if my child needs enrichment services?

FCASD is committed to providing every child the education he/she needs. Whether a child needs support or enrichment, they will have access to these resources.

Q: How can we know what they are learning about?

The classroom teacher will send a weekly/monthly newsletter regarding classroom learning. Each Spanish immersion teacher will also have a web page to showcase student learning.

Q: How will my child maintain his/her Spanish language skills after 5th grade? Will there be immersion opportunities in middle or high school?

Additional programming at the middle school and high school levels will be implemented to allow for students to continue their Spanish language skills.

Q: I'd like my child to participate in Spanish Immersion. How do I enroll?

You can enroll online at si.fcasd.edu by completing the Spanish Immersion Pilot Program Application. If needed, a lottery will be held on June 6, 2019.

Q: How do I learn more?

Please see the resources on our webpage at si.fcasd.edu.