

Notes from Language Immersion Program Presentation

From Parent Meeting at John Stanford International School April 15, 2003

Questions... Parents were asked what questions they had brought to the evening's meeting:

- How committed is the Seattle School District to High School Language Immersion?
- What will the impact of WASL be?
- What are the negatives, as well as the positives, about Immersion?
- What type of child thrives in this type of program?
- Are there models for including a 3rd language?
- What is the vision K-12 and what do we need to do now?
- What can be done about the large teacher/student ratio?
- Will there be changes in content areas for Language Immersion in Middle School?
- How is the current program doing?
- How do we deal with attrition in the program?

Why did you choose Language Immersion?

This is what parents said:

- It was in my neighborhood school.
- Foreign Language enriched my life.
- Spanish is important in the U.S.
- An hour of foreign language [a day] is not enough.
- We come from a bilingual household.
- It's the 21st Century: you can smell the demographics.
- I taught in an international school and saw how easy it was for little children.
- When you know more than one language you have a different capacity for seeing the world.
- Learning languages makes the brain work differently.
- My child will have more career opportunities.
- If children grow up with multiple cultures as the norm, they'll be comfortable with it.
- Teachers use their whole body and resources for teaching – they are like performers.

Looking ahead to Middle School

Hamilton has been researching options for Language Immersion in Middle School. Based on other schools' experiences, Social Studies and Science (and Spanish or Japanese Language Arts) seem to be the most likely candidates.

How are we doing at JSIS?

Parents reflected on how they've seen their children respond to the program:

What's working...

- My daughter teaches her dolls and animals Spanish.
- My child talks in class.
- My child is very comfortable.
- My child is doing very well.
- My child made huge progress in the second year of Japanese; she teaches us the alphabet and pronunciation.
- Our daughter sings in Japanese and talks with her friends, and can read signs in Japanese [at grocery store].

Concerns and other thoughts...

- Math and Science are lightweight (plodding)
- Science kits are watered down in Japanese – that makes it boring, and I'm worried about future implications.
- On trip to Mexico last summer, found out that the kids in Mexico are further ahead in Math.
- Concerns about WASL Math – how do they do the thinking problems?
- Math has not changed with John Stanford International School [these complaints existed before the Language Immersion Program].
- By 3rd grade, the Spanish is not a problem.
- Math and Science can be of secondary importance to language learning for a while.