

John Stanford International School
Language Immersion Boot Camp with Regla Armengol
August 1, 2000 – Parent Evening

Time	Topic
7:00 PM	<p>Introductions</p> <p>Karen Kodama</p> <p>This is an exciting time and you are the trailblazers. What we are doing here at the John Stanford International School is new, but not experimental. We're taking what has been learned in other schools and adapting the best for here.</p> <p>One key to the success of immersion programs is that the parents feel comfortable. So, we have brought the best person to talk to you tonight – Regla Armengol, who started the first immersion program in Fairfax County 11 years ago. Regla came for a workshop with our teachers and kids in January, and it was so successful that I invited her back this summer to work for a full week with our immersion teachers.</p>
7:05 PM	<p>Regla Armengol</p> <p>Karen is a dynamo! When I came in January I was so impressed with the staff and their “can do” attitude. If that’s in place, everything else will come.</p> <p>I also remember the parents and their level of support. In particular, I remember a luncheon the parents put on one day for the teachers. Teachers work so hard for so little money; they really appreciate that type of support.</p> <p>In terms of my background, I started the immersion program in Fairfax County, VA 11 years ago. This past year I was National Hispanic Teacher of the Year and had the opportunity to work at the Center for Applied Linguistics. I traveled around the country working with immersion programs, so I really got a national perspective. Now I’m going back to the classroom to teach 5th grade in an immersion program.</p> <p>At the John Stanford International School, you have the opportunity to change the next generation: to help these children become bilingual. Even more, they’ll be able to see cultures from other perspectives.</p> <p>The kids in my classroom have lived what it feels like to not understand. I see them being helpful to new immigrant children in their English classroom because they understand how it feels.</p> <p>It takes a vision and hard work to create an immersion program.</p> <p>Agenda Tonight:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ History of Immersion ▪ Language acquisition – what is it about? ▪ Strategies ▪ Teach a lesson (learn by doing) ▪ Debrief ▪ Video (examples of students after 1 ¾ years) ▪ How parents can support their kids and the program

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	<p>Karen (Introduced Michele, Mercedes, Maria, & Dolly)</p>
	<p>Regla In terms of my personal background, I am a true bilingual. I came to the U.S. from Cuba at the age of 3. I began learning English then, but we always spoke Spanish at home. I can easily switch back and forth from English to Spanish. Your children, too, will be able to acquire a native-like accent in Spanish because they are starting so young.</p> <p>I was one of six teachers who founded the Immersion Program in Fairfax County 11 years ago. I taught first and second grade for many years. I became a teacher trainer in the district, then began presenting nationally at conferences.</p>
7:17	<p>Second Language Acquisition Theory</p> <p>There is a difference between learning language and acquiring language, according to the research of Stephen Krashen. Your children will be acquiring Spanish as they learn the content.</p> <p>It is helpful to think about first language acquisition, too. How do parents talk to babies: <i>(responses from parents)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Simple language ▪ Sing-song (intonation patterns) ▪ Body language ▪ Talk about immediate, survival – here & now ▪ Affective <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - any utterance is met with approval - extend the utterance (e.g., “baba” – bottle) <p>In the Immersion Classroom, we try to recreate this:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Make the language meaningful ▪ Give it Context ▪ Give the children time to sort out the language (before expressing) <p>The first 10-12 months is called “the silent period.” In school it varies. Some kids are ready to self-generate language (to speak on their own, without a prompt) after two months, but it could take up to a year.</p> <p>At the beginning, kids can memorize language, such as songs and poems. In our school, we had to give the Pledge of Allegiance each morning, so I taught it to them in Spanish. They could say it, but they didn’t understand what they were saying. (However, parents were impressed!) Even if they’re not producing language, they are working hard making sense of the sounds.</p> <p>Critical to language acquisition is <u>comprehensible input</u>. If the language is meaningful, it will be learned. The job of the immersion teacher is to create a context for comprehensible input.</p> <p>Nearly 40 years of research on 2nd language acquisition is guiding our classroom practices. Some of the first immersion programs were begun in Canada 35 years ago by Anglo parents who were concerned that their children would be at a disadvantage if they didn’t learn French.</p> <p>Bottom line: it works. They learn language and content.</p>

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7:30	<p>Evaluation</p> <p>I would now like to share some data on the evaluation of our pilot program after the first 3 years. This study was done by Virginia Collier (a major linguistic educational researcher).</p> <p>She tested the children based on matched profiles (e.g., socioeconomic, IQ, years in schools - 7-8 variables). When the kids took the MAT in Reading, the immersion kids scored higher than the control group and the district as a whole.</p> <p>Why? <i>(responses from the audience, plus Regla)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More linguistically sophisticated ▪ Broad base of language to draw from ▪ Understand your language better from the mirror of another language ▪ Instruction in the immersion classroom is top-notch (all learning cues to cue meaning) ▪ Also – support of parents is critical (e.g., reading more to your child at home)
7:35	<p>Sample Lesson (Flota & Se hunde)</p> <p>[Note: no accents on the Spanish and it may not be quite accurate... MA]</p> <p>As I present this lesson, think of what I'm doing that allows learners to understand the content (and the language). Need 5 volunteers up on stage to be "kids."</p> <p>Introduces herself ("Mie nombre es Regla.") and gets their names. "Agua." Shows that there is water in the pan by dipping and flicking it a bit. (Wouldn't do the flicking with kids, of course!)</p> <p>"Un experimento." Pauses to let them think about what is going to happen (some type of experiment).</p> <p>"El lapis." Holds up a pencil.</p> <p>"Flota o se hunde?" (Does it float or sink?) Uses hand gestures to get meaning across.</p> <p>"Prediction." (Prediction) Gives them a sheet of paper with a floating object on one side and a sinking object on the other. Shows them how to hold up the side that they are predicting. Then she reads off "Flota" "Se hunde" etc.</p> <p>"Un papel para ti." (A paper for you) Gives student a paper with the pencil picture and word on it to put on the graph.</p> <p>"Grafica." (Graph) Shows the large graph for tracking which objects float and which sink.</p> <p>Continues with sponge, chalk, paperclip, scissors, glue, and piece of paper.</p>
7:50	<p>[Regla told the story of little girl at Latona in January who was watching the paper and jumped up to say that the paper was floating now, but would eventually sink. She was missing her 2 front teeth ("but thoon it'th going to think!.)]</p>

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	<p>Instructional strategies using during this lesson:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mentally engaging (try to guess – predict) ▪ Intrinsically interesting ▪ Interactive (participating) ▪ Way to communicate without talking (i.e. with paper – flota / se hunde) ▪ Getting symbolic representation (i.e. card with picture and word) ▪ Way of interacting (fun) – even when someone makes a mistake, just fix it and go on (low risk) – very positive feedback ▪ Repetitive ▪ Give them only as much language as they can understand (simple, slow language) ▪ Language modification
	<p>Questions/Answers</p> <p>Q: Is that the pace you'd go with the kids? (Isn't it too slow/boring?) A: No – Kids are more excited (than adults). Pace varies according to attention span of kids.</p> <p>Q: Was this a Math or Science lesson? A: Both.</p> <p>Q: Do kids see this as competitive? A: Everyone gets a turn. When they get it right, they say "Yes!" and are really excited. [Good comment from audience that they have a 50/50 chance of being right!]</p> <p>Q: Long-term is there competition because some of the kids know Spanish from home? A: It helps in the classroom when some of the kids know Spanish already. It all depends on what type of climate you create in the classroom.</p> <p>Q: Don't the native Spanish speaking kids get bored? A: No. The activities themselves are interesting. Also, by using open-ended questions, it allows native speakers to participate and feel challenged.</p> <p>Q: Was the language simplified (e.g. "3 flota")? A: The teacher speaks grammatically ("3 flotan"). The children will acquire the forms over time. They'll learn them in writing too.</p> <p>Q: How are the two halves of the day integrated? A: The two teachers plan together. The English side can provide support to the Spanish side. Vocabulary needs to be developed in both languages. This is critical for kids to do well on standardized tests, which rely heavily on vocabulary.</p> <p>Q: What are the expectations for the children's use of English in the Spanish classroom? A: During the "silent period" (first 6-12 months), no Spanish production is demanded (except participation in songs and games). It is usual for them to express themselves in English, and for the teacher to restate/expand what they've said in Spanish. Teacher should reward them every time they do produce some Spanish language. Never stress the child out to produce in Spanish, except for "prefabricated language" (such as "I need to go to the bathroom") that they have memorized and should use. What really makes them speak in Spanish is feeling good about what they're doing.</p>

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	<p>Q: How do the immersion kids test for Math? A: Math scores are also higher than for comparable non-immersion children.</p> <p>Q: Why did Regla's school start in 1st grade? A: Because we only had half-day kindergarten. Immersion should start at K or even pre-K.</p> <p>Q: Is it helpful or harmful for parents with rusty Spanish to help at home? A: You don't need to teach them at home. Don't push reading stories in Spanish or insist on speaking Spanish at home.</p> <p>Q: What about adding a 3rd language (like Chinese)? A: Don't introduce the 3rd language at the same time. Could start a few years later after the Spanish is firmly established.</p>
8:18	<p>How Can Parents Support the Program and Their Child?</p> <p>In the Spanish classroom, the teacher (and assistants) must not speak English to the kids. Children must view that as the Spanish room and the teacher as a Spanish speaker. If a parent comes into the room, the teacher will escort him out the door (to the Volunteer Table) and take care of the business in English – out of earshot of the children.</p> <p>Here's how parents can help:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Help with attitude at home. Less is more. Take the pressure off; don't make them produce language before they're ready. Let them know that what they are doing is special. ▪ For the first 3-4 weeks while they're getting the classroom routines in place, the teachers prefer to NOT have any parent volunteers in the classroom. After that there may be opportunities to volunteer. ▪ English-speaking volunteers can work with children at the Volunteer Table in the hall on Math concepts (in English). This helps reinforce concepts for children who may not be getting them yet in Spanish. (Teachers will prepare work for them.) ▪ Need lots of help with materials preparation – props, visual, etc. The teacher can send home stuff for parents to work on too. ▪ Displays – with 60 kids in her 2 classes, the teacher will need help posting pictures and stories in the hall and classroom.
8:30	<p>VIDEO: 2nd Graders doing Problem Solving</p> <p>Example of student trying to explain how to get 30 (from the calendar). He said he started at 29 and then put one more. Regla added: "Yo sume" (I added one more) so that he could learn the word for addition. Good example of circumlocution that language learners use to get the meaning across.</p>
8:40	<p>END</p>