



¡Vamos a jugar!

Let's Play!

A Spanish Immersion Program for Preschool-Aged Children

By Denise Tucker

World Languages for Children offers a Spanish immersion program for preschool-aged children. The program combines all the senses with all domains of learning – language, motor, cognitive, and social / emotional. Lessons include active learning, teacher-directed plans, and independent exploration. The curriculum of World Languages for Children offers something that will benefit every type of language learner – including Linguistic, Musical, Spatial, Interpersonal, Logical and Bodily-Kinesthetic learners. The program offers children cultural awareness and increased flexibility in the global community.

Because the greatest concentration of learning occurs between the ages of birth to 10 years of age, preschool is the key moment to ensure a healthy grasp of a foreign language for it is during these formative years when the brain is more capable of retaining foreign language skills. Additionally, facial bones and muscles are more pliable for shaping sounds that may be unique to a specific language.

Eighteen months ago, Ms. Klarisa Cizmek recognized a need for this kind of instruction in preschool environments. With a master's degree in English, as well as established fluency in five languages – Ms. Cizmek is the perfect candidate to lead this new endeavor!

Currently, World Languages for Children is being piloted at Fairview Moravian Preschool. The participating children range from 2 – 5 years of age and the rapt attention they give the instructors suggests they are thoroughly enjoying this learning opportunity! At the beginning of each class the young students are each given a toy airplane and with their instructor, they fly away to a Spanish-speaking country. From that point on they are guided through a Spanish immersion learning environment that is inclusive of reading, music and dancing, creative arts, and sharing before “flying” back to the US.

With thematic lessons tailored to follow the preschool curriculum, children are learning Spanish words for the content they are acquiring in their regular classes. In other words, if they are learning about colors, numbers, body parts, or the first day of spring, their Spanish class is

structured to build upon the content they have already mastered by introducing them to the corresponding Spanish word.

The pilot program at Fairview Moravian is proving to be very successful! Director Heather Hubbard has been enthusiastic about World Languages for Children, while parents of the students have been equally encouraging. Parents have shared that their children are excited about what they are learning and they are appreciative of the list of resources made available to them so that they may continue Spanish language exploration at home.



Patrice Williams, Spanish instructor and Klarisa Cizmek

Ms. Cizmek is excited about the feedback she is receiving and is looking forward to expanding the program to other preschools. In addition to direct user accolades, coupled with approval and encouragement from Dr. Mary Lynn Redmond of Wake Forest University and the National Network for Early Language Learning, Klarisa Cizmek is determined to make her program successful and purposeful in the earliest classrooms of our community.

In addition to her program, Ms. Cizmek is seeking space in order to establish a regular playgroup for bilingual and multilingual children and families. This is an excellent opportunity for families interested in languages and multiculturalism...an international family mixer, so to speak! Once established, this service would be free, enabling parents to share experiences and ideas about raising their children in an international world. Triad International Playgroup would meet every Friday morning for two hours. If you are interested in participating, or have an idea about free meeting space, please contact Ms. Cizmek at info@WorldLanguagesForChildren.com.

At this time, the program's emphasis is on Spanish, but Ms. Cizmek plans to launch Chinese in the fall. With Spanish and Chinese being two of the most commonly spoken languages in the world, the knowledge of these languages can open up a world of possibilities to future community leaders.

Parents, preschool programs, day care centers and kindergartens are all welcome to contact Klarisa Cizmek for more information. Visit World Languages for Children on the web at www.worldlanguagesforchildren.com. You can also call 336.403.8233.