
INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: SPANISH IMMERSION PARENTS
FROM: LINDA PLANTE; ELISE BLOCK
SUBJECT: UPDATE
DATE: 8/17/2011

As the school year came to an end, we wanted to update you on progress towards the goal of a smooth 6-12 pathway for the Spanish Immersion program.

Most recently, we met with Tara Fortune at the University of Minnesota to discuss program options, best practice suggestions, and model programs already in existence. Also accompanying us on this visit was one of our Spanish language teachers from Woodbury High School. We came away from the meeting with research backed suggestions and contact information concerning existing programs.

Key aspects of the research that we will continue to explore include: best practice for partial immersion students to ensure maximum retention; a focused mission and values for successful transition from the middle to high school level; ensuring appropriate programming for special education students; and required assessments. Ms. Fortune also stressed the importance of the classroom teacher and the associated fluency of that staff member, which should be tested prior to hiring. We are implementing this “best practice” in our current hiring process. She also gave us information on student fluency assessments which might be useful as we move forward.

We also learned of possible notations from the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) which may be added to the diploma of a Spanish Immersion graduate. The value of the diploma notes will be explored through MDE. Additionally, we have learned of a model k-12 program located in Portland, Oregon. This district will be presenting at a conference we are attending in Minneapolis this summer. We look forward to learning more about this model organization.

We will continue to explore the question of athletic participation and eligibility. Under current Minnesota State High School League and School District policies middle school students can only participate in high school athletics/activities at their “attendance boundary high school”. It should be noted that the school district does not provide transportation to practices for middle school athletic participants who participate at the high school level.

Additionally, we asked about a student who might decide to drop out of the Spanish Immersion pathway. What school would the student attend? The answer is that the student would return to their attendance boundary school unless an inter-district transfer request is submitted and approved. Both of us would like to see sufficient enrollment, participation and commitment to support two sections of SI throughout the 6-12 pathway, and stress that students receiving special education services would receive those services just as other students in the building receive them. Finally, a topic for discussion this summer will be the development of required classes. Testing for high stakes tests for SI students will be done in English.

We are formulating a Q & A, which will be posted on the district's web site in the near future, but in the mean time we wanted to clarify some of the key questions and concerns we are hearing. We will consider the Q & A document a working draft as issues continue to be explored.

We have selected a team of administration, staff and parents to work through the summer and into the fall. We look forward to the development of a high-quality unique pathway for our Spanish Immersion students. Thank you for your continued attention and interest.

Linda Plante, Principal, Woodbury High School – lplante@sowashco.k12.mn.us

Elise Block, Principal, Cottage Grove Middle School – eblock@sowashco.k12.mn.us