

What is immersion education?

Immersion education is an organized curriculum designed to help students develop functional fluency and literacy in a second language. Children learn their regular school subjects through a second language.

Careful evaluation of immersion education has shown that advanced cognitive development can take place in classes where a second language is used as the major medium of instruction and learning during the early school years. (Wallace Lambert, "An Overview of Issues in Immersion Education," California State Department of Education, 1984, P.265)

Why did the SFUSD begin immersion programs?

For over twenty years, research in Canada and the United States has documented the impressive development of second language fluency and academic achievement of children in immersion programs. At the same time, immersion students have maintained and enriched their native language and literacy skills. The SFUSD was eager to provide children in San Francisco with such an exciting, enriching, multilingual/multicultural educational opportunity.

In 1983, the first San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) immersion program was implemented in Spanish at Buena Vista School. The Chinese Immersion Program was started in 1984 at West Portal School. In the SFUSD immersion programs, Spanish or Chinese is used as the language of instruction through the 8th grade. Gradually, English is introduced into the school curriculum ensuring children are fully biliterate and bilingual.



Buena Vista Alternative School
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SAN FRANCISCO
Unified School District
Spanish Two-Way Immersion Program



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Learning to speak another's language means taking one's place in the human community. It means reaching out to others across cultural and linguistic boundaries. Language is far more than a system to be explained. It is our most important link to the world around us. Language is culture in motion. It is people interacting with people."

*Sandra Savignon 1983
Professor of Speech Communication
Penn State University*

What are the goals of the Spanish Two-Way Immersion Program in the SFUSD?

The curriculum is aligned with the District; students participating in the program will be able to fulfill requirements for promotion and graduation.

The goals of the Spanish Immersion Program are to:

- develop communicative fluency and literacy in internationally significant languages;
- develop and enrich English language skills;
- promote academic achievement commensurate with the child's ability and grade level; and
- encourage understanding and appreciation of another language and cultural identification.

Why would parents select an immersion program for their children?

Our world is rapidly shrinking. It is increasingly dependent upon communication and understanding among people of diverse beliefs and backgrounds. Few places display the exciting opportunity of multi-lingualism and multi-culturalism as richly as the San Francisco Bay Area. Parents select an immersion program to challenge and stimulate their children's cognitive, social and linguistic development, providing their child with a unique linguistic and cultural advantage in today's world.

What kind of child will succeed in an immersion program?

Research has proven that the model of immersion education benefits native English speakers, and native Spanish speakers. Children who have a positive self-image, normal language development, and enthusiastic encouragement from home will be able to succeed in an immersion program.

What is the instructional time in Spanish vs. English for each grade level?

Below is a chart depicting the amount of instructional time in Spanish and English:

	Spanish	English
Kindergarten	90%	10%
First Grade	90%	10%
Second Grade	80%	20%
Third Grade	65%	35%
Fourth Grade	55%	45%
Fifth Grade	50%	50%

How can parents enroll their children in the Spanish Immersion Program?

Enrollment to the Spanish Immersion Program follows regular District Optional Enrollment Request (O.E.R.) procedures. All students are welcome to enroll in the program regardless of race, color or language. The O.E.R. process generally begins in December and parents should check with the school in November for application deadline. O.E.R. forms can also be obtained from the District office or school site. For more information, please contact:

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