

# ESCONDIDO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

## SPANISH IMMERSION PARENT HANDBOOK

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**Escondido Elementary School  
Spanish Immersion Parent Handbook**

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# Introduction

Thank you for your interest in the Spanish Immersion Program at Escondido Elementary, one of the choice programs of the Palo Alto Unified School District. We know that choosing an elementary school program for your family is an important decision, and we hope to help you as much as possible in making that decision. In this handbook you will find information about immersion education and its benefits, the program at PAUSD, and how to be considered for enrollment. We are very proud of the Spanish Immersion program and we hope that the materials will help you understand why. Again, thank you for your interest in the Spanish Immersion Program.

## History of Spanish Program at Palo Alto Unified School District

The first Spanish Immersion kindergarten class started in September 1995. To fully evaluate the program, the PAUSD Board of Education assigned Spanish Immersion 'pilot' status in January 1998. In November 2001, after favorable evaluation, the board assigned the program 'on-going' status. As an 'on-going' program, Spanish Immersion will continue to enroll students each and every year.

At the elementary school level, the program was initially located at Fairmeadow School and subsequently moved to Escondido School, its current location, in the fall of 1997. Currently, there are approximately 44 students per grade level in the Spanish Immersion program at Escondido. The middle school program (grades 6-8) is at Jordan.

Transportation to the Spanish Immersion Program is the responsibility of the parents, except for Voluntary Transfer Program students which, as for all schools, is the responsibility of the District. The Spanish Immersion Program is open for enrollment to all PAUSD students. Students are selected by lottery (see Lottery and Enrollment Guidelines.)

## Program Description and Goals

The Spanish Immersion program is a type of bilingual education for acquiring two languages by integrating native English speakers and native Spanish speakers in content and literacy instruction in both languages. Standard school subjects are taught in one of two languages. Language is acquired and developed by using it as a *means* for instruction and not the *object* of instruction. In this manner, students become fluent and literate in *both* English and Spanish, while they follow the same curriculum that is taught only in English in non-immersion classes. The goals of the Spanish Immersion program are bilingualism and bilaterality, high levels of academic achievement in both languages, and positive cross-cultural attitudes.

- *Bilingualism and biliteracy*: Development of high levels of proficiency in the student's first language and in the second language.
- *High academic achievement*: Perform at or above grade level in academic areas in both languages.

- *Positive cross-cultural attitudes:* Demonstrate positive cross-cultural attitudes and behaviors, and high levels of self-esteem.

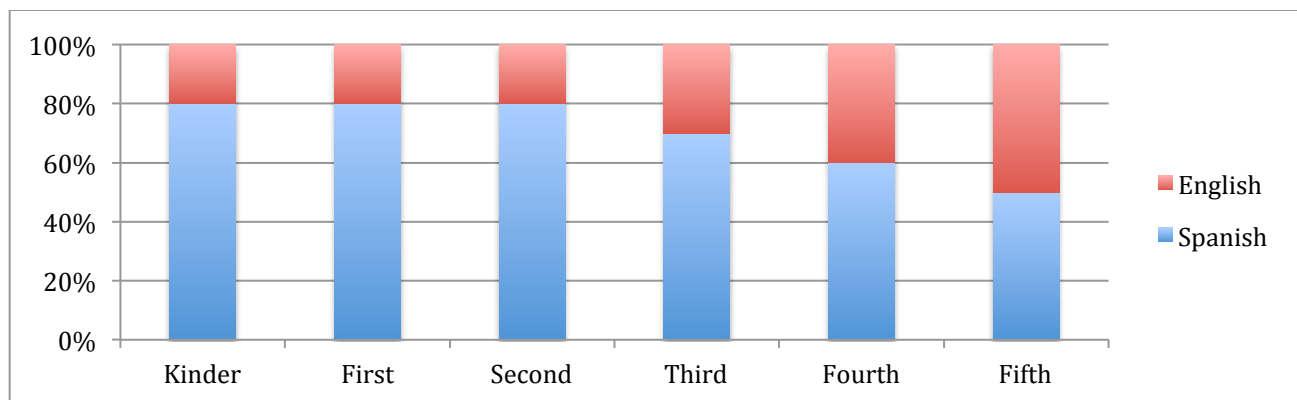
Considerable research states that the benefits of the Immersion Bilingual Program are educational, cognitive, sociocultural, and economic (Calderon & Carreon, 2000; Cloud et al., 2000):

- *Educational:* Students acquire high levels of proficiency in both their first and second language while developing high level academic skills.
- *Cognitive:* Bilingual students are able to problem solve more creatively. Their knowledge of the structural properties of the language allows them to decode academic language more efficiently.
- *Sociocultural:* Bilingual people are able to understand and communicate with members of other cultural groups. They are also able to respect the values and customs of the speakers of other languages.
- *Economic:* There are jobs that call for bilingual or multilingual proficiency. Bilingual students' knowledge of another world language is a valuable resource that can contribute to the nation's economic relations with other countries.

## Program Design and Evaluation

To accomplish its goals, the program follows a unique instructional design in which Spanish-speaking and English-speaking students are combined in the same classroom, with at least one-third of the students being native speakers of each language. These students will serve as language models to the other students as they acquire the languages. Escondido follows an 80/20 Spanish Immersion model. This model emphasizes the use of Spanish in the early grades to provide a solid foundation for future academics. In grades K-2, 80% of classroom instruction is in Spanish. Instruction in English increases to 30% in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and to 40% in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade. By 5<sup>th</sup> grade, approximately half of the schoolwork is done in each language.

**Language of Instruction**



In this program, native English and Spanish speakers are learning the curriculum in either their first or second language, depending on grade level and subject area. Because many students learn content through a language they do not speak natively, techniques that make instruction more comprehensible are necessary. Teachers in the Spanish Immersion Program use a variety of strategies to “shelter” instruction and make it more understandable. In general, these strategies include the following:

- hands-on activities
- student interactions in whole group discussions
- slowing down speech, pointing to illustrations or objects
- pantomiming and gesturing by teacher or students
- thematic units of study which develop a concept in depth over weeks
- peer interaction and cooperative learning activities
- multiple cues that give students the opportunity to master concepts such as graphic presentation, followed by a discussion, an experiment, or a field trip.

Throughout the year, teachers collaborate to plan focused lessons that involve opportunities for students to work collaboratively during a variety of learning experiences. Additionally, the curriculum in the Immersion Program is aligned with the Palo Alto Unified School District curriculum adoptions and the California Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

The Immersion Program uses multiple forms of assessment to determine student’s language fluency and academic abilities across all grade levels.

- We conduct reading, writing, and math assessments to measure students’ academic progress throughout the year.
- Spanish oral language assessment (SOLOM) is given at all grade levels
- State norm-referenced assessments for academics in English beginning in third grade to assess proficiency in state educational standards
- APRENDA assessment for academics in Spanish beginning in first grade.
- Assessment information for all academic areas is communicated with parents during conferences and progress report periods.
- Students who are considered to be learning English as second language will also take a state test California English Language Development Test (CELDT) to measure their progress on the English language.

**Evaluation Matrix**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Literacy Assessments</b>	<b>Math Assessments</b>
<b>Kinder</b>	DRA, Estrellitas, PAUSD writing assessment	PAUSD math assessment
<b>First grade</b>	DRA, APRENDA, PAUSD writing assessment	PAUSD math assessment, MARS
<b>Second grade</b>	DRA, APRENDA, PAUSD writing assessment	PAUSD math assessment, MARS
<b>Third grade</b>	DRA, APRENDA, Smarter Balance Assessment Literacy (English),	PAUSD math assessment, MARS, Smarter Balance Assessment

	PAUSD writing assessment	(English)
<b>Fourth grade</b>	DRA, APRENDA, Smarter Balance Assessment Literacy (English), PAUSD writing assessment	PAUSD math assessment, MARS, Smarter Balance Assessment Math(English)
<b>Fifth grade</b>	DRA, APRENDA, Smarter Balance Assessment Literacy (English), PAUSD writing assessment	PAUSD math assessment, MARS, Smarter Balance Assessment Math (English)

## The Role of Parents

Families who are interested in enrolling their children in the Spanish Immersion Program are asked to commit to staying in the program for six years so that students may obtain the maximum benefits of the immersion program from kinder through fifth grade. Current bilingual education research states that it can take up to seven to nine years to acquire a second language.

All parents who enroll their children in the Spanish Immersion Program are encouraged to fully engage in their child’s academic program by attending parent/teacher meetings and volunteering in the classroom and at the school. We also encourage families to seek Spanish cultural events beyond our school so that students can also learn about the Spanish speaking cultures.

There are many ways that parents can volunteer and participate in our school, including some of the following:

*School-wide volunteer opportunities:*

- Escondido School Site Council
- Escondido Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and Spanish Immersion Parent Association of Palo Alto (SIPAPA)
- Escondido Fall Festival
- English Language Advisory Committee (ELAC) for parents of students acquiring English as a second language

*Classroom volunteer and participation opportunities (We encourage all parents to participate):*

- Volunteer during Spanish instruction (if Spanish speaking)
- Volunteer during English instruction
- Volunteer by doing take home projects
- Volunteer during special classroom events
- Volunteer during library, science lab, or field trips
- Parent/ teacher conferences

## Frequently Asked Questions

**Q: Has Spanish Immersion been proven to be an effective education paradigm?**

**A:** Yes. In large-scale studies over many years, university researchers have documented a very high rate of success in achieving academic proficiency for both Spanish and English-speaking

children in programs similar to ours. Typically, both Spanish and English speakers achieve native or near-native fluency in their new language. On standardized academic tests, both groups outperform their counterparts who have been educated in monolingual classrooms. Spanish speakers also outperform their counterparts who have been educated in traditional bilingual classrooms. We have obtained similar results in our own program here in Palo Alto.

**Q: What happens in the classroom?**

**A:** Language is the vehicle for instruction in immersion classrooms. A visitor would not find a class conjugating verbs or memorizing prepared "dialogues." Rather, one would see children using the language --speaking, reading, writing, adding, subtracting, experimenting, singing, arguing, whispering and shouting --all in Spanish, under the guidance of a teacher, who has been specially trained to teach the language while using it. The teachers follow the same curricula as the district's English-only classes.

**Q: How do Spanish speakers specifically benefit from this program?**

**A:** In a general education classroom, where English is the language of instruction, the native Spanish speakers might struggle initially when using English. However, in a Spanish Immersion program, these students gain self-confidence, because they understand the language of instruction. These students are also challenged to become language models by assisting the English speakers by translating and leading some group activities. Meanwhile, the native Spanish speakers are learning English by interacting with their peers. Spanish speakers get the chance to advance academically and socially while becoming bilingual. Native Spanish speakers can maintain their first language, Spanish, while learning a second language, English, at a time when their brains are most receptive to language learning. Spanish speakers also gain socially by making friendships across cultural, ethnic and linguistic boundaries. Research demonstrates that Spanish speakers in language-immersion programs hold positive attitudes about people from other cultures.

**Q: How do English speakers specifically benefit from this program?**

**A:** English speakers get the chance to acquire a new language in the years when their brains are most receptive to language learning. Most become highly proficient in the target language, a standard that most adult Americans, who typically began to study a foreign language in middle or high school, can never hope to attain. English speakers also gain socially by making friendships across cultural, ethnic, and linguistic boundaries. Research demonstrates that English speakers in language-immersion programs hold positive attitudes about people from other cultures. Perhaps Former California Superintendent of Schools, Delaine Eastin said it best, in an August. 13, 1997, interview with the Palo Alto Weekly "English-only is a formula for no sales in a global economy. We ought to be talking about how every child can be in a bilingual setting. My niece is in River Glen, a school in San Jose, and she was fluent in Spanish by third grade. The Anglo kids are learning Spanish, and the Spanish speaking kids are learning English, and everybody is having a great time. Scores are way up for these children."

**Q: How do children who are already bilingual benefit from this program?**

**A:** Dual Immersion programs allow bilingual children to continue to develop their speaking skills and to learn to read and write in both languages.

**Q: Is this method of early language learning in wide use?**

**A:** In short, yes. There are more than 300 elementary language Dual Immersion Programs throughout the United States, according to the Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington, D.C. There are Dual Immersion programs in many languages, but the most common by far is Spanish. The model was developed in the 1970s in Quebec, Canada, where it is still used extensively to develop bilingualism in French and English-speaking students.

**Q: How did Palo Alto's Spanish Immersion program get started?**

**A:** Our program began in the 1995-96 school year, but its roots go back to 1994, when a district task force recommended Dual Immersion as the most effective and least costly method of elementary second language instruction. After two years at Fairmeadow School, our program is now a part of Escondido School.

**Q: Who are the children and staff of Palo Alto's Spanish Immersion program?**

**A:** About one third of the program's students begin school as Spanish-speaking or bilingual, another one third are bilingual in both Spanish/English, and the last third are native English speakers. Our teachers are dedicated, creative, and trained in immersion techniques. All are completely fluent in English and Spanish.



## Enrollment Procedures

The selection process for the Spanish Immersion Program is conducted by lottery. The program is open for enrollment to all students in the Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD). Please review the following information carefully before placing your child's name in the lottery.

**1. Parents/Guardians are required to understand the goals of Spanish Immersion**

Before submitting a lottery card, read this information packet, attend the parent information meeting, and one of the three classroom visitation days. For parents that cannot attend the information meeting you must view the video about Immersion, which is available in the Escondido office.

**2. All program applicants must be registered in the Palo Alto Unified School District.**

Enrollment is open to all PAUSD students, including those students participating in the Voluntary Transfer Program. To be included in the initial kindergarten lottery, the applicant must be registered for kindergarten. All other program applicants must be registered for their neighborhood school in the Palo Alto Unified School District. If the child is not registered and their name is drawn, their selection will be withdrawn.

**3. All program applicants including siblings must enter a lottery card**

Lottery cards will be made available following the classroom visits. Students who turn in lottery cards retain their space at their neighborhood school until the parent/guardian signs an intra-district transfer to the Spanish Immersion Program after being selected in the lottery.

**4. Siblings**

Siblings of current Escondido students (who must also be Escondido students at the time the incoming kindergarten student begins school) have first priority. They have space in the program, as long as they follow all registration requirements (including registration at the district and turning in a Lottery card at Escondido).

**5. Spanish/English Proportion**

One third of the 44 spaces are for native Spanish speakers, one third are for English speakers, and one third are for bilingual students. Native Spanish speakers are children who are fluent in Spanish (and may also be fluent in English or other language). English speakers are children who are fluent in English but not Spanish.

After spaces are assigned to siblings (as defined above), the remainder of the 44 spaces are filled with names drawn by a lottery, while keeping the Spanish/English proportion. In order to determine a child's category for entering the lottery, the child will take a language assessment.

**6. Deadlines:**

Lottery cards received after the closing of the kindergarten registration date will be kept on file in case an opening should occur at a future date. All lottery cards for the initial kindergarten lottery drawing must be turned into the Escondido School Office by the kindergarten registration deadline.

**7. Wait List**

Lottery cards not drawn in the original lottery will be kept on file until the end of kindergarten, in case an opening should occur at a future date. If a name is drawn, and the applicant does not begin the program, then the lottery card is removed from the pool.

**8. First through fifth grade enrollment**

In order to apply for the Spanish Immersion program in grades 1-5 registration cards may be turned in at any time during the year at the Escondido School Office. Registration cards will be kept on file. As openings occur, parents will be contacted in the order of dated application. All students entering grades 1-5 will have their Spanish skills assessed, in order to determine if they are within the acceptable range for the grade they will enter.

## Important Dates for the Spanish Immersion Lottery and Registration

- **Parent Information Meeting:**
  - *Date: Thursday, Jan. 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2015*
  - *Time: 7:00-8:30 pm*
  - *Location: Library (English)/ Room 13 (Spanish)*
- **Classroom Visit Days:**  
**(Lottery Cards will be given on these dates)**
  - *Date: Friday, Jan 30<sup>th</sup> / Monday, Feb 2<sup>nd</sup> / Tuesday Feb 10<sup>th</sup>*
  - *Time: 9:00-9:45 am*
  - *Location: Spanish Immersion classrooms & library*
- **Deadline to turn in lottery cards:**
  - *Date: February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2015*
  - *Time: 4:00 pm*
  - *Location: Escondido Office*
- **Lottery**
  - *Date: March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2014*
  - *Time: TBD*
  - *Location: District Office*
- **Spanish Immersion Student Assessment:**
  - *Date: March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>*
  - *Time: 8:30-3:00 pm*
  - *Location: Escondido Staff lounge*
- **Deadline to accept enrollment:**
  - *Date: March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2015*
  - *Time: 4: 00 pm*