

# The ACIE Newsletter

News from the American Council on Immersion Education

## Parent Activism : A Critical Component for Secondary Immersion

by Martha Johnson, Spanish Immersion parent and former Coordinator, Highland Park Senior High, St. Paul, MN

*Editor's Note: Spanish Immersion Parent Activist, Karen Plaza, and Secondary Immersion Curriculum Coordinator, Martha Johnson, were preparing to co-author this article when Karen died suddenly and unexpectedly in December 2002. This article is dedicated to the memory of Karen Plaza, whose tireless efforts towards building a strong immersion program at the secondary level continue to inspire others to realize this dream.*

**I**f you build it, they will come." Parent activists in Saint Paul, Minnesota, used this slogan while lobbying administrators and school board members to extend the district's popular Spanish Immersion Program into the high school. Early in 1995, the superintendent decided there were not sufficient numbers to justify a continuation of the program into senior high, "We will reconsider adding a program when there are more students." This was not the answer Spanish Immersion parents wanted to hear. Eighth grade students and parents felt betrayed. After all, these students had been the "guinea pigs" all the way through, the ones who had "new" teachers each year as the program added a grade. Parents and students argued that if the district waited there would never be enough students to build a quality continuation immersion program. Nothing changed.

So parents decided to make their voices heard. From February to May of 1995 hundreds of parents made phone calls, wrote letters, lobbied school board members, and organized meetings. They insisted that the district could not wait to extend the program even though there were only fourteen Spanish Immersion 8th graders at the time. More than 200 parents and children attended the final school board meeting in May where student after student, from kindergarten to 8th grade,

made presentations in Spanish and English about the need for the program to continue.

During the break before the final school board vote on the issue, two parent leaders (one who worked as a professional lobbyist) went out in the hall to "work" the board one more time. They came back and related the news up and down the rows of parents. It was unanimous; Spanish Immersion would continue at the senior high. There was a collective sigh of relief, and the verdict was clear: Parent activism *can* make the difference for the survival of a secondary immersion program!

### SPANISH IMMERSION CONTINUES INTO THE HIGH SCHOOL

The Spanish Immersion Program at Highland Park Senior High began the next fall, in September of 1995 with two classes: Spanish Immersion Language Arts and Spanish Immersion Social Studies. In addition, one teacher was given a 55-minute class period to coordinate the program. Since then, many changes have occurred at the senior high school. Site-based management expanded, the school transitioned to a 4-period day, the International Baccalaureate and Liberal Arts Programs blossomed and, most recently, Smaller Learning Communities were introduced. As for the

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May 2003

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Theme Issue:

Secondary Immersion

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Volume 6, Number 3

**American Council on Immersion Education**

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Parents and teachers who have advocated tirelessly for elementary immersion programs will no doubt recognize themselves in the pages of this newsletter. They will surely applaud the unremitting efforts of those who have labored against great odds to continue these programs into middle, junior, and senior high schools across the country. Budget cuts, increasingly recalcitrant pre-adolescents,

community perceptions of elitism and privilege, all these and more conspire against the best intentions and beliefs of immersion advocates that to end immersion education at grade five or six is to leave a good job unfinished.

We hope you enjoy this special focus issue—our second annual one—and will find in it reason enough to continue your own pursuit of excellence in immersion education.

—Kimerly Miller, Editor

“

...No matter where our kids go in life, no matter what they decide to do, or where their interests lie, they will always share one really simple and important piece. Something that we as parents have helped instill and nurture within each of them, and that is — they are part of something greater than just

## One Person Can Make a Difference

by Liz Hathaway-Castelan, Social Studies teacher, Highland Park Junior High Spanish Immersion, St. Paul, MN

I first met Karen Plaza a year and a half ago. To me, that seems incredible. It feels like I knew her for much more than that. I know it is because of the huge impact she had on me and the Spanish Immersion Program at Highland Junior High.

Our relationship began when she first introduced herself as a parent of a new seventh grade student in my class, followed by her simple offer to help out in any way that she could. I responded that I was looking for someone to write an article for the school newspaper about the Spanish Immersion Program. That, it seems, was all it took to set Karen in motion.

From that moment on, our program and school has not been the same. Within months of that first encounter, Karen had organized us into a community of parents and teachers who worked to better the program and school. We met and planned family events like picnics, hayrides, potluck dinners, bowling evenings, and a Mexican celebration of the Feast of the Three Kings—all because Karen was leading us. We proactively promoted the expansion of the program into the Senior High, writing letters and making phone calls which caused the

curriculum for the Senior High to be reevaluated and rewritten. And Spanish Immersion parents were recruited to be on our Site Council. All this happened because Karen was leading us. She created an e-mail list to communicate with parents and teachers, scrambled to meet newsletter deadlines, wrote flyers for students to take home, and made calls to set up events and encourage parental involvement. Her efforts made a difference.

Karen's passion for the Spanish Immersion Program was contagious. Her unwavering belief that world language education at an early age can broaden horizons and enhance communication across community borders was inspirational. Her passion made all of us—teachers, administrators, parents, and students—stand taller, reach farther, and become inspired to be even better. She created a model group of families and teachers working together to help young people feel connected and grow in the learning of Spanish.

I used to worry about Karen's daughter graduating because Karen had become so involved in the Junior High. I no longer have to worry about that. Karen's influence will never go away. She will always be encouraging us, prodding us,



## Parent Activism, *continued from page 1*

immersion program, the coordinator time was eliminated and Social Studies classes were no longer being offered. By the 2001-02 school year, although the number of Spanish Immersion students in grades 9-12 had risen to more than 75, the immersion program had been reduced to one Language Arts course offering each semester.

Throughout the 2001-02 school year the 7-8 grade junior high immersion parents organized monthly events and business meetings that quickly revealed issues and parental concerns with the Spanish Immersion Program at the senior high. Mere survival was no longer the main interest—parents wanted to see the program expand and address deeper issues of program quality, such as curriculum alignment and continued language development.

With these goals in mind, the junior high immersion parents identified specific areas of

concern, designed an action plan, and shared information with each other to carry out the plan. As before, they wrote letters, attended meetings and made phone calls. Although there were many committed parents, the effort drew most of its momentum from its leader, Karen Plaza. She created an email list to keep parents informed. She developed flyers for students to take home about parent meetings and immersion gatherings, wrote articles for the school newsletter and encouraged stronger parental involvement, lobbying for parents to join the school's site council. One of Karen's emails stated, "We parents need to be involved: listening to, speaking for and taking action based on our concerns for our students and program." Karen became the catalyst that brought people together. Hard work and determination eventually led to a meeting with the school district's

*Parent Activism, continued on page 4*

### Highland Park Senior High Spanish Immersion Courses: A Four-Year Rotating Cycle\*

Spanish Immersion (SI) Course Offerings Available For 9th Graders Only							
2003-2004		2004-2005		2005-2006		2006-2007	
<b>Grammar Review and Writing (Qtr)</b>	Connections (Qtr)	<b>Grammar Review and Writing (Qtr)</b>	Connections (Qtr)	<b>Grammar Review and Writing (Qtr)</b>	Connections (Qtr)	<b>Grammar Review and Writing (Qtr)</b>	Connections (Qtr)
Spanish Immersion (SI) Course Offerings Available to Students In Grades 9-12							
2003-2004		2004-2005		2005-2006		2006-2007	
• Language Arts •							
<b>Public Speaking (Qtr)</b>	<b>Creative Writing (Qtr)</b>	<b>Caribbean Literature (Qtr)</b>	<b>Film Studies and Human Rights (Qtr)</b>	<b>Legends (Sem)</b>	Perspectives in Language and Literature (Sem)		
<b>Dramatic Arts (Sem)</b>		Modern Latin American Literature (Sem)		<b>Storytelling (Sem)</b>	<b>Service-Learning (Sem)</b>		
• Social Studies •							
Global Studies (Sem)		Cultural Anthropology (Qtr)	Political Science (Qtr)	<b>Geography (Sem)</b>		History of Latin America (Sem)	
• Math •							
<b>Intermediate Algebra II Or Geometry (Sem)</b>		<b>Intermediate Algebra II Or Geometry (Sem)</b>		<b>Intermediate Algebra II Or Geometry (Sem)</b>		<b>Intermediate Algebra II Or Geometry (Sem)</b>	

**Bold script = Pre-International Baccalaureate Designation (Pre-IB)**  
**Bold and Italicized Script = International Baccalaureate Designation (IB)**

\*Highland Park Senior High uses a four-period block schedule. Students register for a combination of semester-long (18 weeks) and quarter-long (9 weeks) courses. A variety of Spanish Immersion classes are offered each year in three core content areas: Math, Social Studies, and Spanish Language Arts. Spanish immersion students are expected to register for a minimum of one Spanish Immersion course per year. Through these content-based classes this program seeks to advance students' Spanish language proficiency in all areas while providing them with a first-class academic education.

## *Parent Activism*, continued from page 3

area superintendent who assured the parents that curriculum changes would be made.

### SPANISH IMMERSION PLANS CREATIVELY ADDRESS KEY SECONDARY CHALLENGES

Once again, parent advocacy produced results. The district hired the former secondary immersion coordinator during the summer of

2002. Together with the high school Spanish Immersion Language Arts teacher, they designed an expanded 4-year cycle of courses for students in grades 9-12 taking into consideration many of the unique challenges that exist at the senior high school (see course overview on page 3).

**Key Challenge #1: Low enrollment and the**

### *Highland Park Senior High: A Sampling of Spanish Immersion Courses*

#### Especially for 9th Graders

##### **Spanish Immersion - Highland Connections (8015/8515)**

*1 Quarter – 1 Credit Per Quarter  
Required for Spanish Immersion 9th graders*

*Prerequisite - Spanish Immersion students only  
Grad Standard – Career Investigation*

**Course Description:** Spanish Immersion Highland Connections is a one-quarter course that will introduce freshman Spanish Immersion students to Highland Park Senior High School, its community, history, traditions and expectations. It will provide students with practice in development of responsibility, self-discipline, and skills in dealing with stress. It will provide experience in communicating with others in Spanish and resolving conflicts, and practice using important study skills. Students will participate in activities related to cultural diversity. Finally, the course provides experience in analysis of interests, aptitudes, work-related values, career exploration, resume writing and making educational plans for the years at Highland and beyond.

#### For 9th-12th Graders

##### • *Spanish Immersion Social Studies* •

##### **Spanish Immersion – Global Studies (8019/8519) (2003-04)**

*2 Quarters - 1 Credit Per Quarter  
Elective 9, 10, 11, 12  
Perspectives 7.3*

*Prerequisite - Spanish language proficiency  
Grad Standard - People and Cultures: Diverse Perspectives 7.3*

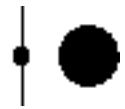
**Course Description:** Global Studies is a comparative study of different regions and cultures in the world. Particular emphasis will be given to population, gender issues, religion and environmental concerns. Students will explore how these issues have evolved within different societies. Students will have an opportunity to study a particular region in depth. All course work and discussions will be in Spanish. Students will develop the knowledge and skills necessary to satisfy the Minnesota Graduation Standard: People and Cultures: Diverse Perspectives 7.3.

##### • *Spanish Immersion Language Arts* •

##### **Spanish Immersion – Public Speaking Pre-IB (7011/7611)**

*1 Quarter - 1 Credit Per Quarter  
Elective 9, 10, 11, 12  
Performance 3.1*

*Prerequisite - Spanish language proficiency  
Grad Standard - Literacy Arts/Creation*



***need to integrate the program and students within the larger school community.***

Today there are about 85 immersion students in grades 9-12. Offering a four-year rotating cycle of courses open to students in grades 9-12 provides the needed numbers of students and allows more efficient use of existing secondary teachers. We are also working to re-define the Spanish Immersion Program to see how it fits within the context of the high school's Smaller Learning Communities. While this reflects one effort to integrate within the larger school community, a second effort involves inviting enrollment in immersion courses offerings to select non-immersion students. This group includes native speakers who demonstrate strong language and literacy skills as well as a few very strong traditional Spanish Foreign Language students. We believe that it is important that we continue to include students from diverse language learning backgrounds who are interested in an immersion experience in the Spanish Immersion Program. At the same time, we are exploring ways to refine the enrollment criteria by developing appropriate assessments to ensure the requisite language proficiency and literacy skills of the non-immersion students.

***Key Challenge #2: Need to offer courses that students find attractive and interesting.***

To attend to this challenge, the new curriculum plan offers immersion students a greater array of classes, explores high-interest topics, and allows students access to “challenge” credits. Instead of just one language arts class each semester, for example, we now propose three content area options (one in math, social studies, and language arts).

In addition to this increased variety, we have purposefully selected course topics that we believe will appeal to students and that we know are unavailable in English: Cultural Anthropology, Political Science and Global Studies are a few examples. Creative Writing, Public Speaking, Film Studies and Human Rights, Dramatic

Arts and Service-Learning also add a more interesting twist to the Spanish language arts curriculum. More intriguing content through which to meet the Spanish language arts curriculum requirements gives students more options and increases student interest.

A third way to attract students to enroll in the immersion offerings is to ensure that students will not be asked to choose between doing immersion or “challenge” courses. “Challenge” courses include those with the desired Pre-IB/IB designation. Previously, many students were choosing not to take Spanish Immersion classes because they did not have the Pre-IB or IB status. Now students can take IB courses within the Spanish Immersion Program. We also hope a few of our new courses will eventually become part of the University of Minnesota's College in the Schools program. This program allows students to receive college credit for accredited courses taught in the students' high school.

***Key Challenge #3: Need to offer courses that meet curricular requirements established by the school and the state's graduation standards.***

Our curriculum plan gives students a way to fulfill the various requirements set forth by the school and the state. There are two one-quarter course offerings that target 9th graders only and will be offered every year to incoming immersion students. One of them, the Connections course, is required for all 9th graders in the school and until now has only been taught in English. It is a survey course designed to help students think about career options, the scope and sequence of the courses they will take at Highland, develop study and conflict resolution skills, and thoughtfully choose a Smaller Learning Community for their 10th – 12th grade years. By offering this class in Spanish students can meet the requirement and take a class in Spanish. We also looked long and hard at graduation requirements and

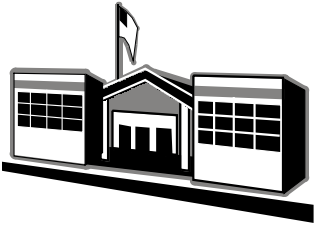
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...More intriguing content through which to meet the Spanish language arts curriculum requirements gives students more options and increases student interest.”

~ Martha Johnson

*Parent Activism, continued on page 19*

# Continuing Spanish Immersion at Lawrence North High School

By Mary Carr, Foreign Language Department Chair, Lawrence North High School, Indianapolis, IN



## SCHOOL PROFILE

There has been dramatic growth in the number of immersion programs during the last decade. More and more communities have chosen to support this educational option, whose benefits to students are well documented. In this feature we spotlight immersion schools and explore factors that make each one unique.



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*Editor's Note: ACIE's November 2002 issue (Vol. 6, No. 1) featured Forest Glen Elementary School, an International Magnet School with a Spanish Immersion Program within the school. We thought our readers would enjoy reading about what happens to the graduating 5<sup>th</sup> graders from this school as they continue on to the middle and high school levels in Lawrence Township, Indiana. Read on!*

**T**he Spanish Immersion Program of Lawrence Township, Indiana first welcomed elementary-age students in 1994. Each subsequent year another grade level was added at Forest Glen (FG) Elementary School until the program expanded to Craig Middle School in 1999. There, following research and discussion, the decision was made to continue with a partial immersion program in which science, social studies and Spanish Language Arts would be offered.

When planning for the high school component began in 2001, the goal was to develop a well-articulated program at Lawrence North High School. With help from a Foreign Language Assistance Program (FLAP) grant, teachers at Craig Middle School and Lawrence North High School began to plan and develop an immersion program sequence. The idea was to develop a separate track for them rather than infuse them into the upper level classes that are part of the regular Spanish sequence of courses.

## IMPORTANT ISSUES

Program planning for secondary immersion introduces a unique set of challenges. What content areas will make up the curriculum? Where will we find qualified licensed teachers? What materials and resources are available and appropriate for these students and the course content? Will we attract a sufficient number of students to be able to offer the courses? What follows is a description of how we have worked together to address these important issues.

## Curriculum Decisions

Immediately, the question arose of which content areas, other than Spanish language arts, could continue to be part of the immersion program. Because students take science and social studies at the middle school, these two content areas were considered for the high school part of the K-12 program. Since Lawrence North is a comprehensive four-year high school, students have a variety of courses they can select to fulfill the science requirements for graduation. Therefore, the decision was made to continue, at least for grade 9, with social studies. The courses developed and proposed to the Metropolitan School District of Lawrence Township and to the Indiana Department of Education were Spanish Immersion I and World Cultures, a social studies class that is a district requirement for graduation. These two courses make up one fourth of the students' eight-period-over-two-days block schedule. Because the students take four classes each day, students in the immersion program have one class a day in Spanish.

## Qualified Teachers

Finding qualified licensed teachers presented a problem. There were no native or near-native speakers of Spanish on the faculty who held a license to teach social studies. Since the first group of immersion students would number fewer than thirty, teachers of these students would also need to teach classes outside of the immersion program, which would require that they also have strong English skills. For the first year of the program, a teacher with near-native proficiency and a license in Spanish was



hired. A limited license to teach social studies was issued to the teacher. In addition to teaching the two immersion classes, the teacher was assigned to teach a Spanish I class and a Beginning English as Second Language class. Until there are enough students enrolled in the program, teachers will be expected to teach courses outside of the immersion curriculum.

**Appropriate Materials**

After developing the first two courses, it was easy to find challenging and appropriate materials for the Spanish language arts class. However, finding materials for the social studies class was difficult. Since the World Culture class is the Spanish version of an already existing, required class, the teacher spent many hours translating or creating materials so that the class standards could be met in Spanish. This year we will select texts to be used in social studies classes over the next six years. Fortunately, textbook companies are beginning to publish texts, not just supplements, in Spanish.

**Sufficient Enrollment**

Student enrollment in the program also needed to be addressed. Like many high schools, in order for a course to be offered, a minimum number of students must be enrolled. To insure adequate numbers, a decision was made to allow native Spanish speakers to enter the high school immersion program. For the most part this has been a good decision.



*A 9<sup>th</sup> grade North High immersion student presenting to his peers in Spanish Immersion I.*

**THE EVOLVING CURRICULUM**

In August of 2002, Lawrence North High School welcomed the first group of 28 students to the senior high immersion program. Fortunately, these students and their parents took a leap of faith when they enrolled in the program that a course of study would be developed beyond grade nine. Within the first weeks of school, a meeting was held with these students. Students were asked what they wanted from a high school immersion program. The response was clear: (1) students wanted the flexibility to select courses from other curricular areas, (2) they wanted an overseas experience, and (3) they desired recognition of their efforts in completing a 12-year immersion program.

Ideas for the rest of the high school program began to take shape as a result of the meetings

*Lawrence North High School, continued on page 8*

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*...Students were asked what they wanted from a high school immersion program. The response was clear: (1) students wanted the flexibility to select courses from other curricular areas, (2) they wanted an overseas experience, and (3) they desired recognition of their efforts in completing a 12-year immersion program.”*

*~ Mary Carr*

**Lawrence North High School's Spanish Immersion Program Plan**

Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Spanish Immersion I</li> <li>· World Cultures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Spanish Immersion II</li> <li>· Culture &amp; Diversity*</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· AP Spn Literature*</li> <li>· Culture &amp; Diversity*</li> <li>· Additional Proposed Class*</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· AP Spn Literature*</li> <li>· Cadet Teaching at FG</li> <li>· Additional Proposed Class*</li> <li>· Advanced Learning Experience</li> </ul>

*\*Course can be taken either year*



## THE BRIDGE

Educational research is vital to validating effective practices, challenging ineffective ones, and encouraging innovations. Yet research is only valuable if teachers read and implement findings in their classrooms.

The Bridge feature is included as an insert to encourage teachers to collect them for future reference. We hope this pull-out insert will help immersion teachers stay abreast of the latest research and allow it, when applicable, to affect their own practice.

This month's Bridge article, aimed at practitioners in two-way immersion schools but applicable to a one-way immersion setting as well, is an edited version of a report written in 2000 for the Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence (CREDE), a national research center funded by the Institute for Education Sciences (IES) of the U.S. Department of Education. Reprinted here with CREDE's permission, the editors believe our readers will find this report resembles closely both the format and the quality of writing that regularly characterize our Bridge feature.

The entire report, including profiles of each of the two-way immersion programs investigated, can be accessed at the CREDE website: <http://crede.ucsc.edu/products/print/eprs/epr5.html>.

The findings and opinions expressed here are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of IES.

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## Lawrence North High School, *continued from page 7*

with students (see *Spanish Immersion Program Plan page 7*). Two tenth-grade courses, Spanish Immersion II and Culture and Diversity, a class focusing on the cultures of Spain and selected Latin American countries were created and submitted for approval. In addition, the high school immersion staff developed a proposal for a four-year plan with required and elective courses that will ultimately lead to a special diploma issued by the Metropolitan School District of Lawrence Township for students completing the thirteen-credit program. The required courses in this proposed plan, which make up ten credits of the program, are

Spanish Immersion I, Spanish Immersion II, World Cultures, Culture and Diversity, and AP Spanish Literature. The elective possibilities for the additional three credits are: 1) student teaching in the immersion program at Forest Glen Elementary, 2) Advanced Learning Experience, which allows students to develop an independent project in an area of interest, 3) an overseas experience in Spain that is a home-stay/study program in the summer, and 4) an additional language arts class that is under development. Plans for assessing the immersion students' Spanish language development

*Lawrence North High School, continued on page 19*



# Organizational Pointers for Secondary Immersion Parents

by Martha Johnson, Spanish Immersion Parent, Highland Park Senior High, St. Paul, MN

The following initiatives have worked for parents at Highland Park High School in St. Paul, MN. We offer them here as possible recommendations to further the development of other secondary immersion programs.

✎ Write articles about the immersion program for the school newspaper.

✎ Organize regular meetings to bring parents, staff, and students together. Once a month hold a social event (bowling, hay ride, picnic, or cultural event) and hold a monthly meeting to proactively support the expansion of the program. Build a community and a unified voice. Make an action plan and follow through.

✎ Make phone calls and write letters to district officials asking for their support and thanking them for their efforts. Invite them to come to your meetings.

✎ Teach administrators about the importance of and passion you feel about immersion education. They need to understand the philosophy of immersion education.

✎ Create an email list and/or a local immersion listserv for parents to network and share ideas.

✎ Make sure there are immersion parents (and/or immersion teachers and students) on school Site Councils and other committees. Immersion parents in leadership roles can educate and advocate about immersion issues.

✎ Help organize a field trip for 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade immersion students to visit the schools where the program continues. Together with teachers host an immersion Open House at the senior high and invite students in grades 5-12 to participate. Invite administrators, teachers, parents, and students from the senior high to

talk to junior high parents and students. Invite administrators, teachers, parents and students from the junior high to talk to elementary parents and students. These events should be scheduled to happen in the months before the school choice applications are due.



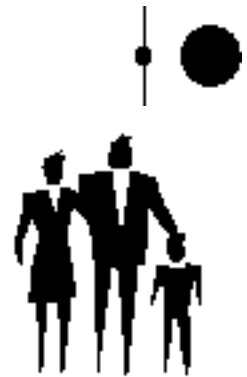
Spanish Immersion parent Nancy Houlton (right) answers questions from a prospective 7th grade student and her parents at Showcase Night.

✎ Organize a unified parent group to focus and express concerns. Work with Spanish Immersion teachers to understand what the real issues are. Establish clear goals. Communicate the goals with all immersion parents. Speak up and take action.

✎ Work together with the district/school. Be willing to discuss difficult issues with an open mind. Be ready to listen and learn.

✎ Identify the skills/availability of your parent group. Use those skills strategically to advance the goals. Are there any grant writers, lobbyists, listserv experts or cookie bakers in the group?

✎ It is very helpful if there is a main parent leader who can serve as the contact person, disseminator of information, and catalyst for



POINTS FOR PARENTS

Parents often are looking for a place to access ideas about how to support their children's education. Immersion parents who may or may not be fluent in the language their child is learning at school have many questions and concerns.

In this regular feature, we offer concrete suggestions for extra-curricular support of language learning. In addition, we address specific parent concerns and invite parents to share their experience and expertise.

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...Parental involvement and communication between home and school is one of the key factors in a student's success and achievement.”

~ Karen Plaza



## RESEARCH REPORTS

*In an effort to push the edge of what we currently know about learning, researchers continue to design and publish new studies on issues important to immersion education. Keeping up to date with current research is a time-consuming task.*

*This regular feature will help inform the immersion education public about recent research by providing our readers with brief summaries of selected studies.*

*Editor's Note: This article originally appeared in the ERIC/CLL News Bulletin, 23, 2, and is reprinted here with permission from the ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics.*

## High School Immersion in the United States: A Research Study

by Pat Barr-Harrison, Supervisor of Foreign Languages, Prince George's County (MD) Public Schools

**F**oreign language immersion programs offer all or part of the school curriculum through a foreign or second language. A number of these programs are in place across the country at the elementary school level, but there are very few language immersion programs at the high school level. At present, there are no national guidelines or standards for high school foreign language immersion programs in the United States. Immersion planners have few research studies or program evaluations to draw from and must develop their own objectives (Fortune & Jorstad, 1996).

This article describes a research study that sought to identify the program standards, goals, and special projects of existing high school immersion programs and to look for common features among them that could define models for future programs (Barr-Harrison, 1998). The study examined 15 of the 20 high school programs identified by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) in a recent survey of U.S. immersion programs (Rhodes & Seydel, 1999). In addition, experts in the field of immersion education were interviewed about the features they believe should be included in a high school immersion program. Survey results revealed three types of high school immersion programs, and analysis of interview data led to the compilation of a list of 18 essential features of a high school immersion program.

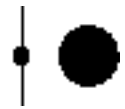
### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A 46-item questionnaire was sent to the 20 high school foreign language immersion programs identified in the 1999 CAL study. Questions were asked about program goals, number of content courses taught in the foreign language, content focus, assessment methods,

special projects, student exchange programs, and international and other travel opportunities. The first part of the questionnaire asked for information about program standards and objectives. The second part was designed to elicit information about a variety of topics, such as particular features or specific courses. The third part sought information about instructional practices and asked respondents to indicate if or how often a particular practice was used. Out of the 20 schools contacted for the study, 15 responded. Data analysis is based on the responses of these 15 programs.

In addition, 15 experts from various regions of the United States who had key professional roles in immersion education (educators, researchers, program planners, and resource center representatives) were interviewed about essential criteria for model high school immersion programs. The Delphi-Method, a technique for gathering information and consensus through interviews (Linstone & Turoff, 1975), was used in three rounds of interviews. The first two rounds of interviews defined the questions that were asked in the third round. The following questions were used in the third round of interviews:

- How would you define a standard for a high school immersion program?
- What are the main foci of a strong academic program in an immersion setting?
- How do you define the various high school immersion model types that exist in the U.S.?
- What do you see as major objectives of a national high school immersion model?
- What instructional strategies and activities are essential to a successful high school immersion model?
- What instructional outcomes should be assessed in a high school immersion model?
- What projects and travel components should be included in a national prototype model?
- What is your definition of an ideal high school immersion program?



To bring content validity and closure to the interviews, the researcher selected six additional foreign language immersion experts from six regions of the United States to discuss this question: What are three important characteristics of a high school immersion program? Responses from the interviews provided a broad spectrum of opinions from experts on immersion education across the United States. (For information on how the interview data were analyzed, see Barr-Harrison, 1998.)

#### SEVERAL FINDINGS FROM THE DATA

##### *Questionnaire data*

Questionnaire responses from the 15 immersion high schools provided valuable information. In response to questions about particular features of an immersion program, two thirds of the schools listed similar characteristics. These characteristics were subsequently used to divide programs into one of three program types (see below).

##### *Three Immersion Program Types*

###### *1. High school language and content immersion with continuity from elementary and middle school*

- Two or three immersion courses are offered as a unit that a group of immersion students can take at one time and that include content courses.
- Content courses in the foreign language continue from middle school programs.
- Foreign language content courses generally involve social studies and language arts. If a third course is included, it is usually science or creative arts.
- Special features include opportunities to use the target language outside the classroom, such as community service projects conducted in the target language and exchange programs.
- Special field experiences and preparation for Advanced Placement (AP) courses or the International Baccalaureate (IB) are included.

###### *2. High school language immersion continued*

###### *from elementary and middle school*

- Immersion students are grouped together for target language development classes and an advanced literature class.
- Students are given a proficiency test to determine what language course they will take (either a regular advanced language course or an immersion advanced course).
- Students continue target language development but without specified immersion goals. They register for the AP or IB test.
- Additional opportunities are available, such as study or travel abroad or participation in special projects.

###### *3. High school immersion with no prior elementary or middle school immersion experience*

- Immersion study begins in high school.
- Students must attend a summer readiness immersion program prior to entrance to prepare for the intensive foreign language experience in Grade 9.
- Three immersion courses are sequenced together as a unit; 10 immersion courses are required for graduation.
- Other opportunities are available, such as travel abroad and community service.

In response to questions regarding the skill areas in which immersion students needed the most improvement, more than half of the respondents (69%) felt that writing and reading skills needed to be improved. Results also showed that the most common content course taught in the target language was social studies. When asked if immersion program teachers were certified, 92% responded affirmatively. Other similarities included instructional practices. At least 67% of respondents reported that teachers used cooperative group structures in the immersion classroom, and as many as 85% stated that students developed their writing through essays. A majority (69%) of the respondents stated that teachers used authentic materials in the classroom to enhance lessons. Only four schools indicated that

*High School Immersion, continued on page 16*



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## GUEST INTERVIEW

*It is critically important for immersion educators to thoughtfully and proactively address articulation of immersion programs from the elementary to the secondary school level. For this issue, our editorial staff decided to interview a local administrator whose elementary program will be expanding into the junior high school, grades 7 and 8, in the 2003-04 school year.*



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## *Planning for Articulation: One Principal's Experience*

*Interview with Ursina Swanson, Principal, Park Spanish Immersion, St. Louis Park, MN*

**ACIE Staff:** Tell us a little bit about the elementary program.

**Ursina Swanson:** We're a K-6 Spanish full immersion school and we're in our 7th year. We have 500 kids at a time here in grades K through 6. We do all our subject areas in Spanish starting English in the second half of second grade. The first half of second grade we teach reading to those students who aren't readers and then we start in the second half of second grade with English instruction three times a week for 40 minutes. We try to have a very intentional view of delivering the Spanish as much as we can in, not just the in classrooms, but in the halls, in the social language in the cafeteria, whenever possible.

**ACIE:** Let's go on then and talk about the continuation program. Where will it be and when is it going to be starting?

**US:** We are the only immersion program in the district but the junior high years, grade 7 and 8 in this district, will be at the junior high. They'll have Spanish Language Arts and Social Studies taught in Spanish. The rest of the day they'll be part of a team.

**ACIE:** Will they be mixed in with other kids?

**US:** They will be with other kids except for the two Spanish immersion classes. When the task force worked on the junior high piece they were hoping for far more than just two courses out of the day. Ultimately, that wasn't possible. We have budget cuts in this district and it was felt that these kids already had so much language compared to the other students in the district for whom Spanish instruction was cut out of the elementary schools a couple years ago due to budget cuts. Our students are truly the only ones who have had any foreign language. A lot of people felt they've had so much

already that they weren't going to give them another half day in Spanish in the junior high years. Obviously, as an immersion educator, I find that is really too bad. Two courses out of a 7-period day is barely enough to maintain your language. And so, my hope is that we start this way and as people become more knowledgeable about what immersion means and what we need to do, they will open up the discussion again so that we can bring it to at least three classes out of that 7-period day.

**ACIE:** How many kids from the 6th grade will be going on into that program then?

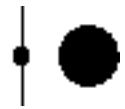
**US:** I think most of them will. We only started with 60 kids. We have 47 of those 60 left seven years later which I think is good.

**ACIE:** Will students need to enroll in all the immersion courses?

**US:** Yes, very definitely. You can't choose to do Language Arts and nothing else. We have decided we can't run that many different kinds of individualized programs. You're either part of the immersion program or you're not.

**ACIE:** Can you describe the process you went through to develop a plan for the continuation program in the middle school?

**US:** It started when the first group of parents visited Edina Valley View Middle school when their kids were only in 2nd or 3rd grade, I think. In some sense we maybe had too much time because the discussions went on almost too long rather than having a set amount of time and getting your work done and coming to a decision. I think it allowed in some sense a lot of community dialogue with people who weren't really familiar with immersion and what immersion needed. When I got here, we started a task force right away with the junior high principal and met every month for 2 1/2 years.



We looked at the research, looked at other schools, had other school principals come and talk to the group, looked at curriculum, looked at hiring, I mean, the gamut. We went through everything.

**ACIE:** If 2 1/2 years was too long, what do you think would be optimal?

**US:** About a year and a half. Because I think we *should* learn from the schools that have done it before. We do not, each district, need to reinvent the wheel. Yes, you need to bring a task force along, you do need to educate them and they need to do that first hand, not second hand. But I think we also need to be content when another school tells us, “This is what we did, this is what I wouldn’t do, this is what I would do,” and trust it.

**ACIE:** ...and so people got involved who weren’t necessarily...

**US:** ...knowledgeable. I brought people from this school and the junior high principal enlisted people from his school. Obviously, the people from this school, staff and parents, had a real vested interest. They were *very* dedicated, as immersion parents are. They never missed a meeting, they did their homework, their subcommittees did the work, they provided everybody with the research.

The junior high group was not strong enough. Most importantly, key decision makers weren’t on the task force. I think one of the lessons learned is very definitely that [the task force] needs to be more top heavy from the junior high than from the elementary site and it needs to have the decision makers in on it from the beginning. They need to be committed to it, not just the principal and two people. The site council has to be represented on the task force, the PTO, staff from each grade level and subject area. For some of them I think it was even, “I hope it doesn’t happen. I’m going to lose my job if these people come here.” So that was a weak link and I think that when it came down to making a decision, then people surfaced and said, “We don’t want this or they don’t need any more. We are not continuing a

program for people who have been advantaged all along.”

**ACIE:** Who were the people then that came along to begin with? The principal?

**US:** The principal and an assistant and a dean to begin with, but it should have been a broader group from the junior high. The expectation should have been put out there, you cannot miss this, this is something you really need to commit to. It ended up being a Park Spanish Immersion (PSI) task force because, yes, we were very eager that this would happen. Can you just see that dichotomy? It took me a little while to figure out who the players were.

**ACIE:** Presumably though, there had to be a decision from higher up that this dialogue would even take place between these two schools.

**US:** Yes, I wanted it to get started and [the junior high principal] knew it was coming. He had foresight, and he and I went to the superintendent and we said, “What is your mind on this? We are not going to spend 2 1/2 years in a task force and you will say, ‘I never wanted this.’ We need to have a green light...” and she recognized that this is something that needs to go on, that parents would never abide that this stop at 6th grade.

**ACIE:** Was it something that had to go past the school board then?

**US:** You know, at that point it didn’t. We went to the school board with our task force recommendations at the end of the 2 1/2 years. And, I think typically a school board will look to their superintendent and say, “What do you advise us on this? Is this something you support?” So I think that was a valid way to go about it.

**ACIE:** The main stumbling blocks you encountered in the process?

**US:** That if you’re going to put a task force together, make sure it’s got people who need to be educated on it from the junior high site,

*Articulation, continued on page 14*

“  
...The latest ACIE  
Newsletter was awesome! I  
found every article valuable  
and interesting.”  
~ Anne Moyano  
Spanish Immersion Prin-  
cipal

## Articulation, *continued from page 11*

“  
 ... I think one of the lessons learned is very definitely that [the task force] needs to be more top heavy from the junior high than from the elementary site and it needs to have the decision makers in on it from the beginning.”

people who do need to have input. That it isn't the elementary site pushing this thing along. [People from the junior high] need to own it.

**ACIE:** How did it eventually happen that the junior high people bought into the idea that [the immersion program] was going to be extended even though some of them feared the loss of their jobs?

**US:** I think the recognition by the principal that this was going to happen. It was our superintendent's desire as well as our clients. But it was an uphill battle. It could've gone either way. And I think the upshot of it is that we do have less than the maintenance level recommended by research.

**ACIE:** And that was primarily because the people who did get involved at the junior high level felt that...

**US:** There was not a lot of support because you can't support what you don't understand. It takes a while to understand immersion. You've got to read the research and you've got to hear other immersion educators and other administrators and teachers who've been through it. And to be given a decision to make without the knowledge, I think that's what we often run up against in immersion, where people make decisions about our schools, about us, who haven't been brought along in the education process and part of that education process is talking through the impact. This is the impact it will have if immersion is at the junior high. People always worry about their jobs. There's always attrition and so you fill that attrition by an immersion teacher who could also teach some English sections. But all of that is a process you've got to bring people through, and if people aren't at the table to be brought through the process, you have a lack of understanding and a lack of sympathy for what you're trying to get accomplished.

**ACIE:** You were saying that some of the teachers there felt that the students at the immersion program had already been privileged.

**US:** As you know, the elite piece is always stuck onto immersion schools, fairly or unfairly. It's kind of been a community sentiment. You can see that in budget cutting years when a whole community loses their language instruction at the elementary level because of budget cuts and then you have 47 students who have had, mind you, seven years of solid language, are totally bilingual. You can see where that comes in as a comparison piece.

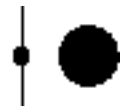
**ACIE:** Do you have recommendations for other elementary immersion programs?

**US:** Very definitely. Who is on the task force, what the expectations are, the attendance, that you bring people through the education piece of what immersion is, why it needs to continue, that you let them see other schools, talk to immersion educators, so it's not just you. That is so key. I learned a huge lesson out of that.

**ACIE:** What would you consider your greatest success in this whole process?

**US:** I think that an open-minded principal at the junior high who knew this was going to come was willing to step out and say, "Let's start looking at this" and has come through the process and has gained a great understanding about it. I think that's a big success. He's learned over this process what needs to happen at his site...and he recognizes the value.. he's eager for these kids to be there. They test well, they do well, they've learned to study hard. They're bilingual. I think we should have had more of the staff at that level, you know. But I think we got the leader to understand. I think that's a success piece. I think that in budget cutting times that it's even happening is also a success.

**ACIE:** Is there any other thing that you would add to the list of challenges?



**US:** I think another challenge is that our numbers aren't right. I know that numbers have to break right for your budget not to be impacted. You have to have that critical mass up front to bring an adequate number to junior high to run a valid program. Technically immersion doesn't cost that much more. Teachers have to be hired all the time. There's always attrition. Books in Spanish, yes, that's a cost. But beyond that it shouldn't cost a lot more. So starting with the right number of students up front, that is something so hard to get through to people.

**ACIE:** And what do you think that number is?

**US:** I think around a hundred sounds right because then you come with 75, 70 kids. 75 - we would've had 3 sections. That would've been the right number. But I think that goes seven years back. You've got to make the right decision.

**ACIE:** And you're doing that now because you've got...

**US:** We're up to 87 but we're still not at 100 where we should be so that it breaks neat and clean at the junior high level.

**ACIE:** Did you find any research-based literature that was helpful in articulating the need for the program?

**US:** Well, I found some. Tara Fortune helped me. I actually had her come and talk to the school board once, too. It was [also important] to bring in other immersion administrators and say, "Look, we've been through this." I think of [the principal] from [a local middle school] who came and said, "Trust me, whether you like it, this is how it should break out. This is what you need to talk to the parents about."

**ACIE:** Any other thoughts or reflections?

**US:** A recommendation I would have is that all this learning that we've done, man hours we've spent, ought to be compiled somewhere so that's it's easily accessible so someone else

doesn't have to do it again. We all do it in isolation and that's not necessary.

The other piece is hiring. We're going to work very closely with the junior high because one thing we've done very well here at PSI is keep our Spanish level very, very high. We've had the same two people do oral and written assessments of all our candidates. In fact, it's the first step we ask any candidate to take and if they don't pass that, we don't even go on with the interview process. And we're going to continue that for the junior high. We'll do it here.

**ACIE:** You've worked out something, then, with the junior high principal.

**US:** Exactly. So that we know that the immersion language will be at the high level that we've tried to keep it at. I think that's another piece that's key.

Our media specialist did the first order of books for the media center because their media specialist has never done it. They got together and placed the order for the first set of Spanish books for their Spanish collection over there. That's another piece, you know. You've got to give them some help if you're going to expect them to do it because for many people that's kind of intimidating. "I've never looked at a Spanish catalog. Where do I start?" And it's not like ordering English books, as you know. The Spanish books don't come catalogued and ready to be shelved. There's all kinds of work that needs to happen. They're very much harder to obtain in the first place, too. We will continue working with the junior high because we want to support that program.

**ACIE:** Who's going to be working on the curriculum for these courses?

**US:** Well, it'll be the teachers that they hire. They had hoped somebody from here would go there, and I think that would be the ideal piece. I don't know if that's going to happen.

○

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## High School Immersion: Research Study, *continued from page 11*

they had an exchange program.

### Interview data

Through the interview data, 18 key characteristics of effective high school immersion programs were identified. These characteristics include incorporating national K–12 foreign language standards or second language content standards; developing students' writing through essays, the World Wide Web, and e-mail; including at least 3 hours of daily immersion instruction in selected courses; and including special language service projects in the community for immersion students during their junior and senior years. Additionally, the content of high school immersion education should be determined by the school district. National guidelines should include generic content that most programs can use for planning purposes.

### CONCLUSION

The results of this study are significant for program planners, because there are few studies of secondary-level language immersion in the United States. The questionnaire data have revealed patterns among existing high school immersion programs that have helped to define three types of high school immersion, and interview results from foreign language immersion experts have been used to identify a list of characteristics that will help guide the planning of future programs. In addition, most questionnaire and interview respondents believed that the national foreign language standards (National Standards for Foreign Language Education Project, 1996) should help frame guidelines for high school immersion in the United States. ○

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...In response to questions regarding the skill areas in which immersion students needed the most improvement, more than half of the respondents (69%) felt that writing and reading skills needed to be improved. Results also showed that the most common content course taught in the target language was social studies...”

~ Pat Barr-Harrison





## U.S. Secondary Immersion Programs

This summary table offers information about the number of U.S. immersion programs that articulate to the middle school, junior high and senior high levels. It is based on information gathered and made available by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) in Washington, DC. If you are interested in learning if your program is included in the CAL directories on immersion education, we encourage you to visit the CAL website (see URLs below). Information about who to contact in order to add your immersion program to the directory or update information about your program is provided below.

*Summary Table: U.S. Secondary Immersion Programs 2002*

	Middle School/ Junior High	Senior High
<b>One-Way (Foreign Language) Immersion*</b>		
Spanish	25	8
French	8	2
Japanese	3	1
German	3	—
<b>Two-Way (Dual Language) Immersion**</b>		
Spanish < > English	9	6
Cantonese < > English	2	1
French < > English	1	2
Korean < > English	1	—

### ONE-WAY (FOREIGN LANGUAGE) IMMERSION\*

Center for Applied Linguistics. (December, 2002). *Directory of Foreign Language Immersion Programs in U.S. Schools*. Retrieved April 28, 2003, from <http://www.cal.org/ericcll/immersion/ImmersionSearch.jsp>

First compiled by CAL in 1981, this directory was most recently updated and enhanced, including improvements in appearance and searchability, in December 2002. If you represent one of the programs in the directory and wish to update or make corrections to the entry for your program, please e-mail Lisa Biggs at [lisa@cal.org](mailto:lisa@cal.org)

### TWO-WAY (DUAL LANGUAGE) IMMERSION\*\*

Center for Applied Linguistics. (October, 2002). *Directory of Two-Way Bilingual Immersion Programs in the U.S.* Retrieved April 28, 2003, from [www.cal.org/twi/directory](http://www.cal.org/twi/directory)

This searchable database contains profiles of 248 two-way immersion programs in 23 states and the District of Columbia. The directory was last updated on October 30, 2002, with 266 programs in 23 states. To add your program to our directory, or to change information in your program's entry, please e-mail Julie Sugarman at [twi@cal.org](mailto:twi@cal.org).



2003 CARLA SUMMER

INSTITUTES FOR  
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*Immersion 101:  
An Introduction to Immersion  
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Minneapolis, Minnesota

Presenters: Amy Egenberger, Tara Fortune, and David Downs-Reid

*Meeting the Challenges of Im-  
mersion Education:  
Is Immersion for All?*

August 11–15, 2003

Minneapolis, Minnesota

Presenters: Tara Fortune with  
guests presenters.

For more details on the Immersion  
Summer Institutes, see the CARLA  
website at <http://carla.acad.umn.edu/summerinst.html>.



## TECHNO TIPS

Technology and second language education are a natural match, as both enable us to explore our world more directly. In this column, Techno Tips, we highlight successful applications of technology in and around the immersion classroom.

## Websites for Secondary Immersion Students

### SPANISH AND FRENCH RESOURCES

[www.ebsi.umontreal.ca/jetrouve/projet/index.htm](http://www.ebsi.umontreal.ca/jetrouve/projet/index.htm)

This site will help students organize and write a research paper for an immersion class. Maintained by the École de bibliothéconomie et des sciences de l'information (EBSI) at the Université de Montréal, this site is very extensive and has translations of the main page in Spanish and Italian which identifies six steps for carrying out a research project (see Spanish-language sample below).

Las 6 etapas de un proyecto de búsqueda de información	
Sección de un (sitio) web completo de búsqueda de información	
Además, usted puede acceder en español a:	
<b>Estepa 1</b> Definiendo el tema	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Análisis de temas que debe entender</li> <li>➤ Definir el tema</li> <li>➤ Ser legítimo, viable, global, útil, etc.</li> <li>➤ Darse a elegir los datos que se van a usar</li> <li>➤ Buscar un plan de trabajo y un plan de trabajo</li> </ul>
<b>Estepa 2</b> Búsqueda de información	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Identificar fuentes y los términos de búsqueda</li> <li>➤ Convierte otros palabras clave, palabras de investigación</li> <li>➤ Buscar palabras que se pueden profundizar</li> </ul>
<b>Estepa 3</b> Seleccionar los documentos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Cuestionar primero los documentos elegidos</li> <li>➤ Identificar los términos de búsqueda</li> <li>➤ Tomar en cuenta la relevancia</li> </ul>
<b>Estepa 4</b> Recolección de información	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Los documentos</li> <li>➤ Los documentos y personas</li> <li>➤ Características y cómo se usan los documentos</li> </ul>
<b>Estepa 5</b> Análisis de información	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Análisis de la información recolectada</li> <li>➤ Perfeccionar el plan de trabajo de trabajo</li> </ul>
<b>Estepa 6</b> Consultar la información	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Revisión de fuentes</li> <li>➤ Comparar con otras fuentes de información</li> <li>➤ Qué más buscar</li> <li>➤ Revisión de trabajo</li> </ul>
<b>Vuelva sobre el plan de trabajo</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Memorandum de un(a) trabajo</li> </ul>

Steps in Spanish for organizing and writing a research paper from the University of Montreal's website.

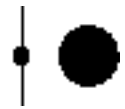
### FRENCH RESOURCES

[www.youthlinks.org/defaultUnit.do](http://www.youthlinks.org/defaultUnit.do)

YouthLinks, the Historica Foundation's program for secondary French immersion school students, is a collaborative web-based learning project that provides opportunities for building critical analysis, team work and problem solving skills as well as understanding important global topics and issues.

<http://www.lactualite.com>

The French equivalent of the English MacLeans (a Canadian weekly current events magazine), this site is a great resource for current events, covering topics ranging from science and technology, health and education, world events, entertainment and more.



## *Parent Activism,* continued from page 5

developed courses that would satisfy them. As a result, Minnesota Graduation Standards are explicitly embedded within most Spanish immersion courses

### WHERE WE ARE NOW

We are working towards full implementation. However, our success will depend on the school's budget, staff availability, and student enrollment in the courses. There is still much to be done. We are already working on staffing these courses for next year, helping the senior high administration create the schedule to include the new courses within the context of the Smaller Learning Communities, finding appropriate textbooks, and developing the actual course curriculum. Parents are actively helping with the course registration process. We are also seeking collaboration with the University of Minnesota to offer SI social studies classes to juniors and seniors for college credit through the University of Minnesota's College in the Schools Program.

Back in 1994-1995, parent activism was the driving force behind the survival of the Continuation Spanish Immersion Program at Highland Senior High. Now, it is the driving force behind

refinement and promotion of an expanded, stronger, more effective curriculum. To ensure its future, Spanish Immersion parents, teachers and administrators must continue to grapple with the complexities of secondary education. We have come a long way over the past two years learning how to pool our ideas and to come up with creative solutions to complicated issues. Karen often closed her email updates with, "Working together we can and do make a difference." That says it all. Thank you, Karen, for your hard work and dedication. ○

## *Lawrence North High School,* continued from page 8

are also in place. In addition to sitting for the AP Literature Exam, students are being encouraged to sit for the AP Spanish Language Exam and the Diploma Español como Lengua Extranjera, a language assessment tool offered by the Spanish Ministry of Education.

The Spanish Immersion program being developed at Lawrence North High School is unique. As with any evolving program, it will have highs and lows as it continues to grow. In 2006 the first group of immersion students will graduate and the program will be fully developed. At the writing of this article, students are signing up for classes for the 2003-04 academic year. It appears that most of the students in the ninth grade are continuing on to grade 10 and next year's ninth-

grade students are enrolling for the ninth-grade courses. We find that to be very good news. ○

### ARE YOU A LIM-A

#### LISTSERV PARTICIPANT?

*LIM-A, a listserv for Language Immersion in the Americas, was established in 1995 to facilitate the networking of parents, teachers, administrators, researchers, and others involved with language immersion education in North, South, and Central America. This listserv seeks to provide opportunities to collaborate and exchange ideas and experiences for immersion educators in the Americas, regardless of particular immersion emphasis. To subscribe, send a message to:*

*listserv@tc.umn.edu*

*The message (without subject line or signature) should read:*

*subscribe LIM-A yourfirstname  
yourlastname*

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Manuscripts should be between 750 and 1,500 words. All references and notes should follow the specifications described in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA), 5th edition, and must be placed at the end of the article. Please include the title of the article, your name, address, telephone number, e-mail address, institution, a short biography as well as pictures.

Manuscripts can be submitted, preferably by email, to:

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The American Council on Immersion Education (ACIE) is an organizational network for individuals interested in immersion education – teachers, administrators, teacher educators, researchers, and parents.

Conceived by immersion teachers in Minnesota and funded in part by the National Language Resource Center (NLRC) in the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition

(CARLA) at the University of Minnesota, ACIE aims to facilitate communication among immersion teachers and others interested in immersion education.

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## ACIE NEWSLETTER/MAY 2003

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# Implementing Two-Way Immersion Programs in Secondary Schools

by Christopher L. Montone and Michael I. Loeb, *Center for Applied Linguistics, Washington, DC*

## Introduction

Two-way immersion (TWI) programs have been gaining popularity over the past decade, and have recently begun to proliferate at a rapid pace across the United States. In TWI programs, language minority and language majority students are integrated for all or most of the day and receive content and literacy instruction through both English and the minority language, with the goals of promoting academic achievement, bilingualism and biliteracy development, and cross-cultural competence in all students (Christian, 1994; Genesee, 1999). There are many reasons for the popularity of these programs, including opportunities for federal and state funding, interest from parents, and the publicized success that some two-way programs have had in educating both language minority and majority children. While the numbers have grown from 30 documented programs in 1987 (Lindholm, 1987) to 261 in 1999 (Loeb, 1999), the vast majority of these programs operate at the elementary school only. To date, very few programs have effectively carried on into the middle school (26) and fewer still to high school (8) (Loeb, 1999).

There are two main reasons for the small number of secondary TWI programs at this time. First, because the growth of TWI is a recent phenomenon and most TWI programs start with a single cohort of students in kindergarten, adding additional grade levels and cohorts each year, there has not been a sizeable number of TWI programs in need of expansion to the secondary level until this time. Second, the structure of secondary schools often complicates the continuation of TWI programs. For example, in secondary programs, students have greater freedom of course selection than they do in elementary school, meaning that TWI course offerings must be scheduled in such a way as to not interfere with core courses or popular electives. In addition, secondary teachers tend to teach a single academic domain rather than all content areas, meaning that several bilingual teachers may need to be hired in order to perpetuate the program at the secondary level. These issues and others will be discussed in the following sections.

This preliminary report serves two purposes: 1) to present the challenges that districts face in operating their two-way programs at levels above the elementary school, and 2) to present options for meeting these challenges based on the experiences of programs that have tried to move to the secondary school level, whether successfully or not. In addition, there are a few programs that have not relied on elementary level feeder schools to populate their programs, but have started from scratch at the middle or high school level. These programs' experiences will also be considered.

While reading this document, it is important to keep in mind that the information presented here is anecdotal and self-reported. Currently, the number of secondary TWI programs in operation is minimal; subsequently, there is no existing research base on their effectiveness. At the same time, because of the growth and expansion of elementary TWI programs, there is increasing interest in the design and implementation of secondary programs. For that reason, a logical first step seemed to be to contact existing programs to find out more about what they are doing and how well it is working. The resulting document is descriptive; in the absence of any other information on the

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topic, we believe that it provides a useful introduction for programs that are considering expansion to the secondary level.

## Assembling the Information

This report is based on information obtained during telephone interviews with school or district personnel across the country who were involved and intimately familiar with a middle or high school two-way immersion program. In some cases, the programs were no longer in operation—because they had lost support at the school or district level, experienced a significant drop in language minority students coming to the district or school, or because the program was incorporated into the elementary school. Interviews were conducted with personnel from these programs to discover what, if any, specific obstacles or challenges led to the discontinuation of the program at the secondary level. It was felt that such information would be beneficial for schools or districts to know when planning their own programs, to help them prepare for the possibility of facing similar challenges.

In the end, representatives of seven programs were interviewed (School profiles and contact information may be accessed on the website, see reference section). One program was close enough for the authors to observe the transition of its middle school program from one school to another in the district, so they were able to gather more documentation on that district's planning and implementation of secondary two-way immersion. A site visit to another program also permitted a closer look at the only program that started at the high school level rather than building on an established elementary TWI program, as other existing secondary TWI programs have done. All of the information about the other programs was gathered via telephone interviews and from the Directory of Two-Way Bilingual Programs in the U.S. (Christian & Whitcher, 1995).

## Benefits of Two-Way Immersion in Secondary School

While this report focuses on the challenges of implementing secondary TWI programs and strategies to address them, we should first note that there are many potential benefits to be derived from implementing or continuing a two-way program at the secondary level. Of course, the greatest may come from giving secondary students access to continued development of language skills and cultural knowledge that will be marketable assets.

Benefits shared with most elementary TWI programs	Additional benefits of middle/high school TWI programs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Lower likelihood of tracking and other practices that might be detrimental to language minority students</li> <li>· Development of bilingualism and biculturalism</li> <li>· Development of positive cross-cultural attitudes</li> <li>· Development of cognitive flexibility</li> <li>· Provision of an efficient model for serving the second language needs of English language learners and native speakers of English</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Continued development of second language skills</li> <li>· Preparation to enter advanced language courses in high school or college</li> <li>· Preparation for International Baccalaureate (IB) programs in high school</li> <li>· Preparation for additional languages in high school or beyond</li> <li>· Preparation to earn college credit through Advanced Placement language exams</li> </ul>

## Challenges Faced in Secondary Programs

School districts confront many challenges in attempting to extend programs to the middle or high school level. There are still more challenges if they attempt to create programs at the secondary level in the absence of elementary feeder schools. This report focuses on core issues faced by all programs:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Planning the program</li> <li>2. Language distribution, curriculum, and materials</li> <li>3. Student participation and motivation</li> <li>4. Attrition and late entries</li> <li>5. Student scheduling</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Teams, clusters, and houses</li> <li>7. Staffing</li> <li>8. Transportation</li> <li>9. Parent involvement</li> </ol> |
|---|---|

Each of these issues is examined individually below. Each section summarizes the information provided by the

program representatives consulted and features options, ideas, and suggestions that they have either implemented or would recommend based on their experience to date.

### ***Planning the Program***

Existing TWI programs recommend that new programs take at least one year to plan prior to implementation. A committee or task force created to lead the planning efforts would take on some of these activities:

- Compiling information and evidence to convince the district powerbrokers of the need for or desirability of the program
- Giving a presentation to the school board in collaboration with teachers and students from the elementary program
- Helping to choose an appropriate site for the program
- Making recommendations on how the program should be structured (with regard to curriculum, materials, staffing, scheduling, transportation, and continued articulation with the elementary program)

In cases where there is no initial consensus for starting a new program or expanding an existing program to the secondary level, the planning stage can entail activities that will inform and persuade both the district powerbrokers and the community. Once these two groups are open to the idea of having the program, planning for all of the other components can take place. Of course, planning the entire program and then presenting the plan to the district administrators and the community is another option. However, if there is no support for the program, the planning time might have been wasted.

#### **Advice and Ideas**

- ✓ ***Include teachers from all subject areas, parents, students, counselors, and administrators.*** The more people involved in the decision making from the start, the more buy-in there is likely to be, resulting in support to keep the program going. If there is a sense of shared ownership, there will also be more people willing to help resolve programmatic dilemmas that may arise down the line. Convene meetings regularly and well in advance of the beginning of the first year. Assign sub-committees or task forces to deal with specific issues or tasks (e.g., scheduling and content, electives and extracurricular activities, parent survey).
- ✓ ***Conduct a parent survey*** the year before implementation to find out under what conditions parents would be willing to have their children continue in the TWI program. For example, location may be a deciding factor. If the school is distant and transportation is not provided, this may be a barrier to participation for otherwise enthusiastic families.
- ✓ ***Bring in experts.*** Find people at other schools who have experience with TWI programs, researchers in the field, or simply research-based information. These can help persuade those not yet convinced as well as offer options and advice on how to tailor the program and adapt it to local circumstances.
- ✓ ***Discuss and set goals and objectives.*** Identify what students should be able to do by the time they graduate from the school and the program. This may force some difficult choices to be made, but it will also guide decision making on issues such as how many courses to offer in each language,

If there is consensus for starting or continuing a program at the secondary level, the issues listed below should be dealt with next.

## **② Language Distribution, Curriculum, and Materials**

The nature of secondary TWI programs differs from that of elementary programs. At the high school level especially, but also at the middle school level, the program typically becomes the sum of the classes offered in the non-English language only. That is, the Spanish-English TWI program is considered to be the two or three courses taught in Spanish to the participating students, since those are typically the only classes offered exclusively to TWI

program students. Classes taught in English may no longer count as TWI, since they frequently include non-TWI students. Planning the TWI program, then, consists mostly of deciding which courses to offer in the non-English language and how many periods per day students will be required to attend these classes in order to be considered part of the TWI program.

While most TWI programs appear to offer the same middle and high school curricula as non-TWI programs (with the exception of language arts in the non-English language), deciding how much of the curriculum and which subjects will be taught through which languages is often a difficult decision. At the elementary level, the self-contained nature of the classroom makes it easier to adopt any of a variety of program models, such as a 50/50 model or a 90/10 model.<sup>1</sup> One bilingual teacher, for example, can teach any or all subject areas in Spanish, while a monolingual English teacher can teach any or all subject areas in English. Middle and high schools operate differently, however. High schools tend to be departmentalized, and teachers specialize in one or more content areas. Consequently, offering social studies, science, and math in Spanish, for instance, will most likely require the services of three bilingual teachers instead of just one. Middle schools are more flexible in their structure. Some may be very departmentalized (especially in the upper grades), while others may operate more like elementary schools (especially in sixth grade), with one teacher teaching multiple subjects or staying with the same group of students for most of the day.

According to the existing secondary TWI programs interviewed, the most critical factors for deciding which subjects to offer in which language are the availability, qualifications, and subject-matter preferences of the staff and availability of appropriate materials in the non-English language. Finding qualified bilingual content teachers to teach subjects in the non-English language can be quite challenging. Finding appropriate bilingual texts in non-English languages can also prove problematic. For example, required social studies curricula typically differ from state to state, making it difficult for educational publishers to know what to include in their non-English-language version texts. Planning to teach the same subject in two languages will also require budgeting for two textbooks, or for the creation and distribution of either commercial or teacher-created supplemental materials.

### Advice and Ideas

- ✓ In order to continue to develop students' skills and to promote the status of the non-English language, **have at least two mandatory classes in that language each year.** Most programs offer some form of social studies and language arts.
- ✓ **Try to maintain some degree of continuity in language allocation from one year to the next.** Avoid multiple year gaps in teaching math in Spanish, for example. When a subject is offered in Spanish after several years of being offered in English, the students may fear they won't be able to cope with it in Spanish and choose not to enroll.
- ✓ **Choose subjects to teach in the non-English language for which quality textbooks are available.**
- ✓ **If sources of materials in the non-English language cannot be found, create your own materials to supplement or replace existing texts.** It might also be possible to persuade those who determine text adoption to select texts that have versions in multiple languages.
- ✓ **Hire bilingual teachers who can teach more than one subject.** This will allow for flexibility in course offerings and lower the number of staff required for the program, if your school or district is seeking to limit the cost.

### 3 Student Participation and Motivation

Another issue commented on by survey respondents was the motivation of students to participate in secondary TWI programs. Adolescents are pulled by many biological and social forces. On the one hand, they are developing their individuality; on the other hand, they can be extremely susceptible to peer pressure and the fear of being perceived as different from the "in" group. If participation in the TWI program means not being able to take electives, having an extra period each day, having a longer commute, or being at a different school than their friends,

<sup>1</sup>In the 90/10 model, the non-English language is used in the early years for nearly all instruction (usually about 90%), with the amount of English instruction increasing each year until instruction in each language is roughly equal. In the 50/50 model, the ratio of instruction delivered in each language is equal at all grade levels (Christian, Montone, Lindholm, & Carranza, 1996).



even previously successful and dedicated students may determine that the sacrifice is too great and balk at continuing in the program.

The balance of native English speakers and native speakers of the non-English language of the program was also discussed by respondents. Consideration should be given to the effect of time on this balance. For instance, students who have been together since kindergarten may not want to continue to be together as a group in middle or high school, instead preferring to make new friends and blend with the non-TWI students. Questions of how the program will deal with attrition and late-entry students also affect the overall distribution of students by language background. These questions will be discussed in a separate section.

## Advice and Ideas

### ***Prior to Participation:***

- If graduating fifth or eighth graders are being relied on to fill program seats, ***poll these candidates and their parents ahead of time to get an indication of their willingness to participate and their level of interest.***
- Arrange for elementary school students to visit other schools that feed into the secondary school,*** so they can meet their future classmates and lay the foundation for social relationships.
- Have middle or high school immersion students make a trip to the elementary or middle school to answer questions and allay possible fears of feeder school students.*** Arrange for a half or full day of “shadowing” of sixth graders by fifth graders or of ninth graders by eighth graders, so that they may become familiar with the school and what secondary-level immersion looks like. This will help dissipate some of their possible fears and concerns.
- Have a Two-Way Immersion Night*** for parents, teachers, and students to socialize at the middle or high school.
- If the program is just beginning its first year, ***have a contest to choose a logo or motto for the program.***
- Create buttons that say “First Two-Way Immersion Class at <your school name>”*** to give to incoming

### ***During Participation:***

- Create cross-program social activities for TWI students so they are not isolated in school.*** Students who are separated in one wing of the school or who feel that they are perceived as different may be less likely to stay motivated to continue in the program. Framing the program in terms of enrichment will allow participants to integrate with others in the school, yet pursue a somewhat more specialized path.
- Make sure that classes are those that students find challenging and worthwhile.*** At one high school, for example, there are no honors TWI math classes because there are not enough students to fill a separate class. The school is trying to find out from students what electives they would like to see included in the TWI program. One idea is to offer a folklorico class that could replace physical education, an alternative that is appealing to many of the students.
- Create opportunities for elementary and secondary staff, parents, and students to work and socialize together*** (e.g., cultural celebrations, curriculum development, school board presentations, staff visits).
- Have the program featured in school and district promotional/informational literature and materials.***
- Emulate methods that varsity sports teams and bands use to create status for their members.***
- Present TWI students with special pins at graduation.***
- Take a group picture of TWI students for the school yearbook.***
- For graduating students, ***organize a trip to a country where the non-English language is spoken.***
- Align the TWI program with another high status program in school*** (e.g., science focus). At one middle

#### 4 Attrition and Late Entries

Over time, students will leave the program for various reasons—most often family relocations, but occasionally for other personal reasons. If the numbers get so low that they jeopardize the language balance or the actual viability of the program, schools will look for a way to re-populate the program in a manner that does not endanger the pedagogical integrity of a two-way model. Some programs will not accept new entrants to the program at the middle or high school level if there are sufficient feeder school students from which to draw their students annually. Other programs will allow late-entry students from either language background, if they can show proficiency in both languages. Still others may find a middle or high school TWI program an advantageous place for limited English proficient (LEP) students to receive content instruction in their native language while spending the rest of the day in an English as a second language environment. Though there are several options to choose from, the program would do well to set a policy before implementation for dealing with late-entry students from both language backgrounds.

##### Advice and Ideas

- Keep students motivated to continue participating in the program.**
- Try to avoid scheduling conflicts between TWI courses and other courses** that all students want or need to take.
- Set specific criteria that late-entry candidates must meet** to participate in the program.

#### 5 Student Scheduling

Scheduling can make or break a secondary TWI program, particularly at the high school level. Participating students need to be able to take the required courses in the non-English language, but at the same time want to take electives and meet other non-TWI students. Since many programs require language arts classes in both English and Spanish, students usually have one fewer period for an elective of their choice, which can be a disincentive to continuing in the program. Programs need to work with those responsible for scheduling to find ways to avoid conflicts among TWI classes, allow students to take electives, and make the program a viable and preferable option for students.

##### Advice and Ideas

- Work with whoever is doing the master schedule to ensure that TWI courses don't compete with each other.** For instance, at one high school, TWI U.S. history was scheduled at the same time as TWI algebra, so students had to choose one or the other. Now the TWI staff communicates their scheduling needs to the counselors far enough in advance to avoid such conflicts. Issues such as this are also raised during TWI articulation meetings, which are held regularly.
- Include counseling staff in program plans.** This will help greatly in avoiding scheduling difficulties. If possible, identify or hire a special TWI counselor. If this is not possible, brief the counseling staff about TWI and re-visit issues periodically.
- Have the students in TWI commit to an extended day program** (one extra period per day for electives). This has the advantage of providing a full array of courses and electives for students in the program, and it conveys the message that the TWI program is important. The downside is that it may lead to attrition if the students feel overburdened by the extra period, or if it means they have to get up much earlier or return home much later than other students. This kind of scheduling will also require coordination with transportation services. Extending the day in this manner may not be feasible for rural schools, if there are already long bus commutes.

## 6 Teams, Clusters, and Houses

Many secondary schools, especially middle schools, have organized their students and teachers into teams, clusters, or houses. The choice of whether to have all TWI students and teachers in one team can influence how isolated the TWI students feel. A program drawing from feeder schools with students who are weary of studying with the same classmates for 5 or 6 years may want to distribute the TWI students among multiple teams. A program whose teachers want and need time to coordinate and plan together may want all TWI teachers and students in one team. Each program needs to choose a structure that works best for everyone involved. Presented below are two structuring options, along with some of the advantages and disadvantages of each.

All TWI Team Options	Combination (TWI/Non-TWI) Team Options
<b>Advantages</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program identity as a team is strengthened.</li> <li>• All teachers in the team are dedicated to the needs of TWI students.</li> <li>• Interdisciplinary lesson planning is possible in the non-English language.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students are mixed with other students in school, which may keep them motivated to participate in the program, because they will still have an opportunity to form friendships with students outside of the program.</li> <li>• Non-TWI teachers have more of an incentive to be involved in the program and may feel a part of it over time.</li> <li>• Block scheduling is possible.</li> <li>• Students feel they are part of the whole school, not isolated.</li> <li>• Teachers can concentrate on teaching one subject, not multiple subjects.</li> </ul>
<b>Disadvantages</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students and teachers are separated from the rest of the school.</li> <li>• Block scheduling becomes difficult, if not impossible.</li> <li>• Students don't meet as many non-TWI students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is harder to do interdisciplinary lesson planning in the non-English language.</li> </ul>

## 7 Staffing

Most TWI programs mention quality staff as one of the most important components of a successful TWI program (second only to careful preparation). Finding and hiring qualified staff can be challenging and may require extensive recruitment efforts. Teachers who meet state or district content certification requirements and who are also bilingual may be particularly hard to locate. It should be kept in mind that many of the program's curriculum choices regarding content to be taught in the non-English language may very well be conditioned upon the content knowledge, experience, and flexibility of the TWI teachers that can be found.

### Advice and Ideas

- Bring secondary staff to visit the elementary level program** so that they may become familiar with students, program goals and structures, curriculum, and so forth.
- Transfer an elementary TWI teacher to the secondary school** to make use of his or her experience and to serve as an anchor for the secondary school program.
- Hire part-time teachers to teach the smaller courses until the number of students increases.**

## 8 Transportation

As with some elementary TWI programs, the middle or high school program may not be in the neighborhood

### Advice and Ideas

- ✓ **Poll parents ahead of time as to their preferences for a site for the program.**
- ✓ **Attempt to obtain district commitment to bus students as needed** (including for extracurricular activities).
- ✓ **Choose a site where commuting time will not be a disincentive to participation.**

where TWI students live. This means either the school will need to provide busing or parents will have to arrange transportation for their children. If numbers of eligible students in the district are slim, and the secondary-level program is situated in what is perceived by parents as an undesirable location, the program could have difficulty maintaining or attracting students from the start. If the program needs to bus students to the school in order to keep the program viable, these costs should be taken into consideration in advance and budgeted for accordingly.

## 9 Parent Involvement

Parents who were the TWI program's biggest fans when their children were in elementary school can suddenly become less than supportive when the program moves to middle school and especially high school. As their children face more serious academic studies, parents may grow more concerned about having their children taught subjects like math and science in a non-English language, fearing that they will not do as well on standardized tests, such as the SAT, and that participation in the program will ultimately hinder their prospects of gaining entry into a good college or university. These concerns can influence everything from the program's language choices for the curriculum to the overall percentage of instructional time spent in each language. Parents may also have concerns about the neighborhood in which the middle or high school program is situated, transportation inconvenience, the student population at the school, the school's existing reputation, and the impact that continued participation will have on their children's education.

### Advice and Ideas

- ✓ **Obtain support from and consult with parents** throughout the life of the program before making significant changes.
- ✓ **Have a TWI Parents' Night at the school each year.**
- ✓ **Offer language classes for both English -and non-English speaking parents**, pairing them up to facilitate peer tutoring.

## Conclusion

Just as there are multiple variations of elementary two-way immersion programs, there is no one way to implement a secondary-level TWI program. While most have grown out of elementary school programs, there are attempts to start a secondary program without such a base. Some programs had a choice of which school in the district to move their elementary school graduates into, while others had to continue the program in one school only or not continue at all. One program has changed schools annually for several years, searching for just the right home. The programs profiled here offer different courses in Spanish. Some offer electives in Spanish, others do not. One has an extended day program. Some hire new teachers; others use existing bilingual staff. Some have to work to keep their students motivated; others find that their students have coalesced into a tight-knit and enthusiastic group over the years.

There are similarities across programs. They all offer at least two classes in Spanish; they all have to deal with issues regarding staffing, scheduling, curriculum and materials, and parent involvement, though each does so slightly differently. Most of the programs highlighted in this report give the same advice to those just starting out: Be patient, plan well in advance, hire good teachers, and obtain buy-in from the district, the school, the teachers,