

SAUCON VALLEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

**BENEFITS OF BILINGUALISM**

**INCREASES COMMUNICATION**

Students who are bilingual are able to speak to twice as many people as their monolingual peers! This communication piece may help build confidence in students and may allow them to expand their social circles.

**IMPROVES ACADEMICS**

Research consistently shows that students who are bilingual may perform better on math and reading tests, may have improved literacy skills, and may have greater attention focus, responsiveness to feedback, and decision-making skills.

**INCREASES CULTURAL AWARENESS**

Being bilingual may help students to be more empathetic, boost self-esteem, increase self control, increase sensitivity to others, promote biculturalism, and more!

**INCREASES EMPLOYMENT OPTIONS**

Being bilingual increases employability. Many industries and corporations are actively seeking bilingual individuals over monolingual candidates. Bilingual employees may also earn anywhere from 5- 20% more in salary.

**POSITIVE EFFECTS ON THE BRAIN**

Research shows that being bilingual has significant cognitive impacts including increased memory, attention, and resiliency. Not only this, but recent studies have shown that being bilingual may delay the onset of Alzheimer's and dementia in some individuals.

**EXPANDS HORIZONS**

Students who are bilingual are typically more adaptable to new environments, meeting new people, and more likely to step outside of their comfort zone.



## Spanish Immersion Family FAQ

### **What is language immersion education?**

The goal of language immersion is to help students become proficient in the target language while mastering subject content across all disciplines at the same time. In immersion programs, the target language is the vehicle we use to teach the content. It is not taught as a separate subject but is the medium in which core instruction is delivered. Research shows that the most effective way for students to acquire a second language is to integrate the language into their everyday instruction and curriculum. Research also shows that students who participate in immersion programs may outperform their peers in traditional classrooms, may do as well or better than their peers in traditional classrooms on standardized tests, and may have a greater appreciation of culture and diversity.

### **What immersion model is used at our school?**

At Saucon Valley School District, we use a one-way, full Spanish immersion. These programs typically serve students coming from monolingual, English-speaking homes in an environment where the dominant language is used exclusively. In a one-way, full immersion program, content is delivered in the target language (Spanish) and English Language Arts instruction is introduced in 3rd grade. The focus of this model is to promote bilingualism, biliteracy, and biculturalism, with students ideally reaching a high level of proficiency in both their native and the target language.

### **Why explore Spanish immersion for your child?**

Research shows that multilingual students have a variety of educational and professional opportunities from which to choose. Current and future generations of students who are multilingual will be prepared to thrive in an increasingly globalized world. Early childhood is the best time to develop a lasting understanding of diverse cultures, people, and perspectives as well as optimize the ability to acquire a second language.

### **What does research say about language immersion programs?**

There is a great deal of research regarding the benefits of language immersion programs. Some highlights are that research indicates students participating in immersion programs may display increased abilities in native language skills, may have an overall improved academic

development, may develop advanced creative problem-solving skills, may display enhanced global awareness, as well as gain a competitive edge in the workforce as adults.

### **What grade do students enter the program?**

At Saucon Valley Elementary School, students enter the program in first grade.

### **Who is eligible to enroll in the Spanish Immersion Program?**

Any resident student entering first grade and enrolled in Saucon Valley School District is eligible for the program. First grade enrollment is based on a lottery process. We experience and expect a wide range of skills and abilities in our immersion classrooms. However, immersion is designed and recommended for students performing at or above grade level.

### **What is the admissions process?**

Students interested in entering the Spanish Immersion Program will need to complete the registration process. During their kindergarten year, families will be required to attend a Family Information Session prior to registering in SIP. After attending the information session, families will complete a Family Commitment Form and a Registration Form.

If more students register than there are seats available, a random lottery will be held. Students who are selected through the lottery will need to formally commit to the program. Students not selected for a seat will be placed on a numbered waiting list in a random order. In the event that a seat becomes available, we will offer the seat to another student on the waiting list in order.

Prospective students who are siblings of currently enrolled SIP students will be given preference for admission, up to 14 siblings. If more than 14 siblings are interested in enrolling in SIP, then there will be a lottery for those 14 sibling seats.

### **Why was Spanish the language chosen?**

Spanish is one of the most popular languages in the United States and the world. Spanish also offers more accessible staffing and materials for students. Not only this, but it has a great deal of marketability in the workforce as well.

### **What role do families play?**

Parents and families play a vital role in every child's education, but they have specific roles in order to support an immersion student. In order to support their child's growth and development, families are encouraged to read with their child in English daily for a minimum of 20 minutes. Families are also encouraged to work with their student on writing in English daily as well. By demonstrating enthusiasm and value for language acquisition, families will help their student feel proud of their education. Not only this, but families can continue to promote self-sufficiency, problem-solving, and risk-taking by empowering students to do their best on their homework, even if they don't understand every word.

### **How can families of SIP students help with homework?**

There are a variety of ways that families can support their student in homework completion. Families can encourage their student to try their best and not be afraid to make a mistake or ask a question. Families can also check teacher resources provided to the student and can help a student use a parent and classmate network for support. Teachers will ensure that students understand and comprehend homework directions every day before dismissal. It is

vital that families do not use translators and simply translate work for students. This diminishes the language acquisition process and ends up being detrimental to the student.

### **When do students learn English grammar and vocabulary?**

Students will work with their families by reading and writing in English at home during 1st and 2nd grade. Many skills from Spanish will naturally transfer over to English by the end of 2nd grade. In addition to this, students will receive English Language Arts instruction in 3rd and 4th grades to cover any grammar and vocabulary skills and concepts that may not transfer from Spanish to English. This helps to prepare students for middle school English Language Arts and beyond.

### **Do SIP students participate in standardized testing? What happens if a student in Spanish Immersion is struggling academically?**

SIP students will take [IDEL](#), a Spanish foundational literacy assessment beginning in the winter of 1st grade. From that point on they will take the assessment three times per year. They will take [MAP Reading and MAP Math](#) 3 times per year in English. If there is evidence that a student is not making sufficient progress, the teacher(s) will communicate this to the parents and administration so that an individual approach can be developed.

### **Is after-school tutoring available for Spanish Immersion students?**

No. The school has no after-school tutoring available in Spanish at this time.

### **How will I get information about academics and activities happening in Spanish Immersion?**

Teachers send a newsletter home each week to share information about upcoming activities and the topics being covered in core subjects. Parents should also be reviewing Schoology for information about class assignments and assessment grades.

### **What curriculum and instructional materials are used in the Spanish Immersion program?**

SIP teachers will teach the PA Common Core standards in core subject areas. The board-approved Courses of Study for each core subject area will be followed. The following resources are utilized for SIP classes:

- *Estrellita* (1st grade) and *Lunita* (2nd grade) are foundational literacy resources that are similar to the *Superkids* materials used in the English classrooms.
- *Maravillas* is the literature and writing instructional material that will be used beginning in the second quarter of 1st grade.
- *Math in Focus* is used in all grade levels.
- FOSS kits and digital toolkits are used for the Science curriculum.
- *PATHS* lessons and read-aloud books are used for Social Studies.
- *Epic* is an application that is utilized for supplementary, independent reading that is aligned to the standards in core subject areas.

### **What are the credentials for SIP teachers?**

SIP teachers have certifications in Elementary Education and Spanish Education. Not only this, but teachers have Spanish fluency and at least near-to-native pronunciation, along with the same language proficiency skills in English. Most importantly, SIP teachers are passionate

about language acquisition and cultural education.

**Do SIP students participate in Encore?**

Yes! All SIP students will participate in the same Encore courses as their peers in the traditional classroom. These courses will be taught in English and will help students to develop their English skills naturally through conversation.

**Will SIP students be learning the same standards as the traditional English classrooms?**

Yes, classes will follow Pennsylvania state standards for each grade level. Of course, the pacing in first grade will vary as students are hearing a new language for the first time. Similarly, in the beginning of each school year, pacing will vary from the traditional classroom as students get reacquainted to the immersion setting after a summer away from the language.

**What role does technology play in the SIP classroom?**

As in the traditional English classroom, students will use technology where appropriate for instruction and assessment. The added benefit of technology in the SIP classroom is that it offers a variety of language input (including exposure to linguistic differences within Spanish dialects) and speaking opportunities, such as the option for digital voice recording, listening comprehension activities, ebooks, and more. All technology tools are vetted and aligned with the appropriate use policy of Saucon Valley School District. Technology is an important component of the program; as such, students will be expected to follow all SVES's technology guidelines.

**What opportunities are there for the district community to learn about the SIP program and activities?**

As our Spanish Immersion students acquire proficiency in Spanish, there will be opportunities for them to participate in assemblies, announcements, and/or performances in Spanish. SVES administration will also periodically share information about SIP activities in the school newsletter.

**What do Middle School and High School look like for immersion students?** The goal is to have post-program support in both middle school and high school with the goal of maintaining and further developing their proficiency and fluency in Spanish. Ideally, students will have courses specifically designed for immersion students in the target language.

# 2024-25 SPANISH IMMERSION PROGRAM

## REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS + COMMITMENT AGREEMENT

To meet SIP registration requirements, each of the following must be completed by April 8, 2024.

1.  **Attend one Family Information Session\***
2.  **Register** your child in the Saucon Valley School District.
3.  **Read** the Family Information Packet
4.  **Complete** and **submit** Online Registration & Commitment Form

**\*Family Information Sessions will be held on Monday, January 29, 2024 from 3:30-4:30 pm and Wednesday, February 15, 2024 from 5:00-6:00 pm in the Middle School LGI.**

### Next Steps:

**If your child is accepted into the 2024-25 First Grade Spanish Immersion class, you will be asked to sign a digital copy of the Program Commitment Agreement form.**

# PROGRAM COMMITMENT AGREEMENT

**After completing the SIP registration requirements, I clearly understand that:**

- 1. English instruction will not begin until third grade. The only English exposure in grades one and two will come from the home environment.*
- 2. I am responsible for continuing to work with my child's English language development. This will require varying amounts of time that I must invest in my child's education.*

This includes:

- o ORAL LANGUAGE and VOCABULARY
- o READING
- o WRITING

\*\*\*These three skills are crucial for making connections to a second language.

- 3. Placement in Spanish Immersion is recommended for students whose English skills are progressing at or above grade level.*
- 4. I will NOT translate for my child because this is not the natural way to acquire a second language.*
- 5. I intend to keep my child in the program for the entire 4 years and understand that any concerns regarding a student's academic progress will be addressed jointly among the teachers, principal, and family.*
- 6. I understand that withdrawing my child from the program early prevents another child from experiencing the program since the slot cannot be filled beyond 2nd grade.*

**I have read the 2024-25 1st Grade Spanish Immersion Commitment Agreement, and I understand and accept the expectations as listed above and wish for my child to be enrolled for the 2024-25 1st Grade Spanish Immersion.**

**GUARDIAN'S NAME (Please print first and last name):** \_\_\_\_\_

**GUARDIAN'S SIGNATURE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**CHILD'S NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

# **Registration Guidelines**

## **Step 1: PARENT INFORMATION SESSION**

Attend one of the Parent/Guardian Info Sessions offered by the Spanish Immersion team. These sessions include vital information about what immersion is, program expectations, necessary parent support, and more.

## **Step 2: REGISTRATION JANUARY 30 - APRIL 8, 2024**

After attending one of the Family Information Sessions, please complete the SIP Registration Steps. Complete the Registration & Commitment Form. The electronic form is available on the SVES website.

## **Step 3: LOTTERY**

If there are more students registered for the Spanish Immersion Program than there are available seats, a randomized lottery will be held. Details regarding this will be shared after April 8th when registration closes. Any student who is not chosen by the lottery will be placed on a waitlist in the event that a seat will open.

## **Step 4: SPANISH IMMERSION FAMILY MEETING**

After being notified of your student's enrollment status in the Spanish Immersion Program, you will be asked to formally accept your student's enrollment. We will ask committed families to attend another information meeting to go into specifics about the program, give more opportunity to meet the teachers, and ask questions you may still have.

## **Step 5: GET EXCITED!**