

KES
“Journeying Together” – Developing Cultural Understanding

Dual Language Immersion programs within elementary schools continue to gain popularity nationwide as parents seek ways for their children to become bilingual while developing an appreciation for cultural diversity. Despite these hopes, parents of children within such programs often have very limited interaction with one another due to language barriers, cultural differences and/or hectic work schedules. As a result, many of the cultural and relational possibilities that dual immersion programs can offer aren't fully developed.



Beginning February 11, Dr. Lisa Porter, Assistant Professor of Sociology at James Madison University, began a five-week “Journeying Together” seminar to serve as a pilot program in helping to create a space where parents of children within Dual Immersion programs could come together and engage in meaningful activities. Parents did acquire some basic second language conversation skills through interactions and guided activities (for those with limited to no second language backgrounds). However, the seminar’s primary focus concentrated on enhancing communication and cultural understanding in hopes of lessening socio-cultural barriers between Native Spanish-speaking and Native English-speaking parents and building the foundation for lasting relations moving forward. Parent interest was overwhelmingly positive. Over 30 parents signed up and remained in the program for the entire duration.



Each week was organized around a particular theme. The program began with a dialogue on “The Story of My Name,” where participants were introduced to the meaning/placement of Spanish surnames as well as common traditions of surnames in the United States. Participants were then asked to share about the story behind their first names as a reminder of the importance/value of recognizing one another by name. Other themes explored during the seminar included commonalities and differences and the impacts of stereotyping, social rules/norms and feelings of being an insider/outsider, key components of a collaborative community and goals for moving forward. The

capstone of the seminar was a Community Resource Fair that included over 15 agencies/programs and was open to the entire Keister Elementary School community. The fair was designed to help families find ways to learn about possibilities for language learning (English/Spanish) and getting connected with and involved in the greater Harrisonburg community.

Journeying, con't.

There were many groups and individuals involved in the implementation of this program. The weekly activities were co-facilitated by Dr. Porter and Ms. Sylvia Whitney Beitzal, Language Interpretation and Translation Coordinator for Harrisonburg City Schools. JMU students from a variety of programs participated by providing childcare, serving dinner and assisting parents with interpretation during the small-group discussions. Keister staff members coordinated activities for children each evening, helped to organize dinner, helped with program advertisement and supported the use of technology. Funding support for the program came from a Virginia Foundation for the Humanities grant, Federal Title I money and Keister Elementary School. Photos of the event were taken by Cindy Parks, a freelance photographer, and a traveling photo exhibit of the event will take place throughout Harrisonburg in April and May.



“Journeying Together” participants expressed appreciation for this opportunity. Many stated that they had been hoping to have the opportunity to simply sit down as parents and get to know one another. Some felt happy to be able to share in a program that helps them better appreciate their child’s experiences in the Dual Language program. After sharing meals and stories over the course of five weeks, relationships emerged and memories were made. The participants are planning a reunion for some time this spring.

SSES

Read Across America!



A great sense of excitement was felt at Stone Spring Elementary, as they were in celebration mode for Dr. Seuss’ birthday! Book character dress-up day was the theme, and the entire school also participated in a “Drop Everything and Read” time. Administrators, teachers, assistants, staff and students were all reading their favorite books!



Bookmarks, prizes and free books were given away to students throughout the day! WHSV TV-3 even came and got in on the action. It was a wonderful way to celebrate a beloved children’s author!

THMS

GEAR UP

HCPS was awarded the federal GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness for Reaching Undergraduate Programs) grant last school year and the program has been taking place at both Thomas Harrison and Skyline Middle Schools. Students who are currently in 8th grade are eligible to participate, and students must have attended THMS or SKMS last year. At THMS, there are 170 eighth grade students enrolled in the program, and more students continue to join. The funding for GEAR UP programming will follow this group of students (HHS graduating class of 2020) all the way through high school and into the students' first year of college. All GEAR UP students who graduate from high school and attend a 2- or 4-year college within the U.S. are eligible for a minimum scholarship of \$2,000.

GEAR UP activities and programs are provided at no cost. At THMS, GEAR UP funding has been used to develop an after-school tutoring program, a mentoring program, and several parent events. Guest speakers have talked about goal setting and taking advantage of opportunities and resources. College



students and college admissions personnel have spoken at THMS to increase awareness of college options and the college application process. This spring, THMS will hold a College Awareness Week.

Visits to college campuses are an additional component of the GEAR UP program. In March, 50 students will visit Blue Ridge Community College where they will learn about the Blue Ridge Scholars program, Associate's Degrees, certification programs, and the

transfer program to JMU. Also in March, 15 students and several parents will attend the Latino Youth Conference at Mary Baldwin College. Students will attend classes while parents learn about the college application process, financial aid, and what to expect when their child goes to college.

During the summer, THMS students will attend a summer program at The University of Virginia. The program is facilitated by CoolSpeak, a youth engagement company. Students will stay in a dorm on campus and eat in the dining halls while participating in fun and meaningful activities and dialogues. Several THMS students also participated in a CoolSpeak camp last summer at Virginia State University.

If you would like to learn more about the GEAR UP program at THMS, contact Corinne Makarewich at cmakarewich@harrisonburg.k12.va.us.

SMES
Mini Society/Economy is Alive and Well

If you walk by the library or art room at Smithland Elementary on a Wednesday afternoon, you may hear the voices of very excited students naming their “society,” or interviewing the civil servants such as the paymaster, or discussing possible business ideas and partnerships. On other occasions you may see very excited students selling products or services at a market, while collecting and spending their currency. Excitement is the key word for these activities!



Years ago, Mini-Society (which is now Mini-Economy) was introduced in Harrisonburg City Public Schools, and it has continued and is thriving at Smithland. While Mini-Economy fits well in a social studies or civics curriculum, at Smithland, Mini-Economy is an afterschool program that meets 10-12 weeks from 3:45 - 5:00 pm. Third and fourth graders are invited to participate. At first, about 24 students were showing interest and then as time went on, a waiting list developed. As brothers and sisters shared their interest in Mini-Economy with younger siblings, the demand for spots in the program increased. Nori Carter, third grader and younger sister of former Mini-Economy participant Eve Carter, came into the library in August and asked, “When will Mini-Economy start? I already have a product in mind to sell!”

This year there are 46 students in the program at Smithland working with teachers Kinya Walker, Betty Simensen, and Andrea Nolley. They spend much of their time preparing for their BIG event, the G.E.M. (Global Entrepreneurial Market) Fair that is held March 9 at the JMU Festival Center. Hundreds of Mini-Economy students come together to share their wares. Talk about excitement! Their shops are judged for marketing awards, creative product awards, and one from each society is named as Entrepreneur of the Year. Also students may enter an essay or currency design contest. Smithland students have received very nice recognition of their efforts at the final awards program at the G.E.M. Fair in the past.

Think you would like to share in the excitement? Mini-Economy is a program for students in grades 3-8. Training, which includes a wealth of materials, will be held this fall. Watch for emails from Lynne Stover and the Center for Economic Education at JMU. Also, feel free to email Andrea Nolley, a co-trainer of Mini-Economy, if you have questions. Once you experience the excitement this brings to students, Mini-Economy is something you will want to continue.

Highlighting Excellence in Harrisonburg City Public Schools



Photos by Bob Adamek

Upcoming Events

March 28 – April 1:

April 5:

April 8:

April 15:

Schools Closed – Spring Break

School Board Mtg – 7:00 pm – City Council Chambers

Schools Closed – Teacher Workday

Early Release Day