

Have You Heard?

Next school year, students who complete Red Clay's Spanish language immersion program in elementary school will be able to continue their bilingual experience in middle school.

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The fifth-grade class at Lewis Dual Language Elementary will have the opportunity to attend Skyline Middle School next year to continue their Spanish language immersion program. This year's fifth grade is the first class to complete all grades in the elementary Spanish immersion curriculum.

Next year's sixth grade immersion students will take their core classes of English, language arts, math and science in English and will attend classes with non-immersion students. They will have Spanish language arts and social studies classes in Spanish. In addition, immersion students will participate in physical education and arts electives. Future plans are to continue the same curriculum in 7th grade and offer science in Spanish and social studies in English in grade 8.

"Red Clay is committed to making this a full journey for kids so they are truly fluent in the language," said Dr. Judith Conway, supervisor of Unified Arts. She added that as immersion students enter high school it is the plan for them to take Spanish advanced placement within the first two years and continue with dual enrollment classes.

More than 40 years of research has documented the success of immersion education to help students attain high levels of language proficiency. Benefits also include enhanced cognitive skills, increased cultural sensitivity, improved performance on English and math standardized tests and better job preparedness. Students in immersion programs show more positive attitudes toward other cultures, enabling them to effectively interact with people of different backgrounds and ethnicities.

Red Clay has been a leader in providing a bilingual experience for young learners when their minds are developmentally best able to acquire a second language. This year, the Spanish immersion program started at Mote and Marbrook and the Chinese immersion program at Linden Hill are providing kindergarten students with an opportunity to have fun while they learn in a non-native language. Continuing the immersion program into middle and high school will further develop students' knowledge, skills and abilities in comprehending, speaking, reading and writing, helping prepare them for today's global workplace.

Language immersion engages students in learning in a non-traditional way. Students acquire second language skills and cultural appreciation that gives them an advantage in the real world. "We are excited to offer the opportunity for students to develop fluency and proficiency in two languages," said Jim Comegys, Director of Curriculum and Instruction.