

Have You Heard?

Sixth grade students in the new Spanish immersion program at Skyline Middle School are continuing to develop their second language skills so they will be prepared for advanced placement Spanish in 9th grade, dual enrollment courses in grades 10-12 and have an economic edge in the multilingual workforce when they graduate.

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This year, 24 students with intermediate Spanish skills are continuing their bilingual experience at Skyline. They take their core classes of English, language arts, math and science in English and attend classes with non-immersion students. They have Spanish language arts and social studies classes in Spanish. In addition, the immersion students participate in physical education and arts electives. Next year they will follow the same curriculum but in eighth grade science will be taught in Spanish and social studies in English.

Goals for the middle school immersion program include further developing Spanish language skills, preparing for high school advanced placement and dual enrollment classes and providing students with an advantage in today's global marketplace.

"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.

This year's students in the Spanish immersion program feel comfortable speaking and collaborating in Spanish. They enjoy working with their Spanish teacher, Antonio-Ortiz and are embracing the middle school program. "It is exciting to see how the first cohort of Red Clay's Spanish immersion students at Skyline MS are continuing their journey to become linguistically proficient in a second language while adjusting to middle school," said Ana Richter, Red Clay Spanish Immersion Coach.

The students believe in sharing information about the program with others as five current 6th graders went to Lewis Elementary on choice open house night to explain the middle school program to parents of younger bilingual students.

Language immersion engages students in learning in a non-traditional way, giving them the opportunity to develop fluency and proficiency in two languages. The middle school Spanish immersion program will further develop students' knowledge, skills and abilities in comprehending, speaking, reading and writing. Students acquire second language skills and cultural appreciation that better prepares them for the global community and job markets where knowledge of a second language is an asset.

Red Clay students with intermediate Spanish skills can fill out a choice form for next year's 6th or 7th grade classes at Skyline Middle School. For more information call the choice office at 552-3789.