

Chapter VIII

Bilingual/Bicultural Instructional Program

1. Classical International Education

The Pharr Oratory of St. Philip Neri School System is modeled after the classical European international schools historically chosen by families of means, nobility and culture to give their children a well-rounded education in the formation of a “universal man.”

Essential to this kind of education is the mastery of other languages done in a way that develops a true understanding of a people and their culture.

2. Importance of Multilingualism

International leaders in education have always known that a person cannot consider himself really educated without, among other things, having command of, at least, one or two other languages. Technological advances have made communication among nations much easier. This, in turn, has made it necessary for anyone wanting to communicate in depth with the citizenry of another country, to learn the language of that nation. This fact is particularly obvious in regions like the Lower Rio Grande Valley where Anglo America both physically and culturally meets Latin America.

The mastery of another language gives one the ability not only to participate actively and directly in changing the world but also permits the truly educated man or woman to appreciate and enjoy areas of life inaccessible to most. To know Italian, for example, expands one’s world of music, especially, in the opera.

The mastery of French also broadens one’s vistas in the world of music, adding to it a treasure of literature that can only be truly appreciated--as in all languages--in the original. Those who truly know modern languages are quick to say that French, more than any other modern language, lends itself to a communication that is at one and the same time “precise” and “courteous.” The “polite” character of the French tongue makes it possible to express oneself with exactness yet with the least possible danger of offense, coming to be, historically, the preferred language of many well-educated diplomats.

Many philosophers have said, moreover, that the German language, because of its cold calculated precision, is the favored language for philosophy.

Language, therefore, is an important key not only to the acquisition of more knowledge but also to a deeper understanding of peoples and their cultures. As personal travel and electronic communication become more and more accessible to the general public, the person in command of other languages will have the advantage in a world that is becoming more and more competitive.

3. Bilingualism Improves Academic Performance

Because the brain is forced to employ particular mental dynamics as it arranges and rearranges concepts according to the peculiar demands of a new language, the student with a real interest in a foreign language usually experiences, because of this exercise, an overall improvement in his academic performance.

Research has demonstrated, moreover, that monolingual students do not do as well in certain areas of college study as do bilingual or multilingual students--*Education Testing Service Analysis of the Scores of the Scholastic Aptitude Test*, 1981; University of Tennessee at Knoxville, see "Artes Latinæ", Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers.

4. Bilingualism Enhances Intelligence

Educators prepared *in language*, and not only in *a language*, know that the learning of other languages early in life not only makes the mastery of those same languages easier, but, more importantly, actually enhances intelligence. The very use of new languages induces different cerebral operations allowing the bilingual student to analyze and synthesize reality in a way better than that of the student of a purely monolingual background.

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