

How Do I Keep My Kids' Spanish Up Outside of School (Especially If I/We Don't Speak Spanish)

One concern for many families who choose immersion for their children at Claremont is how to promote their kids' Spanish outside of school, especially if the parent(s) don't speak Spanish themselves. It's not as *difícil* as you think!

We are lucky to live in an area with a large Spanish-speaking population and, in the Internet era, the possibilities are endless. The most important thing you can do as a parent is to think of your child's interests and find ways to engage those interests *en español*. Is your daughter or son a *futbolista*? Turn on Univisión and watch a soccer game – in Spanish. Ditto for *beisbol* or *los juegos olímpicos*. Does s/he like art? Sign up for an art class in Spanish (check out www.olivosartstudio.com -- they even offer a summer art camp in Spanish).

Simple Ideas That You Can Do at Home

- Most DVDs come with Spanish language soundtracks. Let your child watch a movie using the Spanish soundtrack – which you can pair with English subtitles.
- If your child likes Wii, change the language to Spanish so that they have to follow the directions in Spanish.
- Use audio books or look for e-books for the Kindle or Nook that allow you to hear the story in Spanish while reading along.
- All parents deserve an occasional night out – hire a babysitter from Wakefield (or elsewhere) who speaks Spanish and pay them a bit extra if they promise to speak to your child/ren ONLY in Spanish while you are out.
- Have your child teach you some Spanish – days of the week; foods; clothing; rooms in the house.
- Have an exchange student come live with you during the summer or open your home to an international student from a Spanish-speaking country.
- Have your child correspond with a pen pal from a Spanish-speaking country. S/he can write, e-mail, or even Skype *en español*, and learn about a Spanish-speaking country and its culture in the process.
- Subscribe to magazines in Spanish. For kids, there's *Iguana*, but there's also *National Geographic en español* or *People en español* (great for keeping up with pop culture).
- Play a boardgame in Spanish. The Toys R Us in Bailey's Crossroads sometimes sells Spanish versions of Monopoly and other board games.
- Play pop/rock music in Spanish at home and in the car (there's also internet radio). Some examples:
 - Cri-Cri (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fXa0yaJ5KDo&index=7&list=RD-WziquZ7M-Y>)
 - Olé and Play (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oGYFFAHmDPk> -- check out the song about Don Quixote)

- Floricienta (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8a5gvucLzdl>)
- For older kids, check out the soundtracks to teen telenovelas like:
 - Grachi (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vhYhlYchYCw>)
 - La CQ (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1KYwXHKjnZ8>)
 - Isa TKM (the TKM is internet-speak for Te Quiero Mucho or “I love you lots” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YuvJR5fijv8>).
- *La Copa Mundial* (The World Cup) will take place in Brazil from June 12 through July 13, 2014. You can watch soccer games and celebrations in Spanish on Univisión (Channel 14 in Arlington).

Ideas Outside the Home

- Go to a local Latin American restaurant – the kind that people from that country go to in search of a taste of home. Encourage your child/ren to order dinner for the family in Spanish.
- Attend a local house of worship that conducts services in Spanish.
- Attend a performance at Teatro GALA (www.galatheatre.org) or Teatro de la Luna (www.teatrodela luna.org). If your son or daughter aspires to the stage, sign him/her up for bilingual theater workshops at Teatro de la Luna.
- Attend Spanish immersion summer school at Claremont or Key.
- Sign up for day camp *en español* through Edu-Futuro (www.edu-futuro.org/spanish-academy).
- Throughout the year, many of the Smithsonian museums offer bilingual activities for kids.
- Arlington Public Library features a bilingual program called “Cuentos y más” on their website for younger children. You can watch online at: <http://arlingtonva.tv/category/cym/>

Travel

- In the US, cities like Chicago, Miami, New York, and Los Angeles all have vibrant Spanish-speaking communities, with all the bells and whistles – theaters, bookstores, restaurants, *todo en español*.
- If you are able to take a family trip outside the US, travel to a major Latin American city like Buenos Aires or Mexico City, or to a city in Spain. But don’t just be a tourist – go to theater (try to find a local performance of a Broadway musical in Spanish, for example), look for kid activities at local museums, etc. so that your child/ren can meet local peers.

Learn Some Spanish Yourself

Kids learn by example – even when they say that they don’t! A bit of effort on your part as a parent can go a long way toward demonstrating to your child/ren that you

practice what you preach when you tell him/her/them that it's important to learn Spanish.

- Become involved in his/her Spanish homework.
- Read the Tuesday packet materials or "Esta Semana en Claremont" in Spanish – you'd be amazed how much vocabulary you can pick up.
- Take a class at a community college or local university.
- Take an adult class through Edu-Futuro (<http://www.edu-futuro.org/register-for-adult-spanish-classes>) -- you'll be helping a dynamic local Latino organization in the process.
- Study Spanish with a teacher in a Spanish-speaking country like Guatemala via Skype (see above).

The most important thing to keep in mind: Learning a language is a journey, not a destination!

¡Suerte! Good luck!