

Spanish Instruction Off to Strong Start at Wauwatosa Elementary Schools

November 2011

This year, for the first time, first- to fifth-grade students at our elementary schools are receiving Spanish instruction.

Providing world language courses at the elementary-school level is important for a number of reasons. Not only does learning other languages help our students communicate in an increasingly globalized world, but research suggests that American students who learn another language also perform better in their studies of English.

By reaching students early in their academic careers, we are able to develop skills that will be of great benefit to them during their middle- and high-school years. Fifth graders in Wauwatosa Elementary Schools can look forward to the expansion of the Spanish program to the sixth grade next year.

I am pleased to report that despite the normal challenges in implementing a district-wide program, our elementary school Spanish program is off to a great start. Not only have we been able to bring on some terrific teachers, but our students are fully engaged in the program, and the feedback has been terrific.

Parents have told us that their children are singing Spanish songs at home, that elementary school siblings are comparing their Spanish vocabularies with each other, and that students are translating Spanish menus and signs for their parents.

While we knew our students would be quick to learn Spanish, we could not have expected their enthusiasm.

I learned this firsthand when coaching a group of fifth graders. During our warm-ups at the beginning of football practices, the kids decided to use Spanish to count their jumping jacks.

Our parents are just as excited. One of the questions that I keep receiving from parents is how they can get a hold of Spanish materials to practice with their children. We invite parents to visit the district's [Spanish resource page](#) for up-to-date information what is happening in their children's Spanish classes. The page can be reached from any of the elementary schools' homepages, or directly at <http://www.wauwatosa.k12.wi.us/worldlanguageiniative.cfm> .

Parents who would like to learn Spanish themselves may soon be able to do so through the Wauwatosa Recreation Department. More info on that is on its way!

I look forward to sharing more news about the elementary school Spanish program in the future, and would love to hear more about your experiences. Please feel free to contact me directly at (414) 773-1010, or at ertlph@wauwatosa.k12.wi.us.

As always, thank you for your ongoing support of the Wauwatosa schools.

Sincerely,

Phil Ertl
Superintendent