



The Value of Full-Day Kindergarten

In recent weeks, we have received questions concerning the value of sending children to our full-day kindergarten program. With an eye toward the needs of our newest families, this short essay will explain the reason behind the enrichment activities provided in the second half of the day, and allow parents to understand the value of that enrichment time for the youngest of our scholars.

As we state on all of our tours and in our literature, all of the core content that a scholar needs to move successfully into first grade is provided in the morning by our experienced teachers. Scholars, also, have an opportunity in the half-day program to experience art, music, and PE, which we believe essential to their development as learners. The value of the full-day program resides in the enrichment aspect of the day.

In our full-day program, our teachers enrich the scholars learning through extra time in the exploration of science, history, literature, music, art, and Spanish. Research shows that students who study a second language in their early development are stronger academically in English language arts and reading, as well as in mathematics. They, also, outperform their peers in core content areas like science and history.

One of the primary areas of growth that arises from the study of Spanish, or any foreign language, is a more comprehensive knowledge of the English language. Students studying a foreign language actually study the grammar of the language itself, rather than simply learning it through modeling and experience. Foreign language study, “enhances children’s understanding of how language itself works and their ability to manipulate language in the service of thinking and problem solving” (James Cummins author of *In Schooling and Language Minority Students*).

Concerning mathematics, “Students who started kindergarten in the first Kansas City foreign language magnet schools in 1988 had surpassed national averages in all subjects by the time they reached fifth grade. These foreign language students performed especially well in mathematics” (Eaton 1994). In part, foreign language study develops cognitive reasoning skills, as learning a foreign language is like a puzzle that needs to be solved, and students who begin to solve that puzzle earlier grow in their ability to critically think through problems. In this way, foreign language learners possess the skills to solve problems in a way that their non-foreign language peers do not. “Students who are learning a foreign language out-score their non-foreign language learning peers in the verbal and, surprisingly to some, the math sections of standardized tests” (Duke.edu).

The value of our full-day kinder program resides in the enrichment that students receive in a variety of content areas, but most fully in the study of a foreign language, and in our academy that language is Spanish.