

Dissemination

English Language Learners – Meeting the Growing Need: Facilitating True Language Acquisition

LFDCS wrote two priority goals into its original charter – both directly connected to the needs of the Lawrence community. Parent involvement and the educational development of families, particularly new immigrant families, is at the heart of our mission. The second goal is development and implementation of effective practices to support language acquisition based on research, practice and refinement, to create a model for academic success at LFDCS and ultimately to the broader state and national audience through dissemination and publication.

During 2006-2007, LFDCS took the first step in dissemination of our dual language model, presenting at the Massachusetts Charter School Association conference in March. We also applied to present at the National Charter Conference and will refine this application in the hope of selection for 2008. Sonia Miller, ESL Teacher and ELL Program Coordinator and Rudy Jaime, Spanish Language Teacher developed a dissemination presentation of the philosophy, research and process that created our school and our dual language curriculum.

The presentation introduces the educator/audience with an immersion lesson in a foreign language, Croatian, with an expectation for participation and language development intended to replicate on an adult level, the frustrations faced by new ELL students.

The dissemination project presents the following:

- ⤴ English Language Learners struggle in school due to multiple issues, particularly the extent of their language development in their native, birth or home language (L1).
- ⤴ Research of Wayne Thomas and Virginia Collier of George Mason University which followed student cohorts from kindergarten to high school graduation. Research shows that the academic second language L2 acquisition takes 5-10 years and is most successful when balanced with continued development of L1.
- ⤴ Understanding the levels and layers of language acquisition – essential for educators instructing ELL students.
- ⤴ Family support of language acquisition strengthens the program and the skills of each child.
- ⤴ Rigorous standards in ELA and Spanish support MA Curriculum Frameworks and the school's commitment to high expectations for all.
- ⤴ Collecting language data in English and Spanish through IPT assessments in both languages determines true primary language, individual and grade level strengths and weaknesses. Information used to create a stronger curriculum for students