

Testimonials

What some of our graduates have to say:

“The Spanish Immersion program has offered me so much more in terms of connecting to individuals especially in terms of my college direction. Having a unique skill that allows me to communicate with countless people is something I am truly grateful to have.”--Cat (2019)

“Spanish Immersion gave me an amazing gift that I carry with myself everyday. It has given me the tools to succeed in classes and given me a way to connect with the world on a different level. I have been able to travel and even take an internship in Mexico because of what the program has given me.” --Cole (2018)

What some of our parents have to say:

“...It has proven to be one of the best investments that we have made for our family. Our (four) children have not only learned to speak, read, and write in Spanish, they have learned about culture, which has opened opportunities and their awareness of others beyond our own community.” --The Gordon Family

“As educators ourselves, we have been so impressed with the incredible learning taking place in the Spanish Immersion Program. The language abilities and cultural engagement we see in our children are something we know will continue to impact them throughout their lives as global citizens.” --Eric and Lisa Nephew

What some of our teachers have to say:

“Ser una maestra en el programa de inmersión de Rockford es muy gratificante. Enseñar otro idioma puede ser difícil, pero el apoyo que me da la comunidad de maestros y padres hacen que mis días están llenos con diversión e importancia.”

Being a teacher in the RSI program is rewarding.

Teaching a second language can be hard, but the support I feel here from teachers and parents makes my days fun and meaningful.

--Caitlin Marlowe, Spanish Immersion Language Arts,
North Rockford Middle School

WELCOME TO ROCKFORD SPANISH IMMERSION

at Roguewood Elementary

K-5 Handbook



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Frequently Asked Questions

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How will my child understand what to do in the classroom?

- Language learning is carefully structured to ensure that instruction is comprehensible. In the beginning stages of learning the language, the teachers will use exaggerated hand and facial expressions to illustrate what they are saying. Keep in mind that many, if not all, the other children in the classroom will be in the same position. The teachers use songs, stories, and activities to help build vocabulary and an understanding of the second language.

5

What if my child struggles academically?

- Research consistently shows that students who struggle in a particular area (reading, math, etc.) will do so regardless of the language. Immersion classes have a range of student achievement just like English classes. Academic support/intervention is available for those who need it.

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Who are the teachers?

- Rockford Spanish Immersion teachers are all fluent or native speakers and have extensive knowledge and experience in Spanish-speaking countries. They are all highly qualified under Michigan teacher-licensing requirements.

Frequently Asked Questions

2 How can I support my child at home if I don't speak Spanish?

- The most important thing you can do for your child is read aloud in English. This does NOT mean you should teach your child to read in English, but instead expose them to English books while modeling fluent English reading, and most importantly, a LOVE for reading.
- Listen to your child read in Spanish. Even if you don't understand what they are reading, it is good practice for them.
- Encourage your child and be positive! It is exciting to learn a second language, so praise, praise, praise your child for their hard work. Immersion learning wraps an added layer around each daily task and interaction. Let your child know you are proud of them!

3 What are some common behaviors/issues that I can expect from my child?

- Your child may not be able to fully explain what they've learned in English. At school, students are learning the concepts in Spanish and understanding the concept is a different skill than being able to explain it in English. This doesn't mean that they do not understand the content that is being taught.
- Students in our program learn language by being immersed in it, not by translating from English to Spanish, so they may not know the equivalent of each word in Spanish and English and that is okay!
- Your child may not want to "perform". Students understand that language is used for communication and will naturally use it in appropriate contexts but will likely not feel comfortable "performing" for family members and others. This, of course, depends on the personality of your child. Some children do enjoy showing off their Spanish, but others do not.
- Your child may initially be confused and possibly frustrated. They will likely be very tired at the end of the day, as language learning is cognitively demanding. This reaction is very normal for first-time immersion learners and can last from two weeks to two months depending on the child's age and basic language ability. Children are generally very resilient and will soon feel comfortable with the second language.



Roguewood Elementary is the home of the district's Spanish immersion program, making it a unique place within Rockford Public Schools.

Rockford Spanish Immersion (RSI) began with the 2005-2006 school year and has grown to be a successful K-12 program. As one of the "pioneer" programs in West Michigan, our program is well-established and respected throughout the greater community.

Immersion students gain the knowledge of district curriculum while also learning the Spanish language. This unique learning situation allows for experiences that will challenge students' cognitive thinking skills, allow for increased communication with others, and through cultural learning, give students an informed lens through which to view the world.



What is language immersion education?

Immersion is a technique used in bilingual **language education** in which **two languages** are used for instruction in a variety of topics, including math, science, or social studies.

The immersion classrooms become the setting for second language acquisition through core subject content instruction, intentional language study, academic dialogue, and social interaction.

What are the benefits?

- Proficiency in the second language
- Unique opportunities to serve
- Mental flexibility in thinking
- Cognitive advantages
- Enhancement in understanding of native language
- Greater ability to learn additional languages
- Development of soft skills such as perseverance and problem solving
- Increased sensitivity to others
- Receptivity and appreciation of the language

Lottery Process

The computer-generated, random lottery is conducted at the RPS administration office in March each year. Following the lottery, letters of acceptance and waitlist information will be sent to families. Those who receive notification that they are on the waitlist will be informed in the letter of their place on the waitlist. In order to remain on the waitlist, the student must remain a resident in the RPS attendance area.

Frequently Asked Questions



If my child is learning everything in Spanish, will he/she be behind in English?

Students will receive all instruction in the second language, which is in accordance with research surrounding literacy development in multiple languages. Many parents worry that immersion may have a negative impact on their child's English language development; however, research demonstrates that the immersion experience eventually enhances English language development, student achievement in English often paralleling or surpassing that of traditional (non immersion) peers.

In RSI, English instruction begins in 2nd grade. It should be noted that immersion students may lag temporarily behind their traditional peers when comparing English reading, word knowledge, writing, and spelling; but, they are working at grade level in *Spanish*. For example, a 2nd grade immersion student may not be able to read yet in English but may read at grade level in Spanish. This student is not actually "behind" in their reading skills; they are developing reading skills in *Spanish*.

Once English instruction begins, students transfer the reading and writing skills they learned in Spanish to English (for example, directionality, decoding, comprehension strategies, etc.). English-specific skills that are not transferable from Spanish are addressed in 3rd-5th grades. Almost all of our immersion students read at or above grade level in English by the end of 3rd grade. Those who do not are supported through the district's Response to Intervention (RtI) process of tiered support.

Enrollment Information

Students enter the Spanish Immersion program through one of two ways:

1 Through Sibling

Families who currently have enrolled Spanish Immersion students are eligible for the sibling registration. Sibling registration begins early November and ends mid December each year.

To register this way, families must bring the following to the school office:

1. Completed pre-registration form
2. birth certificate (original, with raised seal)
3. two proofs of residency

(Acceptable Residency Documents: current utility bill within the last month, mortgage statement, lease agreement (signed by landlord and tenant), city assessor's tax statement (current year)

All forms must be submitted in person.

If the pre-enrollment form is not submitted by the deadline, late submissions will be added to the in-district lottery.

2 Kindergarten New Family Enrollment Lottery

New student lottery registration begins early January and ends early February each year.

Interested RPS resident families must bring the following information to the school office:

1. Completed pre-registration form
2. Birth certificate (original, with raised seal)
3. two proofs of residency

(Acceptable Residency Documents: current utility bill within the last month, mortgage statement, lease agreement (signed by landlord and tenant), city assessor's tax statement (current year)

All forms must be submitted in person.

All forms will be given a letter when they are dropped off in the office. These letters will be used for the computer-generated lottery. If the pre-enrollment form is not submitted by the deadline, the submission will be added to the end of the waiting list.

Rockford Spanish Immersion Roadmap What can I expect at each grade level?

Under the immersion “umbrella” of language learning, there are many program models of what learning looks like and how much time is committed to the second language.

Rockford Spanish Immersion is an Early-Total One-Way Spanish Immersion program.

What does that mean?

In this model, the target language (the language students intend to learn) is the priority language, and it is *through* this language that academic content is taught. Total, or full immersion, begins with the learner completely immersed in the target language. Then, as students move through the grades, the percentage of time in the target language decreases some, as English instruction also begins.

Breakdown of Language Use

K/1st-90% Spanish; 10% English

2nd -80% Spanish; 20% English

Teachers use visuals, motions, repetition, and modeling to ensure comprehensible input for students. Students learn how to use resources in the classroom and the vocabulary they already know to help them communicate in Spanish.

3rd- 75% Spanish; 25% English

4th/5th- 60% Spanish; 40% English

Students continue to receive the majority of their academic instruction in Spanish, expanding their vocabulary, refining their grammar, and becoming more complex and sophisticated in their language use. English instruction increases.

What are the stages of language acquisition?

1

Pre-production

- *often referred to as the “non-verbal period”
- *word collection: 500 words
- *developing listening skills, learning vocabulary, practicing words and phrases

2

Early Emergence

6-12 months

- *word collection: 1,000 words
- *greater understanding of spoken language
- *adding new vocabulary
- *using words and short phrases

3

Speech Emergence

1 year

- *word collection: 3,000 words
- *beginning to communicate by combining new words and phrases
- *producing simple sentences
- *developing comprehension

4

Intermediate Fluency

2 years

- *word collection: 6,000 words
- *complex sentences
- *thinking in 2nd language
- *increased accuracy
- *expression of thoughts and feelings

5

Advanced Fluency

5-8 years

- *varied grammatical structure
- *addition of social pragmatics
- *comparable to native speaker of the same age

What opportunities can immersion provide for my child upon graduation?

Opportunity for the Michigan Seal of Biliteracy

Wider range of national and international job opportunities



Michigan Seal of Biliteracy



How do I Qualify?

Qualified students have:

- Met graduation requirements
- Demonstrated Intermediate High proficiency on world language assessment(s)

What are the Benefits?

The Michigan Seal of Biliteracy is designed to:

- Provide potential future employers with language and biliteracy skills
- Provide colleges and universities with a method to recognize and give credit to applicants for attainment of high level skills in multiple languages
- Prepare students with 21st century skills that will benefit them in the labor market and the global society

What is the Seal of Biliteracy?

The Seal of Biliteracy is an award given to graduating seniors by the Michigan Department of Education in recognition of students who have attained proficiency in English and one or more languages by high school graduation.

For more information visit www.michigan.gov/mde or contact: Michelle Krynicki, Krynicki@godwinschools.org, 616.252.2090