

Looking 4-ward

NEWSLETTER FOR PHOENIX-TALENT SCHOOL DISTRICT #4

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"¡FELIZ NAVIDAD!" "MERRY CHRISTMAS!"



1st Graders Laura Renteria and Kyle Gillette agree that their dual language classroom at Phoenix Elementary is a great success. Story on pages 4 & 5.

Merry Christmas from around the world,
how many can you identify?

Gedelig Jul	Zalig Kerstfeest	Boaz Festes	Froeliche Weihnachten	Buon Natale
	Felices Pascuas		PRETTIGE KERSTDAGEN	
	S Rozhdestvom Khristovym		Joyeux Noël	
	Kung Hei Shing Taan		Glædelig Jul	

"Buenos días, Kyle."
"Hi, Mrs. Montan."
"Good Morning, Yadira, I like your dress."
"Gracias, mi mama' me lo hizo."

Dual Language Classroom

"¿Esta' Bien?"

This exchange is typical of the conversations in Rose Marie Montan's dual-language first grade classroom at Phoenix Elementary School.

Confusing, you say? "Only to an outsider," explains Rose Marie, who adds that the students in her room have adjusted remarkably well to hearing — and speaking — two languages relatively interchangeably. "It's wonderful to watch these youngsters learn to LISTEN so intently to what is being said and try to figure it out as we go along, rather than interrupting immediately and asking for a translation," notes Montan. "This is a skill that will benefit them the rest of their lives."

The concept is a new one to Phoenix-Talent Schools, but not to the educational community at large.

"It's not every school that has just the right mix of students to be able to offer this unique - but very natural - concept," points out Sherry Watson, who coordinates Phoenix-Talent's bilingual programs. "This is the first year that our district's demographics have provided us with enough ESL [English-as-a-second language] students at one grade level to make this wonderful opportunity possible." She adds that, with thirteen ESL students in kindergarten at Phoenix Elementary this year, the school hopes to be able to offer dual-language classes at both the first and second grade levels in the 1993/94 school year.

"This district has always been very progressive as far as wanting to meet the needs of its students," says Montan. "When I teach this class, I make every effort to make everything very understandable while at the same time challenging the children's abilities." Storytime is usually in English one day and Spanish the next, and Montan watches closely for quizzical expressions and then explains as

needed. The result is a comfortable flow from one language to the other which enhances rapid learning through a form of loosely structured "dual immersion." ("Immersion" is the educational term used to describe the highly successful method of language learning wherein



*Dual language teach-
ing is a source of warmth
for young learners.
The daily schedule in-
cludes "Storytime" (and hear) stories of
experiences.*



n at Phoenix Elementary p” “You Bet!”



er Rose Marie Montan
s and positive energy to

cludes “News of the
for students to share
each other’s daily

the learner is “immersed” in the language totally, without constant translation being needed.)

“You should see it in action,” says an enthusiastic Dave Willard, district superintendent. “Questions may be asked in one language and answered in another; it’s very impressive!” Willard notes that the program operates at virtually no additional cost to the district, since these are students who need to be taught anyway.

So, one might wonder, how are these children selected? Who decides whether this type of classroom is “right” for a child?

“Every Anglo child in this class is here by choice,” explains Jim Buck, principal of Phoenix Elementary School, adding that the Hispanics, of course, are there due to their present language limitations. “These are children who, with their parents, welcome the added challenge of a bilingual classroom, and who recognize the educational benefits to the child.” Dr. Buck explains that a special application-and-screening process produced more candidates than the class could accommodate. He proudly notes that, aside from a school in Woodburn, Phoenix Elementary is the only school in

the state to offer a dual language class at this time.

“These Anglo children are often students who have special skills, who welcome a challenge,” explains Rose Marie Montan. “At the end of the year, these children will have attained the academic level of the typical first grade classroom, **plus** the additional enrichment of learning about a new culture, a new language.”

Montan, who was herself exposed to the Spanish language and culture through her grandparents, pursued this interest through high school and college with advanced courses in Spanish language and literature, and eventually traveled to Mexico. She has taught ESL extensively in California and in the Medford 549C Schools. “We are breaking through cultural stereotypes,” she notes with pride, “creating new friendships. Each day, I ask the children, ‘Why are you here in this classroom?’ Their answer is essentially: To learn, and to make new friends. What more can a school give its

students?”

