



¡BIENVENIDOS!

Welcome to Spanish Immersion at Grand Rapids Christian Elementary School!

We are so glad you've selected our Spanish Immersion program for your child's education. We are committed to developing your child's Spanish language skills through our academic curriculum. At GRCS, we believe in nurturing children's God-given gifts as they grow in their faith. We hope you will see the results of this in the months to come!

Students in the Spanish Immersion program receive instruction in Spanish. They are taught a parallel curriculum and are held to the same standard as their peers in the English classrooms.

Students begin the Spanish Immersion program in preschool or kindergarten and continue until they graduate from Grand Rapids Christian High School. Once your child is in high school there are exciting opportunities to use their language skills through travel, internships, continued courses at the high school, and to earn the State of Michigan Seal of Biliteracy. Additionally, through an established partnership with Calvin University, GRCS high school students, who opt for this pathway, have the opportunity to take dual enrollment classes and earn college credit.

In this packet, you will find important information regarding your child's education. We recommend holding on to this packet for reference. If you have any questions at any point, please reach out to our Spanish Immersion Coordinators.



We are so glad you're here!

VANESSA ABREU

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History of Spanish Immersion at GRCS

Grand Rapids Christian Schools launched the Spanish Immersion Program at the start of the 2010-11 school year. What began as a single section of preschool and kindergarten enrollment of 48 students has now grown to multiple sections and has advanced through the high school level and beyond! God has blessed this program and we are deeply grateful for the support of our committed parents and dedication of our staff.

Vision

Spanish Immersion at GRCS is more than a language program. Our students are encouraged to authentically connect with the broader world that exists all around them and to see God at work in all communities. Therefore, students in Spanish Immersion are prepared to be...

Culturally Competent — build deep cross-cultural understandings and appreciation for differing cultures.

Communicators and Collaborators — use their bilingual skills to work in a global environment, articulate ideas, and consider multiple viewpoints.

Thoughtful Neighbors — live out empathy and compassion for those in the Hispanic/Latino community, both locally and globally.

Justice Seekers — use their second language to actively build relationships in Spanish-speaking communities by using their voice to influence change for the marginalized.

Creative Solution Finders — use their bilingual skills to identify issues, engage in critical thinking, and persistently work toward solutions.

Lifelong Explorers — live a life of discovery and wonder in God's world with a passion for the people, places, and stories of the Hispanic/Latino community.

Disciples of Christ — partner with and serve the Hispanic/Latino community by following Christ's example.

Parent Commitment

Students achieve at the highest level when parents make a committed investment in immersion programs. Teachers and program coordinators work with parents to provide Spanish resources to support language learning at home even if Spanish is not the primary language in the household.

Students' long term engagement strengthens the program and provides them the benefit of experiencing all the educational opportunities we offer..



What is Spanish Immersion?

Our Spanish Immersion program is an early-total one-way dual language immersion program. This means that students receive 100% of their academic instruction in Spanish in grades K-1. Students learn to read in Spanish in grades K-2 and English instruction is added in 2nd grade:

Preschool: 100% Spanish

Kindergarten: 100% Spanish

1st grade: 100% Spanish

2nd grade: 30-minutes/day in English

3rd grade: 45-minutes/day in English

4th grade: one hour/day in English

Curriculum

At Grand Rapids Christian, all curriculum has been developed to follow the same standards in both Spanish Immersion and English classes. .

Co-curricular classes are taught in English to the Spanish Immersion students. This includes music, gym, art, library and technology. Spanish Immersion students also attend a Spanish co-curricular class that focuses on grammar and culture. In this class, students receive extra teaching of grammar to help improve their literacy skills, as well as learning about Spanish-speaking countries around the world.

Academic Support in the Spanish Immersion Program at the Elementary Level

At GRCS, we acknowledge that each student is unique. Students (Kindergarten - 4th grade) in the Spanish Immersion program receive enrichment for their strengths and support for their areas of growth. Our staff is dedicated to supporting our Spanish Immersion students in the target language the same way as they would in English.

If you have further questions about academic support in the Spanish Immersion Program (Kindergarten-4th grade), please contact:

Jenny Marsh

Academic Support Services Coordinator

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MIDDLE SCHOOL CURRICULUM	
5th grade	Science, Math and Bible are taught in Spanish. Students also take advanced Spanish grammar and literature twice per week.
6th grade	Social Studies and Bible are taught in Spanish. Students also take advanced Spanish grammar and literature.
7th grade	Bible is taught daily in Spanish and students continue to take advanced Spanish grammar and literature.
8th grade	Language Arts is taught in Spanish. Students continue to take advanced Spanish grammar and literature.
Academic support at the middle school level happens in and out of the Spanish Immersion classroom. Teachers and support staff* ensure students' needs are being met. <i>*ESS support is not in Spanish.</i>	
HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULUM / PATHWAYS TO BILITERACY	
9th grade	Spanish language course: Spanish Immersion - 9 Content courses: one offered each fall and spring
10th grade	Spanish language courses: AP Spanish Lang and Culture or Spanish Immersion - 10 Content courses: one offered each fall and spring
11th grade	Dual Enrollment at Calvin University or AP Spanish Language and Culture Fall: Advanced Spanish skills at GRCHS to support student learning at Calvin University Spring: Capstone course which culminates in a student-designed project with the goal of engaging language skills in the local community
12th grade	Dual Enrollment at Calvin University (Fall/ Spring) 6 credit hours total
Support at the high school level happens in and out of the SI classroom. Office hours, focus time and peer tutoring support are available. Teachers and support staff ensure students' individual needs and goals are being met as they advance through the various programs pathways to biliteracy.	



Frequently asked questions

Will learning two languages confuse a child or slow academic progress?

There is no evidence to indicate that learning in two languages will confuse or slow a student's rate of progress. There is, however, significant research to indicate that learning two languages can enhance academic growth. In addition, learning two languages will not complicate behavioral or academic challenges.

Should my child be in the English program if they struggle academically?

All learners are welcomed in our Spanish Immersion program at GRCS. We have a Spanish support program that is parallel to our English support services, so we are equipped to support your child well in Spanish.

How will learning everything in Spanish affect my child's English language and literacy skill development?

Many parents are initially fearful that immersion may have a negative impact on their child's English language development. But research consistently has demonstrated that the immersion experience enhances English language development. *It should be noted that immersion students' English reading skills may lag temporarily until English phonics are developed.*

Why is it beneficial for my child to learn a language in elementary school?

Studies have shown, and experience has supported, that children who learn a language before the onset of adolescence are more likely to have native-like pronunciation. A number of experts attribute this proficiency to physiological change that occurs in the maturing brain as a child enters puberty. Of course, as with any subject, the more years a child can devote to learning a language, the more competent they will become. Introducing children to alternative ways of expressing themselves and to different cultures generally broadens their outlook and gives them the opportunity to communicate with many more people.

Will my child learn the same things as the students in the English program?

Students in Spanish Immersion will receive the same curriculum as students in English speaking classes. In addition to providing the same curriculum to all GRCS students, grade level teams are working together to make sure the curriculum is delivered uniformly to all GRCS students.



Should my child be reading in English or Spanish at home?

Giving your child the daily opportunity to practice their Spanish reading skills is essential to building strong Spanish literacy skills. We recommend resisting the urge to explicitly teach English phonics to your child in kindergarten and 1st grade. They will receive this instruction beginning in the second half of second grade. In addition, reading to your child is always strongly encouraged— in Spanish or English!

Is English used in the Spanish Immersion classroom?

The goal of this program is total immersion in Spanish but, at the teacher's discretion, the teacher may use English to ensure the emotional, spiritual and physical well-being of a student or the group. Many reading and writing skills transfer between Spanish and English, but those that do not are explicitly taught in upper elementary, middle and high school.