

Ms. Linehan from Indian Hills Elementary

Teacher: I teach ESL at Indian Hills. This is my 6<sup>th</sup> year.

Kate: What has the response of the Hillsboro District been in the evolution of ESL and what has it contributed?

Teacher: ESL has actually changed a lot from when I first started teaching. When I first started teaching I worked with kids who didn't speak English at home. That was what the job was. But in the last few years the district in order to address the Hispanic population that has grown so large and based on research people learn to read fastest in their native languages. Hillsboro has implemented the Spanish literacy program. Now children come in speaking Spanish as a first language and we test them to see which is stronger the Spanish or English and if their Spanish is stronger then we teach them to read in Spanish first. So we start with kinders and they're still in regular classrooms of course, but we pull them out. And for the reading we teach them in Spanish. Most kids go through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade learning in Spanish and at the same time are getting English instruction in the classroom. When they got to the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade level they exit the Spanish program to the English. It's easier for most children to learn to read English if they already know Spanish, cause you don't have to relearn the same concepts all you have to do is translate. There's a few differences between English and Spanish that if you tell the kids in that transition period. But generally after you learn to read it's relatively simple, so most children will move from Spanish to English without a lot of problems. Of course it really depends on the child; so some will have more problems than others. Some are just more capable readers than others. But generally we found that it's a lot easier transition and you learn to read faster if there's a transition from Spanish to English.

Kate: How many years ago did they implement that program?

Teacher: I'd say 5 years ago they started in the schools that have a higher Hispanic population. And I taught at this school and Witch Hazel and neither of these schools had a very high Hispanic population. So we really didn't have enough kids to merit having this program, so I didn't start it. Because we've had at this school an influx of Hispanics. In addition, the district now requires if you had a kid, even just one, whose native language is Spanish, then you have to teach him in Spanish first. So it's kinda gotten more stringent in certain cases.

Chelsea: So it's not the parent's decision whether they come in or not?

Teacher: WE well have to get the parent's permission. So what I do is tell the parents about the program and most don't know. I tell them that research has show that they'll learn English faster if they'd had Spanish first and most parents are all for it. There are a few who want their kids to learn only English, because they believe that that's the way. That's the way they did it. But most parents are happy to have their kids learn Spanish and they understand that it'll be easier for the child. So we start them kinder and then we watch them. Some transfer out of the Spanish program before the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade because

they're ready. They're just sucking up both languages so fast. Even though they're not getting direct instruction they're learning by osmosis just because they're in the classroom so their English and Spanish just comes along. Now when I first started teaching this research showed that you should only instruct them in Spanish. SO they got confused. Now long after that the district changed its policy that yes they could have English instruction in the classroom and Spanish instruction outside of the classroom. Most kids were comfortable with the languages at the same time. Most kids can, but there is always that child that gets confused and can't handle both. There's always special cases. It has to be individualized. The district policy is that you get a reading level 34, which is 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

Chelsea: So is it a one on one type of thing?

Teacher: No it's a group. But you just have to be aware of where each child is. Testing to see which language is stronger.

Kate: How was the testing changed over time?

Teacher: We do a lot more testing. Not only in ESL, but in the district. When I first started teaching you know you tested at the reading level or not at all. But now it's every trimester you have running records to see exactly where every child is. We're using it not only to find their progress, but problems. SO it's become a lot more structured. A lot more testing and a lot more accountability. ESL things have really tightened a lot since the NO Child Left Behind. A lot more paper work, a lot more accountability, more parent work, more testing, etc.

Chelsea: So do you think the testing is helping?

Teacher: I think so. It's a pain to do it all the time, but definitely for teachers to know exactly where their students are and catch them up to where they're suppose to be. I think it's a good thing for kids to know what they need and where they are. It's a big deal for the children.

Kate: Anything else we should know?

Teacher: Another thing the district is doing is trying to implement the dual language programs for the schools that have the population. Based on research that's the very best way. The district is starting one at Henry, Boscoe, and Hill, but that's a big deal to get the personnel to do it and the parents thinking that way. To get enough English speaking parents. SO the English speaking kids are learning Spanish from kindergarten, which is ideal. Espically for the kids who are going to college and need at least two years of a language. That's really the best way to do it, but it's complicated. Hillsboro has come a long ways coming from the fact that it use to be strictly English to speaking Spanish literacy to finally the dual languages. That's big for Hillsboro. It's interesting because we feel like we've come so far at the cutting edge of research and what you're suppose to be doing for kids. In CA they're eliminating the dual language and teaching in English only.

SO they're not letting the teachers to use Spanish, cause there's a movement that a minority says that by using Spanish you're slowing them down.

Kate: You think their language would be heightened, as well as a lot of diversity issues also?

Teacher: I agree. The more you can integrate the more acceptances they're going to have. No more punishing kids or teachers for using Spanish. It's like way back with the Native Americans. They'd send the m to school and beat them if they spoke their native language . To us that just seems archaic, so backwards, but some sections in Arizona, it's interesting how things evolve!

KATE & Chelsea: THANK YOU!!!!!!!