

**At Sylvan Rodriguez Elementary we believe that:**

- Language is integral to all learning
- All teachers are language teachers
- There is strength in diversity and that the school community should reflect that diversity
- Language is an expression of the culture and it enhances understanding of self and others
- A focus on vocabulary development is essential to effective language learning
- Incorporating the fine arts and technology can greatly enhance the development of language learning

The purpose of spoken and written language is to communicate, learn, and express our ideas, beliefs and values. It is our goal to provide our students with all of the language tools and experiences that are necessary to become effective communicators and contributors in their society and the larger world.

Our commitment to our students is to enhance their ability to communicate orally and in writing in two languages as well as to be able to listen open-mindedly and objectively with respect and tolerance for the multiple perspectives of others. This is accomplished by providing students with a highly qualified bilingual staff, the use of quality, research-based and authentic teaching materials and real/virtual field experiences that will promote language development as well as their appreciation of different cultural perspectives.

Our programs are designed to meet the language needs of our large, diverse student population. Ninety percent of our student population is Spanish-speaking, five percent is native English-speaking and approximately three percent is composed of speakers of other languages.

English and Spanish are taught beginning at age 4 in Pre K for students whose primary language is Spanish. These students are tested and identified as English language learners. Therefore, the state of Texas mandates that they receive Spanish instruction in PK-4<sup>th</sup> grade because that is their home language. These students are also taught in English from Pk-5<sup>th</sup> grade. English instruction increases each year as Spanish decreases until students meet specific criteria to be transitioned into the general education program (English). This transition usually occurs in grades 3 or 4 and by grade 5 all students move into an all English curriculum with Spanish support. In addition, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade transition teachers continue to provide Spanish language enrichment in the classroom.

English native speakers and speakers of other languages are instructed in English all day in grades Pk-5 with the support of ESL methodologies. These students along with the 5<sup>th</sup> grade transition students receive Spanish language instruction offered by bilingual certified ancillary teachers. We are fortunate to have a fully bilingual and ESL certified teaching staff that allows us to meet all of our student's levels of language needs in English and Spanish in all content areas.

Lastly, we provide on-going professional development for teachers during our weekly early dismissal Wednesdays that targets our student needs. Sessions includes Vocabulary development, Reading comprehension, and IB planner development and refinement. Sessions provide both horizontal and

vertical learning opportunities for all staff members. Teachers and parents avidly support this professional development model as it enables our staff to better serve our student community.