

Parents: I'm so excited to begin Spanish again this year! Here's a bit about what is going on.

**Do you have 6 minutes?** You might find this video interesting. It's a condensed and animated edition of a speech that Dr. Stephen Krashen gave in Korea. Dr. Krashen researches second-language acquisition and his theories form the basis for my classroom approach. It will give you a brief idea of why I do what I do in class.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jWyJXCzh4-M>

As far as what is happening in each grade level:

**Kindergarten** is getting used to how to come down to Spanish class and how to work through our calendar & weather routine at the beginning of class. It takes awhile for them to understand how we do things, since it's a whole new thing for these new learners. Still, I practice as much Spanish with them as possible--if you count to five with them (if you know Spanish), they should be able to tell you the same procedures as they have in class--1, their eyes are looking, 2, their ears are listening, 3, their mouths are quiet, 4, their legs are crossed and 5, their hands are in their laps.

**In First, Second and Third grades** we are reviewing these procedures, and I'm adding a bit to each grade from what they did last year--for instance, now the First Graders come in and spend a minute or two reading a student-created book in Spanish (or, at least looking at the pictures and working out what they can understand). Now that they are older, I expect a little more Spanish, a little less English. We talk about the days of the week, the months of the year, and sing Happy Birthday. Still, they've had a whole summer and some things are easy to forget. If your children are new to St. Vincent's, they are getting help from their classmates and from the actions I do in class to help them understand what it is I'm asking for. Rest assured, they'll be right with us by the end of the year in this.

The **Third graders'** review has gone quicker since they have been doing this longer and are cognitively a little more developed. Consequently, we are also beginning to add a discussion about things we like and don't like. This will carry us through the month, and will give students a way to make their learning personal and interesting (ever listen to a third grader talk about what they find disgusting? It's hilarious!)

**In Fourth and Fifth grades**, we are talking about pets, as we're preparing to read *Brandon Brown quiere un perro*. Ask your student which pet is the most popular in Argentina and why. They should be able to tell you that it's a llama (and they may also pronounce it "llama"). Some of the students will be able to tell you what your pet is called in Spanish, or at least be able to recognize between two choices (presented with "perro" or "gato," for instance, they'll likely get it right). We have spent a lot of time repeating the phrase "tiene una mascota," which means "he or she has a pet." We have also been doing a lot of cognate practice (a cognate is a word that looks or sounds the same as the same word in another language), which allows students to stay interested in our discussions while keeping the demands on their cognitive skills at a reasonable level. At this stage of Spanish acquisition, particularly with students this age who meet with me twice a week, they can understand much more than they can produce, much like our babies when they are about 18 months old.

**In middle school**, I am incorporating more Sr. Wooly into the curriculum. Using some cooperative learning strategies, we are practicing high-frequency vocabulary in context, preparing the students to not only ask to go to the bathroom, but be able to transfer this structure to other actions (Can I get a drink? Can I go to my locker?). Likely, if you ask your student how they might ask me in class to go to the bathroom, they will be able to tell you. If not, they still need more practice, and that's OK, I've got more practiced planned in class. Just like they did when they were growing up, kids acquire languages at different speeds.