

**White Paper:
The Language Education Program Model
Goethe International Charter School (GICS)
of Los Angeles, California**

Table of Content

1. Background - Academic Concepts & Definitions	3
2. Instructional Strategies	3
3. Metacognitive Instruction Strategy and Cross-Linguistic Transfer	4
4. Main Benefit - A Solid Foundation for Superior English Language Skills.	4
5. Other Benefits of a Foreign - Language Immersion Programs	4
6. The Target Language German	5

1. Background - Academic Concepts & Definitions

The GICS Foreign-Language Immersion most closely parallels the European model called the Plural Multilingual Model with early immersion. This model addresses students of different nationality and language backgrounds. Two or more languages are used as media of instruction at different points across the grades. The goal is not only bilingualism, but multilingualism through an enriched educational model.

GICS will utilize a foreign or second-language immersion approach. Immersion is an approach to language development that is based on a body of principles and instructional strategies that are recognized within the academic discipline of language education and among practitioners. Immersion education as instruction is where classroom teachers support the development of multilingualism and multiliteracy of students by creating monolingual language contexts in terms of the input from teacher to students in classrooms where content or language arts are taught in either Language 1 (defined as their primary or native language in which they have obtained a peer-age fluency—L1) or Language 2 (defined as the second or target language expected to be acquired through this model—L2). Teachers maintain instruction in a single language so that students receive rich input in one language at a time, while students are expected to produce progressively more output in speaking, reading and writing in the target language of instruction.

GICS' model is considered "early immersion" because instruction in students' begins in kindergarten and continues across the grades. The structure of language/content instruction is termed "alternate immersion" because students use either German or English exclusively for a full day in alternating weeks, such that 50% of the instruction is in German and 50% in English.

2. Instructional Strategies

The Foreign-Language Immersion Model utilizes the instructional strategies that best meet the needs of *all* second language learners. These include visual cues, hands-on approaches, scaffolding, utilizing prior knowledge, cooperative grouping, total physical response approach (TPR), Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) modifications to lessons and materials as well as the strategies consistent with the Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) approach that connects acquisition of language to specific content areas.

A foundational feature of the immersion model is that students' language learning is achieved through content instruction. Consequently, in lesson planning, teachers articulate both content objectives and language objectives. The content objectives define the specific concepts, vocabulary, simple and complex ideas and abstractions, and skills students need to understand, apply and master to achieve academically.

Differentiation of instruction is necessary to ensure that student are challenged in their language learning but not frustrated by language and/or learning tasks that are too difficult or demanding. GICS teachers will use differentiating instruction according to students' language proficiency levels by virtue of their skills as bilingual/second-language teachers. Differentiation is achieved through student-centered planning that adjusts classroom processes, content, products and pacing according to students' learning characteristics and abilities.

3. Metacognitive Instruction Strategy and Cross-Linguistic Transfer

GICS' type of instruction is also termed "metacognitive" strategy instruction because it teaches students to think about their own thought processes and exert increasing control over their approaches to language input and language learning tasks. Research states that students who were explicitly taught language learning strategies were more efficient and effective in approaching learning task, had a higher sense of self-efficacy, were more confident in their learning abilities and more successful at learning tasks generally, which in turn increased their motivation to learn. GICS students have continuous access to knowledge and skills that make them better language learners across the grades and throughout the curriculum.

When students are learning to speak, read and write in a language other than, or in addition to, their native language, they are able to transfer knowledge and skills across languages, resulting in positive cognitive consequences and enhanced language learning.

The GICS curriculum supports cross-linguistic transfer through explicit teaching of the phonology, morphology, syntax, grammar and pragmatics of German and English, so that students know how the linguistic systems are alike and different. This enhanced "meta"-linguistic knowledge and the resulting control over language production and thinking in multiple languages is a major goal and positive outcome of the immersion approach.

4. The Main Benefit - A Solid Foundation for Superior English Language Skills.

This learning is enhanced in the German/English immersion program because of the common origins of the languages and their parallels and contrasts. In the historical development of languages (the language tree), German has common roots with English. In effect, good German language skills may help the students with their English language arts. When deciding between Romance languages (like Spanish) and German, one should consider the complexity of the language. Ideally, a combination of a Latin-based language and German together form a solid foundation for superior English language skills. The logical and complex structure of the German language makes it a perfect companion language for English Language Learners. German is a 100 percent phonetically based language, thus every phonemic sound is consistent in every context. More than 80 percent of the German phonemes are identical to English and thus transferable in the development of reading skills.

When Spanish is added to the curriculum, commonalities and contrasts across three languages can be explicitly taught. For instance, German and Spanish both have highly regular and consistent spelling systems. German and Spanish both have morphologies based on gender. English, Spanish and German all share cognates based on words of Latin and Greek origin. Such instances of cross-linguistic comparisons enhance students' vocabulary and literacy learning.

5. Other Benefits of a Foreign - Language Immersion Program

First and foremost, immersion education does not handicap our children linguistically or academically. To the contrary, when parents commit their children to a full elementary immersion program, immersion students will not only do as well as children in English-only classroom, with the additional advantage of being functionally bilingual but are likely to outperform monolingual students on standardized measurements of English language competency.

Recent research suggests that immersion may be an effective model for students who do not speak English or the immersion language because of a “leveling of the playing field” effect that may occur when all of the students in a class are functioning in a second language.

Furthermore, research conducted by the University College London on 105 people, 80 of whom were bilingual, evidenced an observable physiological change in the brain. “People who learned a second language at a younger age were more likely to have more advanced grey matter than those who learned later. Scientists already know the brain has the ability to change its structure as a result of stimulation, an effect known as plasticity, but this research demonstrates how learning languages develops it.”

6. The Target Language German

- **160 families who speak German at home have expressed interest in enrolling their children in Goethe International Charter School.** An additional 70 families who speak multiple languages at home have also expressed interest in enrolling their children in Goethe International Charter School.
- **Nearly 12,000 people in our target community report German ancestry** making German the highest-reported heritage group in our target community. (US Census 2000)
- **Families of over 700 children have signed up for regular German language children’s films** at the Goethe Institute of Los Angeles. (Goethe Institute of Los Angeles)
- **About 500,000 people from German speaking countries live in the Greater Los Angeles Area.** (German Consulate of Los Angeles).
- **42.8 million or 15.2% of Americans are of German descent** making German Americans the largest single heritage group in the U.S. (US Census 2000)
- **Germany was Los Angeles County’s fifth largest trading partner in 2006** with \$9.66 billion in total two-way trade. (Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation)
- **Germany has one of the largest economies and is the number one export nation in the world.** The German-speaking countries’ economic significance is even greater. Germany boasts the world’s third-largest economy and is furthermore the most influential member of the European Union, the world’s second-largest. The economies of German-speaking Switzerland and Austria are also substantial for their size, and their per capita GDPs rank third and fourth in the EU. (World Bank)
- **German is the most widely spoken language in Europe.** More people speak German as their native language than any other language in Europe. It’s no wonder, since Germany’s 83 million inhabitants make it the most populous European nation. But not only the residents of Germany speak German. It is also an official language of Austria, Switzerland, Luxembourg, and Liechtenstein. And it is the native language of a significant portion of the population in northern Italy, eastern Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, eastern France, parts of Poland, the Czech Republic, Russia, and Romania, as well as in other parts of Europe. While learning German can connect you to 120 million native speakers around the globe, remember that many people also learn German as a second language. It is the 3rd most popular foreign language taught worldwide and the second most popular in Europe and Japan, after English. German is the most frequently recommended language by U.S. universities.
- **German is the second most used language on the Internet.** Germany’s top-level country domain .de is second only to the extension .com. That makes German domain names even more popular than those with .net, .org, .info, and .biz extensions. Even the second-place country extension .uk trails far behind at 3.7 million domain names.
- **One out of every ten books published in the world is in German.** As prolific researchers and scholars, German speakers produce nearly 80,000 new book titles each year. The only language markets that produce more books annually are the Chinese and English publishing industries.
- **Mastery of German provides insights into a culture rich in literature, science and history.** In addition to the German language, students will also be exposed to the culture of German speaking countries with respect to history, traditions and the arts. A few examples are

celebrations of German holidays and related preparations (lantern crafting, winter wreaths, carnival masks, traditional foods, German folk songs). These exposures provide opportunities for students to expand their myopic view of the world and develop acceptance and tolerance for countries beyond their country of heritage. There are regions of the United States with a strong German heritage that has impacted American and Mexican cultures, including cross-cultural German/Hispanic communities. For example, the towns of Fredericksburg and New Braunfels, Texas are representative of German influence on Spanish and Anglo communities. One manifestation of this cross-cultural influence is in the music and dance of south Texas and northern Mexico called "Norteño". Tracing these cross-cultural influences in American and Mexican history contributes to students' appreciation of the contributions of different linguistic and ethnic groups to our rich and vibrant cultural mosaic.

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