

Denver Language School Crosses the English-Only Border

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Dr. Sara Amodio understands the lingo of education and experimentation. She is also fluent in the theories and practices of innovative and inclusive curriculums. The executive principal of the Denver Language School presides over a multicultural and multilingual kingdom comprised of elementary and middle school students pooled from across the metropolitan area. While the students' racial and socioeconomic backgrounds are different, their presence, purpose and pursuits at the school involve target language proficiencies — literate, verbal and cultural. DLS's immersion education is really that — complete engagement.

Traditional schools typical offer an hourly second-language excursion. At DLS, the second language resounds throughout the day's curriculum, not merely in reading, writing and phonetic lessons. Students hear, speak and apply their adopted language in art, science and math classes. The target language and associated culture even appear in extracurricular activities, including cultural celebrations and assemblies outside the classroom. The linguistic options, Spanish or Mandarin Chinese, appear curious, even discordant, at first glance. The apparent cultural distance between the two offerings overshadows the underlying similarities. Even though one is ubiquitous and the other exotic in Colorado, the targeted languages and cultures play increasingly potent roles in international commerce, politics and leadership.

The Chamber of the Americas salutes DLS's foresight and endeavors, recognizing intercultural awareness and collaboration as essential to our endeavors and existence. Controversy plagued past dual language efforts at public schools, prompting the English Only clique into anger and action. However, DLS's theories and practices discard the emotional baggage attached to the immigration debate. Their vision, like ours, peers past the immigration and border policies that influence the shortsighted and passé English Only debate. DLS watches, anticipates and prepares for the multilingual, global economy and community in which we already exist.