

Students and Parents Frequently Asked Questions about the Foreign Language Classroom at SSHS

Q. Why is studying a FL necessary if I don't plan to live in another country?

A: There are several answers to this question. For one, studies have shown that learning and acquiring another language can actually make you smarter (no joke! – it adds and strengthens a multitude of synapses in the brain!). But more importantly, it is highly likely in the 21st century that nearly every career will involve a global dimension. There are an increasing number of inter- and multi-national companies and corporations operating in the U.S. that seek employees with skills in languages other than English. Developments in nearly every field of knowledge involve interdisciplinary collaboration on a global scale. You will certainly need to interact with people from other cultures, and may even one day need to manage employees from other cultures. Even though most of these people will undoubtedly speak English, you will be subject to multiple misunderstandings unless you possess the kind of intercultural knowledge and sensitivity that is best acquired through the study of other languages and cultures. You will be less disposed to making embarrassing or even catastrophic decisions, and more inclined to make good decisions that are founded on non-superficial global perspectives.

In short, whether it be in your personal, professional, political, or social life, the ability you will gain through the study of other languages and cultures to see both global and local events from multiple perspectives will always give you an edge over your monolingual, monocultural peers.

Q: “If you are speaking Spanish in class, how will my child understand you?”

A: I connect the Spanish grammar and vocabulary to the English language. I try to use Spanish to teach - at the end is a Spanish Class- and I use different techniques and tools to show what I am saying. To start, your child will have a summary of what is going to be covered in class ahead of time, your child would have already studied their Quizlet set before I teach the lesson related to those words, and in class, they should be looking at me (I'm probably acting out what I'm saying), listening closely for cognates (words that sound the same and have the same meaning across languages), look at the board for page numbers and clues, listen to

the responses of a classmates, and follow along in the book. Students need to actively participate every day in order to grasp the content in a foreign language.

Q: "How can my child improve his/her grade?"

A: The best way to improve a grade is to access all resources I provide in the chronological order I assign them. Also, pay attention and be active in class. I teach a lesson, review the next day and connect that content with previous topics. Also, your child must do all assigned work and learn from mistakes. I frequently tell the students "Learning a language is a cumulative process; you will see this again." There are a plethora of study resources on our class Canvas course and at <https://yasminjaffe.weebly.com/> to help students reinforce what we learned in class each day. I go over these resources with students daily, especially Quizlet. Also, while there are no extra credit projects offered, there are often between 5 and 10 extra credit points on assessments and extracredit for coming to Smart Breakfast and making assessments corrections.

Q: "How do I help my child with the Spanish language at home?"

A: Know your child's grade and performance in my class! Talk to them and talk to me! Access your child's grades at <https://stokes.powerschool.com/public/home.html> and contact me with questions. Encourage your child to do all assigned work and take advantage of the study resources I provide. Have them show and explain them to you. You can even have them teach you what they learned that day and then you will know Spanish too! If they struggle at home, encourage them to come to tutoring Smart Breakfast (8:00- 8:25am) or after school. As a parent, you can follow along with the class on Canvas and Remind. Directions are on the class website under the Spanish tabs. For a more fun approach, watch TV shows or movies in Spanish! Netflix has great shows for the family (Check for maturity ratings first!) and you may do closed captions in Spanish or English!

Q: "Why is my child not doing well in Spanish class when he/she does well in other subjects?"

A: Sometimes in subjects taught in a native language, students can "zone out" and their subconscious still grasps the concept because they know their native language so well. This is not possible when learning a foreign language. Students need to be focused and participate as outlined in questions #2 and #3.

Q: “Will my child become fluent in your class? Isn’t the best way to learn a language to go to a foreign country and live there for several months?”

A: Your child will become as fluent as he/she wants to become in this class. If your child is motivated to learn and actively participates each day, he/she will become much more fluent than a student who is just trying to do the bare minimum to pass. I also believe that while it is necessary to travel abroad to become fully fluent in language and culture, that can be overwhelming if you lack prior classroom experience. In the classroom, I can immerse students in a linguistic and cultural experience for a shorter, less overwhelming period of time that will help prepare them for such a journey later in life. When they do travel, they will be able to use their knowledge of the language and culture from the classroom for basic communication, courtesy, and survival.

Q: Why is Spanish the only language offered with teachers in Stokes County?

A: Spanish is the second most widely spoken language in the world in terms of native speakers, after only Mandarin Chinese. Spanish-speaking people are also the fastest growing minority in the United States. Spanish is the need of our community, state, and country right now. Colleges want high schools to send more students who speak Spanish because the job market wants colleges to send more employees who can speak Spanish. If you can speak Spanish, you have a job!

Q: “Will my child’s knowledge of English impact how well he/she does in Spanish?”

A: Statistically speaking, yes. The better a person knows the structure of his/her native language, the more that person will be able to apply to learning the structure of a new language. Because of this, it is actually easier for older students to learn a foreign language; they are more knowledgeable about the structure of their native language. The only part of learning a foreign language that is proven to be easier to master at a younger age is the accent. Also, keep in mind that in this class students actually learn a lot of English grammar and vocabulary!

Q: “Why do colleges/universities require 2 levels of a foreign language to apply?”

A: Colleges/universities want students who are globally aware. They want students who know they aren't the only ones who exist in the world and are capable of and see the value in communicating with people who are different from them. Learning a foreign language is a complex, abstract process that involves an intricate knowledge of culture, geography, history, science, math, and native language structures (in our case, English). Students develop listening comprehension, speaking, reading comprehension, and writing skills in Spanish. Those who demonstrate such knowledge and master these skills are ready to attend college.