

Key Concepts for Success

Children Learn New Languages Best When:

1. Target language instruction is consistently conducted in the target language with minimal use of the native language. The target language and the native language are kept distinctly separate.
2. Teachers recognize learners as active constructors of meaning rather than passive receivers of vocabulary and information.
3. Learning occurs in meaningful, communicative contexts that carry significance for the student. For the young learner, these contexts include social and cultural situations, subject content instruction, games, songs, rhymes, stories, and experiences with arts, crafts, and sports.
4. Learning is organized in terms of concrete experiences: visuals, props, realia, and hands-on activities are integral components of instruction.
5. Comprehension is emphasized rather than speaking at beginning stages of the program, shadowing the process of first-language acquisition.
6. Reading and writing are used as communicative tools, as appropriate to the age and interests of the learners, even in early stages of language development.
7. Assessment of learning is frequent, regular, and ongoing in a manner that is consistent with program goals and teaching strategies.
8. Culture is primarily learned through experiences with cultural materials and practices rather than through discussion and reading.
9. Planning is organized around a thematic center and establishes a balance among the basic goals of culture, subject content, and language in use.
10. Curriculum and instruction are organized according to a communicative syllabus rather than a grammatical syllabus.
11. Activities are geared to the young learner's interests, developmental levels, and experiential background. They are designed to appeal to a variety of learning styles and to incorporate frequent opportunities for movement and physical activity.

– Curtain and Pesola, 1998

