

Expectations for Spanish courses at the Watershed Community School, Fall 2007

The following quote expresses the essence of expectations for me and for my students as we approach Spanish as second language, *como lengua extranjera*. Kathan Brown learned and wrote down all the Magical Secrets: **“Magical Secret #2: Use a lot of time. Take enough time for what you are doing and be aware that you’ve embarked on a lifelong pursuit.”**

THE PRINCIPAL EXPECTATION FOR SPANISH STUDENTS AT WATERSHED:

A half hour a day, FOREVER, until the arrival of happy competence. January or July, at home or on excursion. One day off per week is just fine. 2,3,4 days off in a week endlessly prolong the process – and will probably lead to a miserable spring. The half hours can be short or long, but they need to be very frequent.

What is really fruitful when learning a language is a habit of giving it daily attention, out loud, until the arrival of fluency. Fluency may take 30 weeks, or it may take 30 years. A PRODIGY might do it in 30 weeks, and the OPPOSITE OF A PRODIGY might do it in 30 years.

A COMPETENT person will do it somewhere in between. “It” means: have a real conversation at a competent level. My starting idea is that anyone can acquire basic competence, regardless of “gifts” for language that are endowed from above.

Studying Spanish will bring increased command over English, and over the verbal side of the mind. Studying Spanish will bring business and learning opportunities abroad. It will be an important key to cultural awakening.

I try in every class to bring both:

- 1) a sense of immersion (“right brain”)
- 2) the power of analysis (“left brain”)

FURTHER EXPECTATIONS:

1) Immersion is very auditory, very imitative, and is something like an actor inhabiting a new role. My expectation here is that students be working out loud with their new role, attentively working out loud in the classroom, and in the private study place.

2) Analysis is the task of the intellect, and it seems challenging because it is mostly about dismantling obstacles that were never there in the first place. My expectation here is that written work be attended to in a thoughtful and timely manner. When I give a paper to write on a Thursday, and the paper is due the following Monday, the expectation is that the paper take three nights’ work, at plus or minus one half hour per night.