

Interview with Alice Woodall: Recollections

Q: How does the ESL program determine when a student is ready to begin mainstream classes?

A: well there are three stages of ESL. Kids in ESL start out at the first stage usually to get the basics of learning English, like comprehension and stuff. The students advance to higher stages of ESL as their English skills improve. ESL teaches Hispanics how to understand English textbooks. A lot of times the biggest problem is that Hispanic students in mainstream English classes don't know how to read and understand the class work. A lot of school districts stop teaching ESL kids how to read once they enter high school. HSD is one of the few school districts that continue to teach kids how to read in high school.

Q: What are the parents' reactions to the academic outreach programs provided for their children?

A: It's a little hard to tell the reactions of parents, not a lot of them are involved with their students' school. I only see parents at conferences, rarely any other time than that. But parents who are involved with their students are very supportive. From those supportive parents I get the impression that they appreciate the efforts of school programs such as ESL.

Q: What improvements do you believe could be made to better address the needs of students?

A: I think schools should continue teaching ESL students (and all Hispanic students who need the extra help) how to read after 4th grade and in high school. I know that the higher the school grade, the more advanced the textbooks. The higher-level textbooks are harder to translate into Spanish, so in a way Hispanic students who are unable to comprehend the English language are deprived from this education.

Q: What is the greatest obstacle for Hispanic students to try and further their education?

A: There aren't any obstacles. The schools provide what they need. I think the only obstacle they face is them selves, whether they choose to further their education or not, its up to them.

Q: Do you feel adequately prepared to meet the needs of students who have limited English proficiency? What in-service opportunities have you had? What kinds of support have you received?

A: I feel sort of prepared. Yes, I do. I've had in-service opportunities in the past to learn Spanish so I've taken advantage of those. A lot of (my) classes were full, so not everybody gets a chance to take these classes offered. There is a lot of support from the administration too. The principle here, Mike Scott has been so supportive of outreach programs to the Hispanic students here, its just wonderful.