



THE FACULTY CORNER

FROM THE ANACAPA SCHOOL FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT. . .

Anacapa students of Italian and Spanish have a real advantage—small classes! Language acquisition is enhanced considerably when the opportunities for interaction between student and teacher are increased. The more occasions a student has to practice out loud, the faster the language is learned; in addition, the fewer papers a teacher has to mark and the fewer students to listen to, the more carefully a student's progress can be monitored and appreciated. Hugo and Suzie are both very aware of how each student is doing each day and the improvement our students make is fantastic. It's a win-win situation when students make real, significant progress and teachers have the pleasure of seeing the improvement in skill and corresponding increase in confidence.

Spanish

Opportunities to practice and receive teacher feedback occur every day in each of our language classes. For instance, with the Lower School Spanish class, it is essential to build vocabulary and the first concepts of the language, including greetings, colors, numbers, and time, plus verb conjugations in context, so students have the basic fundamentals of the Spanish language and culture. There are so many ways to make learning these basics engaging and interesting when the class is small, such as games and cooking! In the Upper School, Spanish 1 is a dynamic class, where students are engaged in the outrageous stories of the textbook while developing a good sense of humor. First semester students in Spanish 2 and 3 read the book "Los piratas"—about Henry Morgan, the famous pirate of the Caribbean—out loud in class where Hugo could monitor their pronunciation; all the questions were also gone over orally, increasing students' comprehension. The students' major assignment was to write a summary of the book, and with all the preparation, the students did an awesome job. Spanish 4 read short stories from a genre called "El humorismo" (humorism), as well as stories about artists such as Picasso, Frida Kahlo, and El Greco, among others. These students have also been focused on more complex grammar and reading comprehension, making it a challenging and rewarding class. It has been a great first semester, and Hugo is looking forward to the second semester where the highlight will be movie-making, with students writing the scripts, acting, and filming their own creations.

Italian

One unique component of all the Italian classes is the opening activity, "Le notizie" (the news). Students state the date and weather in Italian, and then each student shares some news, either individual or from the world outside. Students in levels 1 through 3 report their news in English, which Suzie then translates into Italian and writes on the board for students to copy; Italian 4 students actually give their news in Italian! Once the news is copied down, students recite together each news item in Italian, practicing rhythm, intonation, pronunciation, and fluidity. Finally students choose approximately five words to add to our class vocabulary list, and competency in these words is assessed by monthly quizzes and the final exam. The positives of having the time for this activity are numerous, especially helping students build their vocabulary with words relevant to their lives. They can speak in Italian about things that matter to them, whether it is that they had a family get-together or tied an important soccer match or saw a new movie that they didn't think was that great. It is a lively and interactive part of each class, whereby the language becomes personal and important.

Students spend a lot of time listening in any language class, but in a big class they may have limited chances to respond and practice. Progress is really enhanced in many ways by learning a foreign language in a class with a great teacher-student ratio, and at Anacapa we all appreciate the academic benefits of our small classes.

~ ~ Hugo Macario and Suzie Sichi