

Mano a Mano Dual Language Program

157 Perry Avenue Norwalk, CT 06850

<http://ses.norwalkps.org/mano-a-mano> T: (203)899-2950

Using Cognates to Develop Comprehension in English and Spanish

Cognates are words in two languages that share a similar meaning, spelling, and pronunciation. While English may share very few cognates with a language like Chinese, 30-40% of all words in English have a related word in Spanish. For our dual language learners, cognates are an obvious bridge to the second language.

Not surprisingly, researchers who study first and second language acquisition have found that students benefit from cognate awareness. Cognate awareness is the ability to use cognates in a primary language as a tool for understanding a second language. Children can be taught to use cognates as early as preschool. As students move up the grade levels, they can be introduced to more sophisticated cognates, and to cognates that have multiple meanings in both languages, although some of those meanings may not overlap. One example of a cognate with multiple meanings is *asistir*, which means to *assist* (same meaning) but also to *attend* (different meaning).

For a helpful video and link to a list of cognates, go to:

<http://www.colorincolorado.org/guide/cognate-list-english-and-spanish>

Our students in the Mano a Mano program all know about cognates. Ask them about how they use cognates to grow their learning in two languages!



Examples of Cognates

English	Spanish
family	familia
center	centro
radio	radio
class	clase
desert	desierto
magic	magia
gorilla	gorila

Families Attend Dual Language Information Night

On January 26th, many Silvermine families as well as Norwalk families interested in our program attended an information night. The evening opened with a warm welcome from four of our Kindergartners: Weston Carr, Julia Wing, Mateo Reyes, and Yadira Hernandez Ambrosio greeted guests in their second language. This was followed by a beautiful bilingual song and poem, sang by about thirty of our Kindergartners to kick off the evening. Fifth graders, Nicole Rivera and Justin Benitez, spoke to parents about their experiences having been in the program since Kindergarten.

Both students cited being able to communicate with their grandparents and other family members as reasons they initially began the program.

Nicole said, "When I am older I would like to become a lawyer or an interior designer. I think my bilingualism will allow me to help people from all different backgrounds."

Justin said, "I'm very happy to be in the program because in the future I will be able to find any job I want. I know that the best careers are always looking for bilingual people."



Several Silvermine parents took a moment to share a few words about having their children in Mano a Mano, including Lorena Davison, Sasha Carr, and Eric Benitez. Elizabeth Chahine, dual language coordinator, and Damaris Cruz, fourth grade Spanish teacher, presented parents with an in-depth presentation on the school's goals, beliefs, and program structure. Parents learned about how a second language is acquired, how the curriculum is structured, and the work our Mano a Mano teachers are doing to build the program. The evening closed with the teachers leading a Q & A session.

We want to thank all of the students, parents, and staff who came to the event to help and to learn about our unique program. Your support is so important to the continued success of Mano a Mano. For those who were unable to attend, we have posted the Powerpoint slides to our Mano a Mano homepage. Please consider attending one of our events in the spring!

The Benefits of Bilingualism

Learning two or more languages can have a positive impact on brain development. When children learn two languages in a balanced way with similar exposure and skills in each language, the advantages are larger. The human brain is a very complex system that allows us to think, organize information and maintain control of our actions. The Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (2013) describes executive function and self-regulation in the following way: Executive function and self-regulation skills are the mental processes that enable us to plan, focus attention, remember instructions, and juggle multiple tasks successfully. Just as an air traffic control system at a busy airport safely manages the arrivals and departures of many aircraft on multiple runways, the brain needs this skill set to filter distractions, prioritize tasks, set and achieve goals, and control impulses. For children developing language in more than one language, these executive function processes are more frequently in use as they use them to figure out the differences and similarities in words that they hear in all languages they are exposed to. This ongoing use of these processes can actually change the regions of the brain associated with executive function.

Here are some of the benefits of growing up with two languages. Children who are bilingual can:

- Develop improved cognitive control systems at 7 months of age.
- Demonstrate advantages in attention and inhibition.
- Show advantages in tasks that require conflict management and ability to focus on relevant task information.
- Store and use two sets of vocabulary, understand grammar rules in both languages, store two sets of sounds which leads to better metalinguistic awareness.
- Demonstrate improved school achievement as better self-control is a key indicator of school success.
- Develop strong thinking skills and increased abilities to focus, remember and make decisions.



Parent/ Guardian Survey

You are being asked to complete this survey as part of a project to help all those who are part of your school community (students, parents, and the adults who work at the school) understand how everyone feels about your child's school. With the information you provide, we are able to make the necessary changes to better our school and improve our relationships with the greater community. Your opinion matters! The survey takes about twenty minutes. Please go to the Silvermine web page and click on "For Parents" to access the survey. The survey will be available until February 16th. Thank you!

Applications for Mano a Mano are still available

If you have an incoming Kindergartener and are planning on having them attend Mano a Mano (we hope so!) please do not forget to submit an application either online through the Silvermine page or you may get a copy from the office. Deadlines are quickly approaching! Remember, priority is given to families in the Silvermine neighborhood and siblings of current students. Do you have friends with young children? Help us spread the word about our wonderful program! We depend on word of mouth from our Mano a Mano community to promote and support our dual language school. Please direct questions to our coordinator, Elizabeth Chahine, at chahinee@norwalkps.org.

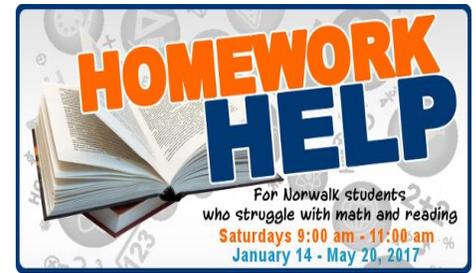
Spotlight on Staff: Meet Mrs. Rosa Colón! Second Grade Spanish

My name is Rosa Colón. I was born and raised in San Lorenzo, Puerto Rico. I came to the United States at the age of 14. I received ESL services all throughout high school. After I graduated from Brien McMahon High School, I went to Sacred Heart University to pursue a major in Psychology. Later on I decided that I wanted to be a teacher because at the time, I was working in a pre-school program. I found myself loving being able to work with children and I decided that that is what I wanted to do. I majored in Spanish at Sacred Heart. I started working at Silvermine in 1997 as a Kindergarten teacher. After two years working at the school, the Mano a Mano program began in 1999. My son was a student in the first class of the dual language program. A few years later, I received a Master's degree in TESOL from Fairfield University.

I love to sing, and work in my church community. I am also a big Yankees fan! My guiding principles are compassion, honesty, dedication, cooperation and commitment. The traits I most admire in others are also compassion and honesty.

I believe the Mano a Mano program offers every child the opportunity to learn a second language, to become bilingual and bicultural. All three of my children went through the Mano a Mano dual language program, and they are doing very well in Spanish and all other academic classes they take.

The main challenge of teaching/working in a dual language school for me is convincing the public of the success of the program and of the opportunities it allows children to have in life. Being bilingual can offer many different opportunities for children in the future, regarding schooling and careers. Without being bilingual, I wouldn't be where I am today.



The Homework HELPer Program pairs College Edge Program alumni with students to promote academic excellence and positive work habits. HELPers are selected to support, nurture, and guide students until June (the end of the school year). They provide structured one-on-one attention, encouragement, and advice, as well as facilitate highly meaningful conversations between students regarding academic excellence.

This program is free and open to the public. Register online at www.norwalkpubliclibrary.org/sono or call (203)899-2790 ext. 15903