

## Expectations of Successful Foreign Language Acquisition Educating Parents and Students

"This class is too hard!"

"I studied for thirty minutes, and I still failed the quiz!"

"I can't pass any of the tests!"

"I go to class, but I don't learn anything!"

You may have heard or said something similar to these statements. The reality is that with proper understanding of what it entails to be successful in any foreign language class, parents and students can work together with their foreign language teacher to ensure language learning.

Too often, the mindset of language learning is grade-driven, not content-driven. If the language is actually learned, then the grade will reflect that. The mindset should be more global: "What do I need to know in this level to be successful in the next level?" "What is my motivation for success?"

To be successful in language learning, the student must have the maturity and responsibility to be motivated and determined to master a particular skill. With block-scheduling, teachers meet the students approximately 15 days a six weeks. Therefore, the students must meet teachers halfway. We do everything possible to teach the students, tutor them, retest them, etc., but if the student doesn't go home and consistently practice and learn, even on "off" days, then they are not going to be able to master the necessary skills, and therefore, the quizzes and tests.

As an analogy, a father is an artist and his son has no artistic talent. If the son had to take art classes to graduate, he would be in trouble because he can't draw. He would have to work at it ten times more than someone else. His dad can show him 50 ways to draw a pretty mountain, and the son could study it for two hours, but if he doesn't go home and practice drawing it over and over again, there is no way he could draw a mountain for an assessment. Language learning is also like learning a song for the first time. Most people can't listen to a song one or two times, and then sing it perfectly. Learning a foreign language is comparable to learning song after song after song. Success depends on the student's talent, motivation, determination, and the amount of time he or she is willing to give to practice.

Successful students know how much practice and learning they have to do. The students who are not doing so well tend to listen to and watch the teacher (most times), but skip the practice and learning part. They study, but they are not learning. A student may say, "But I studied an hour for this test." That would be like the son studying his dad's drawing of a mountain, thinking that would be enough for him to be able to draw one like his dad's. Then when it's time for him to demonstrate mastery, his mountain looks terrible. In any foreign language class, the student has to take home what was taught and actually practice speaking it and memorizing it. The student must be responsible for his own learning.

Teachers, students, and parents are a team, and the team must work together to ensure success.

Hopefully, with all of us working together, we can hear or say:

“This class is fun!”

“I studied for at least 15 minutes every night, and I made an A on the quiz!”

“I learned the language and did well on all of my tests!”

“Because I listened in class and practiced at home, when I go to class I understand everything and can participate!”

“I can speak a foreign language!”