LANGUAGE LEARNING PHILOSOPHY

Concordia Language Villages creates a community of learners in which opportunities to interact in a second language and experience other cultures permeates life. The ultimate goal of all programming is an immersion experience in language and culture that motivates participants to be lifelong learners and responsible citizens in our global community.

Language Learning Principles

1. Concordia Language Villages creates an environment where the target language is used continuously by the staff so that villagers are constantly hearing the target language in a myriad of contexts within the Village.
2. Active listening skills are encouraged from the moment the villagers arrive on site as part of the natural progression of language development.
3. Situations where the villagers need to use the target language to complete tasks and meet personal needs are built into the daily routine of the Village.
4. The Villages offers a myriad of activities and experiences relevant to the target cultures in which the use of the target language is encouraged through active participation in these activities and experiences.
5. Language learning begins with phrases and vocabulary which are useful in daily interactions within the Village. As villagers master this Village-centered vocabulary, the interactions are continuously expanded to broader contexts and more detailed discussions within and beyond the Village.
6. The rationale for curriculum development is based on a proficiency orientation. The sequence of language instruction develops from the communicative needs of the villagers within and beyond the Village context.
7. Error correction does not inhibit communication but leads the villagers toward more accurate language through the modeling of correct meaning or form in a supportive response to the villagers’ communication efforts.
8. Culture is an integral part of a daily routine. Cultural information is actively taught in evening programs and thematic presentations are modeled through authentic experiences in the daily schedule. The cultures’ temporal, spatial and aesthetic concepts are reflected in many aspects of the program.
9. The use of English is clearly separated from the use of the target language. Use of English in the Village is kept to a minimum and is used when necessary to meet the safety and emotional needs of the villagers.
10. Written labels and signs are an integral part of the cultural atmosphere of the Village. While Concordia Language Villages emphasizes listening and speaking skills, instruction in reading and writing the target language may accompany or follow listening and speaking skill development.

Based on the "Key Concepts of Immersion" found in Languages and Children: Making the Match by Helena Anderson Curtain and Carol Ann Pesola (1994).

History of Language Teaching

Language teaching traditionally focused on the structure of language, creating grammatical terminology and rules based on the study of Latin. World War II and the ensuing Cold War, however, created a pressing need to train students quickly in oral and aural communication, resulting in the repeated pattern drills of the school of foreign language methodology called audio-lingualism.
As interest in cognitive development and learning styles grew, educators and researchers introduced a number of new schools of thought to the field of language instruction. Thus, the Natural Approach, Total Physical Response, The Rassias Method, Community Language Learning, Suggestopedia and many more options were presented to the language teaching community. A call to teach language so that learners can use it for actual communication prevails. The National Standards for Foreign Language Learning (1996) broaden the definition of language learning to include more than communication. Cultural understandings and comparisons, connections to other bodies of knowledge and participation in multilingual communities are also an integral part of language learning. Concordia Language Villages uses an eclectic method which integrates many of the historical and contemporary techniques of language instruction, with a focus on oral, authentic conversation.

Second Language Input

It is often said that the best way to learn a country's language is to go there. That's not necessarily true — unless, of course, you can go there and be surrounded by language teachers.

Researchers, for example, generally agree that both the amount and the type of language input — what learners hear — determine how much they learn. Nothing is simple, however, and there is no direct correlation between amount of language heard and amount learned. In other words, a stay in a foreign country, although surrounding the visitor with input, will produce little actual learning if hardly any of the language is understood.

Concordia Language Villages feels it can emulate to a great degree the feeling of being in a new culture while providing language input that is understandable to learners, enticing them forward in learning by constantly expanding the boundaries of what they understand. Our immersion approach to language teaching provides villagers with a culturally authentic setting full of natural opportunities to hear and speak language, as well as the support of language teachers experiencing ongoing training in an unique blend of teaching methodologies.

Looking to the Future

Great ideas tend to turn into merely good ideas without constant refinement. Concordia Language Villages constantly strives to improve its already proven methods. The current emphasis is on villager-centered programming, including villager-led activities, villager-led learning groups and self-evaluation and reflection within models of experiential and content-based instruction.

Refinement of our teaching approaches and techniques arises from villagers, staff and parents, as well as reflection and planning by deans. In addition, a Language Villages research coordinator (a long-time staff member) conducts and oversees internal research to help us better understand why villagers are successful learners in the Villages. This type of internal research is designed to be unobtrusive and is always carried out by staff members. Research results become part of staff training and are shared with the wider language teaching community when appropriate.
LEARNER GOALS

The mission statement of Concordia Language Villages is: To prepare young people for responsible citizenship in our global community.

In conjunction with our mission statement there are certain goals we have for every villager attending a Concordia Language Villages program:

A responsible world citizen is one who:

— Understands and appreciates cultural diversity.
  
  Villagers learn about the cultures that speak the language of the Village and how the people of these cultures relate to other people of the world by interacting with staff members from around the world, participating in activities and simulations, and experiencing culturally authentic meals and everyday life.

— Communicates with confidence and cultural sensitivity in more than one language.
  
  Villagers learn language appropriate for different social situations and develop functional use of language required to successfully navigate their stay at the Village.

— Responds creatively and critically to issues that transcend national boundaries.
  
  Villagers learn geography through names and locations of Village buildings and areas and work creatively with authentic local, regional and world maps. Villagers will also examine issues facing people in many areas of the world. This is done through learning groups, simulations, evening programs and informal discussion.

— Expresses empathy for neighbors in the global village.
  
  Villagers meet people from around the United States and throughout the world, and will live in cooperation and respect of individuals in the Village. Cabin councils encourage villagers to participate in the management of living with a diverse group of people in a small village, and games emphasize cooperation over competition.

— Promotes a worldview of peace, justice, and sustainability for all.
  
  All Concordia Language Villages programs work to model environmentally responsible behaviors, including reducing, reusing, and recycling; respect for nature and property; and outdoor skills. Simulations provide opportunities for villagers to empathize with diverse groups. Teamwork is promoted in the Village, and conflict resolution skills are modeled in mediation of disagreements among villagers.