

Claire Darmstadter

Hey, everybody, I am joined today by Valentine Schneider, 10th grader at La Follette High School. Thanks for taking a couple minutes to chat with me.

Valentine Schneider

No problem. Thank you for having me.

Claire Darmstadter

Yeah, so first to start off, it'd be great if you could just give us a really general overview of your linguistic and education background, and maybe some ways that you want to use your language skills in the future.

Valentine Schneider

So I started in the DLI program when I was six in first grade, and I'm learning Spanish, and I've continued in it ever since. And it's been a really positive experience for me. I really enjoy it. I think it's, it's truly been worth my time. And it's allowed me to make a lot of connections that I don't think I otherwise would have been able to if I hadn't started the program. I'm not sure where I want to go with my language abilities in the future quite yet. I haven't given it too much thought. But I definitely think that I'll be using them in the future. I think I want to travel. So I think that they'll be used to me there and being able to help others I think would be nice as well.

Claire Darmstadter

For sure. And like you mentioned, you were in a DLI program, which is super interesting. But you said I think you entered in first grade, and maybe growing up, he didn't really have much exposure to Spanish, so was that super overwhelming at first was that, you know, pretty easy to get adjusted or what was it like being like, *Oh, my gosh, I'm immersed in Spanish, I don't really know what's going on?*

Valentine Schneider

It was really, it was really interesting, because I remember the days were all in Spanish. And we'd only have a specific time where we could speak in English, where we were allowed to speak in English. And the teacher would have to put a necklace on her English necklace in order to be able to speak in English. But I think being immersed in a classroom where Spanish was the only language spoken for most of the day, I think that definitely helped me pick it up. And I think the teachers were really good with being really clear about what they were talking about, like if they were talking about a piece of paper that we had to color, they would make sure to show the paper and the colors, and they would always have like some Spanish nursery rhyme songs playing in the background when we would have work time. So I think that was a big help in picking it up. And yeah.

Claire Darmstadter

And were you at Nuestro Mundo or were you at a middle school or elementary school where it was kind of like a mix between the DLI program and then other students?

Valentine Schneider

I went to Glendale Elementary where there's both the DLI and the non-DLI students.

Claire Darmstadter

And what was that like?

Valentine Schneider

It was, it was interesting, because in a way the DLI kids had their own little, it was like a little community inside the school. And we didn't have we didn't have too much interaction with the ELI, or English program. I'm not sure what it -- how exactly to call it. But with that English program. It was kind of like our own little thing, which is really nice and helped us form kind of closer bonds and relationships. I don't, I didn't really have too many friends that weren't in DLI, because I was only around kids that were in DLI, which is pretty nice. You know?

Claire Darmstadter

For sure. And I know if I understand correctly, you also took some French classes in middle school in quote unquote, kind of like a normal study. Right? So not DLI. So kind of comparing those two experiences, very different I would imagine. Did you kind of like a French experience? Or would you have wished it was kind of more of that immersion kind of structure?

Valentine Schneider

I kind of wish it was more like the immersion structure. I think that immersion structure definitely helps you pick up the language quicker. I don't remember a lot of the French that I learned from middle school. I didn't continue it in high school. But the French class wasn't really that focused. It was more loose with the work we had to do. And the teacher did speak English for most of the class and we would only do our work in French, which was very different from the immersion program where the teachers speak to you in Spanish and you also do your work in Spanish. I definitely prefer the immersion program way of learning where you're completely immersed in the language because I think it's a more effective way of learning it.

Claire Darmstadter

And then looking at Madison, kind of as a city as a whole or Columbus where you might live a little bit more, do you feel like the community has kind of embraced individuals who speak more than one language? Are you able to feel proud about the fact that you speak Spanish and English? Or do you ever feel like there's kind of a negative attitude or connotation towards individuals who might speak more than just English?

Valentine Schneider

I know that in Madison, like, Madison is very, like a diverse city. It's a very diverse city. So I feel like it's really common for a lot of people in Madison to speak more than one language. It's just kind of normal. But up in Columbus like it, everyone here is kind of just monolingual. So I don't really get to use my Spanish in the summer a lot up here. But in Madison, it's like, definitely feels more normal to know two languages than in a smaller town up here like Columbus. I don't think a lot of people know more than one language, just English.

Claire Darmstadter

And finally, so we can celebrate multilingualism and we say it's a superpower to speak more than one language, so can you give me one reason if you want to answer English or Spanish, or both, whatever you prefer, of why we should celebrate speaking more than one language.

Valentine Schneider

It's because it's really cool. And you can make a lot of connections. And, you know, it allows you to be part of a lot more communities than you would be able to if you only knew one language, and I know that there are immersion programs that aren't only for Spanish, there's for a lot of other languages. So you really have like a lot of options in terms of what you want to learn. And it just opens a lot of doors for you. And you get really close with the people you're learning the language with. You're with those kids for pretty much all of your school career.

Claire Darmstadter

That is so true, right? You take a big community and you make it pretty, pretty small. And that's kind of cool how with Madison, you could do that because it's such a large city. Well, thank you so much for chatting with me. I hope everything with COVID goes well the rest of the school year. I know it's really hard. So I hope everything goes well. Thank you for a couple of minutes of your time.

Valentine Schneider

Yeah, thank you for having me.