

Spring 2015



SSP Learning Center

*Helping Families Learn
Together To Grow Together*



Family Spotlight



Mari Castelan loves to share the accomplishments of her two little ones with her family back home. She also loves to tell people how much the SSP programs have prepared her sons for educational success. But what she doesn't boast about is her role in all of it. She enrolled in SSP in 2012 and started classes only 2 weeks after giving birth to her second son, Gabriel. She said she made the commitment because she knew it would benefit her sons greatly. She shared that she doesn't particularly enjoy studying but knows there is value in her boys seeing their mother committed to learning. This year, Mari has participated in the ESL classes, Mommy & Me, nutrition classes, and BookSpring Parent Book Club. Next, she plans to participate in the UW Success By Six Play to Learn technology program and the LCCT PALS program that are hosted on-site at SSP. I asked Mari if she thought Diego's time at SSP prepared him for the afternoon Pre-k program he currently attends. She said "Claro que si!". She shared a story about the day she volunteered in his classroom last semester. While most of the students struggled with the work, she was pleased to see that Diego did not require assistance. She believes it is because of his time at SSP. I ended our conversation with three more questions:

Board Members Needed!

Are you interested in helping us shape the future of Central Texas? SSP is looking for 2 new Board Members!

Contact us today if you have experience in:

- Financial Management
- Special events
- Corporate Community Connections
- Marketing/Public Relations Expertise
- Volunteerism
- Resource Development
- Education

What is the most valuable thing you have gained from SSP? M: My children's education. The advances they have made in their time here is the most valuable thing.

What is your family's favorite part of SSP? M: Mommy & Me. Without a doubt, Mommy & Me is our favorite thing. If I'm struggling getting the boys out of bed, all I have to say is today is Mommy & Me and they eagerly jump out of bed.

What changes have you seen in yourself? M: I have more confidence now. I feel comfortable helping Diego with homework. I feel more comfortable at meetings. And now if I don't understand something, I'm confident enough to get the dictionary out and learn about it.

I wish I could share the audio of our conversation. As the founder of SSP, it made me really proud to hear the pride in Mari's voice as she shared stories of her sons' successes and the role SSP has played in them. As a mother, I understood all she does is because of her love for her boys.



Save The Date & World-Wide Web

- Please join us on MAY 14th at 10:30am to celebrate our 6th graduating class.
- Check out our NEW website! www.ssplearningcenter.com



Enjoying Spring On Our NEW Playground!

“Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning. But for children play is serious learning. Play is really the work of childhood.” – Mr. Rogers

We are so happy to share photos of our young students playing on their new playground. Thank you to all of the SSP friends who helped make this possible. The joy on their little faces as they ran outside was priceless and even students who rarely verbalize what they want are now making a special request, “Can we play outside today?”. Thank you!

Adult Education

Don't be nosy. This is my students' favorite expression. On Monday, I asked Aurelia, “How was your weekend?” and she responded, “Oh, teacher, don't be nosy.” Everyone laughed. They say it in jest, to tease me, to tease their fellow students, but they're right. I am nosy. In fact, I encourage nosiness in my class. One of the first things a person learns when learning a language is how to talk about him or herself. Similarly, one of the first things a person does when making friends—when building a community like the one we have at SSP—is ask personal questions. So we ask questions, questions about family and about jobs, questions about the past and about the future, and most importantly, questions about dreams. The dreams that led them to the United States and about their dreams for after they learn English.

As a class, we are nosy, and I let this nosiness guide my teaching. When Claudia announced she had an interview the following week for a job at her daughter's school, we practiced interview skills in class. (She got the job). After Ivonne mentioned that she was thinking about buying her first car, we discussed ways to research prices, learned the vocabulary for car features, and role-played negotiations with a salesperson. (She will buy a car in July). When Juan told us he wanted to attend college, I emphasized study skills and note taking in class and added additional listening exercises. (He will go to college in the fall). I incorporate these various facets of American life into my traditional lesson plans so that students can actively engage with and immediately benefit from the material.



But our nosiness doesn't just limit us to the big goals; we celebrate the everyday successes as well, like when Perfecta gets 100% correct on the homework, when Rosa pronounces the “w” sound correctly, or when I catch Saeam and Elizabeth solving a problem together in English before class even starts. The students know how important each of these small steps is in the goal of learning English, and they know how important it is to work together, to learn about each other and try to understand one another so that they can help one another. Being nosy is part of learning English, but more importantly, being nosy is how we create a community of learners at SSP.