

**Catalina Foothills School District
Tucson, Arizona**

TO: C.F.S.D. Governing Board
FROM: Mary Jo Conery, Assistant Superintendent for 21st Century Learning
DATE: December 7, 2011
RE: Approval of Student Fee for Summer Spanish Immersion Program

The district is seeking governing board approval to charge students a fee of \$4,200 for optional participation in a school sponsored summer Spanish immersion program in Costa Rica. The Summer Spanish Immersion Program is a one-credit course offering that was previously approved as part of the World Languages program. It is a one-month program of study that will be scheduled for June/July of each school year, based on student interest. CFSD World Languages teachers at the high school went to Costa Rica to seek the most appropriate school and environment for this full immersion experience. The Trust has approved the travel.

Recommended Motion: I move the governing board approve the fee of \$4,200 for optional student participation in the CFSD Summer Spanish Immersion Program, as presented.

CFSD High School Summer Spanish Immersion Program

Costa Rica

Why Immersion?

Immersion is the fastest-growing and most effective type of academic language program available. Because students are immersed in the language and culture every day, they acquire the language faster and better. They have more time and opportunities to practice their second language skills. Not only do students develop proficiency in the immersion language, they also develop multicultural competency. The ability to interpret cross-cultural interactions is crucial in today's world. Language immersion develops flexible thinking and has a positive effect on students' cognitive development.

Why Costa Rica?

Spanish is one of the most widely spoken languages in the world. While there are many different countries in the world where one can study Spanish, Costa Rica offers some unique advantages. It is a country with friendly people, unique culture, and natural wonders.



Costa Rica is known around the world for its stable, democratic government. After abolishing its army in 1948, Costa Rica decided to spend a large portion of its national budget on education and health care. Today, the country has a high-quality educational and health system. Costa Rica's literacy rate is 93%, which is among the highest in the developing world and the highest in Latin America.

Costa Rica also offers tremendous biodiversity. The country is teeming with wildlife and natural beauty, allowing visitors to climb a mountain volcano in the morning and relax on the beach in the afternoon. Costa Rica has a long-standing commitment to environmental conservation; about 13 percent of the country is dedicated to national parks, and over 25 percent is protected in the form of biological and environmental reserves. From its Caribbean and Pacific beaches, to its volcanoes, rain forests, and cloud forests, Costa Rica is a country full of natural beauty.

San José is the capital of the country. It is a cosmopolitan city with many museums and theaters with music performances and plays, and international restaurants. The population is about four hundred thousand people and combined with the neighborhoods it is close one million. Because Costa Rica's public transportation and road system radiates from San José, the capital is often used as base from which to visit the country's many attractions.

Dates and Location

June 17 – July 14, 2012

Conversa Spanish Language School

Santa Ana, Costa Rica

Beautiful mountain setting just outside of Santa Ana

Conversa has been teaching Spanish since 1975 and has been operating the Santa Ana campus since 1980. The campus is called a “learning park” and is located on a hillside above Santa Ana.

Conversa is located on a six-acre campus that has three small lodges, a 45-foot swimming pool, 25 small classrooms, cafeteria, administration building, basketball hoop, paddle tennis court, ping pong table, TV lounge, educational walking trails, mock travel agency, convenience store and infirmary (for practicing Spanish in different situations), trees, plants, flowers, birds – an ideal place to immerse oneself in Spanish.

Cost Includes:

\$4,200 (includes airfare, daily Spanish classes at Conversa, homestay/lodging, meals, weekend excursions

Breakdown:

- \$2,795: Daily classes, lodging (includes lodging with Costa Rican host family)
- \$700: Airfare (airfare may be higher or lower depending on rates at time of purchase)
- \$800: Three Weekend Excursions (includes transportation, lodging, park entrance/event fees). Does not include fees for optional activities.
 - Parque Nacional Manuel Antonion (June 22-24)
 - Parque Nacional Volcán Arenal (June 29-July 1)
 - Punta Arenas (July 6-8)

Other Student Costs:

- Meals (weekend excursions)
- Souvenirs/spending money
- Money for other optional activities: Rainforest activities: zip line, rafting; Beach activities: surfing lessons, kayaking, horseback-riding, parasailing; Town activities: movies, eating out after school, pizza night, bowling, ice cream, personal items.

Payments and Due Dates:

A completed CFSD Learning Agreement and a \$200 deposit must be received by November 16th. (Late payments will be accepted from students who register after November 16.) The deposit is non-refundable and is applied toward the total tuition at Conversa. A completed program packet must be submitted by January 31, 2012. The deposit and completed registration form, included in the program packet, will be sent to Conversa as confirmation of student participation. Conversa charges a \$200 cancellation fee.

Payment Due Dates: January 13, 2012 (airfare), Feb. 1st (1/3 of balance), March 1 (1/3 of balance), April 11 (remaining 1/3).

Reference web page for materials: <http://goo.gl/vFB1v>

Program Information

The program is designed to help students increase their language proficiency in Spanish as well as their cultural competence in an international setting. The CFSD summer Spanish immersion program offers a unique combination of educational and cultural activities, travel/excursions, and an experience with a Costa Rican host family. The total experience will immerse students in the language and culture:

- **Spanish Language:** Motivation for learning a world language greatly increases when a person is completely immersed in that language. This is the main objective of CFSD's Spanish immersion program in Costa Rica.
- **Culture:** Living with a Costa Rican host family exposes students to regional customs, social life, family values, religion, and food, while museums and other cultural events and places of interest provide examples of Costa Rican culture.
- **The Environment and Ecology:** Students gain exposure to the rainforest, its ecosystems, and the importance of nature preservation. Participants visit important Costa Rican national parks. These parks demonstrate Costa Rica's efforts to protect nature by reserving a larger percentage of its land for parks than any other country on earth.
- **Social Skills:** By interacting with people with various backgrounds in different situations, students have an excellent opportunity to develop social and leadership skills and values that they can carry throughout their lives.

Spanish Class Schedule

Morning classes start at 8:30 a.m. and run until 1:00 p.m. There is a 30-minute morning break around 10:30am. Lunch is scheduled from 1:00 - 2:00 p.m. After the Spanish classes, students will participate in afternoon cultural activities. All Spanish classes and afternoon cultural activities will be held at Conversa. Each week, the students are evaluated on the basis of progress and participation.

All of the classes (including cultural classes/experiences) are conducted completely in Spanish. This is the ideal setting to improve conversation skills and fluency. Therefore, classes have been designed to ensure maximum student participation. The emphasis is on listening and speaking skills. Spanish reading and writing skills are practiced via daily homework assignments, which are corrected on the following morning.

The host family experience, afternoon cultural activities, weekend excursions, and Conversa's friendly atmosphere also provide additional opportunities for conversation. There is wireless Internet throughout the campus.

Academic Credit

CFSD students may earn 1 high school credit upon successful completion of the program.

Host Family Information

Host families are a vital part of the overall program. They are an excellent way to immerse oneself in the Costa Rican culture. The homestay experience provides students with the most authentic environment for their experience. The host families are carefully selected for their hospitality, friendliness, and warmth. They all offer clean lodging in safe neighborhoods. As part of the family, students will practice speaking Spanish every day and at the same time they will learn first-hand about the Costa Rican way of life.

Conversa takes great care in selecting their host families. They are evaluated by a Housing coordinator before they begin working with Conversa and evaluated by each student before departure. The Housing Coordinator interacts with the students every day. If a problem arises, adjustments are made quickly. The host families provide students with the following:

- Private room (1 student/home in private bedroom unless otherwise requested)
- Study area
- Breakfast and dinner
- Laundry once per week

The Housing Coordinator reviews every student registration form and matches each student with a different family, taking into account personal requirements and preferences such as diet and allergies.