

Erin Carson

By Gregory Manack, father of Illi 1st grade

As an educator in the traditional United States system, what caused you to consider bi-lingual education at the International School of Orange County?

I was previously a public-school teacher in Arizona and when I came across the job posting it mentioned teaching 3 different grade levels, so I was curious how it would work. During my job interview, they explained how the system works and I fell in love with the program, in particular the bilingual concept and how it requires students to use different parts of their brain while also expanding their critical thinking skills. It all seemed very interesting.

What factors motivate you to return each year?

Working with Frederique and the French teachers, just working together as a team, it's really amazing. Also, the school has a very homelike feeling. In fact, "family" and "community" are the biggest words I would use to describe our school because the kids grow up together and we have this close-knit community where the students, teachers and parents truly get to know each other. It's great to have that comfort level with the kids and hopefully they feel the same way with the teachers. Also, I think because we're small, everyone is excited to have a new family at the school and the kids try to be welcoming and friendly to new students.

When I first came to the school a fellow parent mentioned how she chose a bilingual educational path for the cognitive benefits but was equally impressed with the cultural diversity provided by the school. Is this something you noticed in your time here?

Yes. When I tell people I work here they ask "What is it like, is everyone French? My reply is, "You would not believe the mix of cultures!" This school is an example of how our generation is rewiring culture. You have so many different families that create our own melting pot and we're all doing our part to change the world. It's one of the most interesting things about our school - not to mention the kids are amazing.

Having worked in differing educational environments, what aspects of bi-lingual education have you found most beneficial to the students, both in the short and long term?



In this series, **International School of Orange County (iSchoolOC)** educators speak about what the school means to them and how the Annual Fund enhances their ability to provide our children the best possible education.

Think about our kids, every day they come to school they switch. They are switching languages back and forth, then they switch handwriting style from print to cursive and then back to another language and they have to switch all the vowel sounds. The vocabulary is different, the math is different. Our kids are switching all day long. When you think about how they are constantly looking at things from a different angle I think it builds strong critical thinking, logical reasoning and analytical skills because they are analyzing, deciphering and translating all the time.

Is there anything parents can do at home to assist you as an educator?

For sure. Reading, and keeping them at a level that's challenging for them is the best thing we can do. Maybe a secondary suggestion would be spoken-word problems like, "I have six cupcakes and if I gave someone else five cupcakes," so kids are exposed to the language. Word problems are the biggest area of growth in math. Also, exposing kids to new vocabulary is very helpful.

As you know, International School of Orange County (iSchoolOC) tuition does not cover all operating costs of the school. The Annual Fund is a crucial mechanism in covering expenses such as Smart Boards and other student-centric equipment and activities. What have you used past annual funds to assist with in your classroom?

Obviously, the technology, the Smartboards, computers, and other electronic aides. I use technology a lot in the classroom. However, there are smaller projects where I come to Frederique and ask for assistance, and she is always on board. For example, when we started math-timed tests, I wanted to get enough five-minute timers for students to practice when they're done with their work. She's never had to say "we don't have the money for that" which is great.

What could you do with additional funding and resources from the Annual Fund?

Ultimately, many of the things we utilize already are being covered, but having our own space would be the biggest help, and I think everyone wants that. But our school is still going to be our school, wherever we are.