



University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

NEWS RELEASE

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New Bilingual Beginnings language camps to be offered this summer

RELEASED: [DATE]

EAU CLAIRE — This summer, the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire languages department will offer its new Bilingual Beginnings language immersion camps at the university's Children's Nature Academy at [The Priory](#).

Bilingual Beginnings will offer classes in French, German and Spanish. Five two-week camps, offered from June 16 through Aug. 22, will be available to students entering grades 1 and 2. Participants can choose between morning (8:15 a.m.-noon) and afternoon (12:30 p.m.-4:15 p.m.) sessions.

Dr. Carter Smith, professor of Spanish and chair of the university's languages department, said one of the goals of the program was to maintain a language immersion format with a nature theme.

"A number of us thought about the possibility of summer immersion language camps that would have a curricula focused on nature. We also thought it was important to create camps that would introduce the study of languages and cultures to the area children since they are at the perfect age to begin to learn a second language, and in this way we could create some important outreach to Eau Claire and surrounding communities," Smith said.

The proposal for a Bilingual Beginnings program began in the fall of 2012, when results from a university survey regarding projects relating to The Priory revealed a desire for camps combining nature and language immersion. By last May, the languages department received critical funding from the Chancellor's Office that helped put the plan into motion.

The majority of Bilingual Beginnings teachers are UW-Eau Claire language education majors with study abroad experience as well as practice working with elementary-aged children. During the spring 2014 semester, Dr. Paul Hoff, professor of Spanish, has trained the teachers in the pedagogy of immersion instruction and foreign languages.

The Eau Claire Area School District will be partnering with the languages department to uphold and cover costs of the camps. Dr. Anne Hlas, associate professor of Spanish, recognizes the value of the collective support of the district and university.

"The Eau Claire Area School District and the university have a collaborative partnership because both recognize the potential of learning a language at a young age. Research shows that exposing children to another language improves flexibility in thinking, listening skills and understanding of native language. It also helps children gain an appreciation of other cultures," Hlas said.

In the future, the languages department hopes to expand the program to include students through grade 6 as well as classes in additional languages.

The camp registration fee is \$25 — and \$200 per two-week session. The Eau Claire Area School District will cover the \$200 fee for any student who resides within the district. The registration deadline is May 30.

To register a child for the camp, visit

https://uweauclaire.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_9ZxHNKhDajBYBY9.

For more information regarding the camps and application, contact Barbara Aronson at 715-836-2178 or aronsoa@uwec.edu.

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