



Ballerinas performing during their recital at the Children's Arts Corner, which integrates the arts in teaching foreign languages.

The art of learning a language

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LEXINGTON - In an innovative approach to teaching foreign languages to children, Madeleine Kando draws on her knowledge of the creative arts and her own experience of learning a second language at a young age.

Kando, director and founder of the Children's Arts Corner, just outside Lexington Center, has developed programs that teach Spanish and French to children ages 6 months to 16.

The company uses dance, music, singing, art, puppetry, and games to teach the languages, and two of its most popular programs are a French summer camp and Spanish summer intensive, which launch in July.

Creative arts are an excellent way for children to learn a second language because the activities are 'physical' and easy to relate to, according to Kando.

"Even though they don't understand what we say a lot of the time, they still understand what to do, because it's all physical", said Kando. "Every French word they hear is accompanied by an abundance of nonverbal enrichment." One key benefit of this is that as the children grow older, learning the language, and other languages, comes easier, Kando added.

"They will pick it up a lot faster later on," Kando said.

Kando, born in Hungary, said she and her family moved to France when she was 4, and then to the Netherlands when she was 11. She said moving around at a young age made her realize that learning a new language for children is more physical than it is mental, which gave her the idea to use creative arts in teaching.

"I remember this so well, that the nonverbal part of learning a language is very important for children," Kando said. "And then I realized that children really learn through their bodies more than through their minds... It seems to work really well with them." Also important to the programs, Kando said, is that the activities the children perform are designed to be fun, which makes learning the language almost secondary from their point of view.

"The children really enjoy what surrounds the teaching of the language..," she said. "They don't really mind that they are learning the language... They come for the fun."

Rebecca Simpson of Concord said she enrolled her 4-year old daughter in the program at the Children's Arts Corner because at such a young age children are very receptive to listening and learning.

"At this age I think children listen more intensely than adults in a lot of ways, ... so it's a great time to introduce them to a second lan-



Above: Margaret Entwistle (left) and Aimee Schechter learning French as they dance to "l'Alouette" during their studio recital at the Children's Arts Corner in Lexington.

guage." Terina Richards of Billerica enrolled her daughter, also 4, in a French program to give her an opportunity to learn about another culture and language.

"We don't speak another language at home," said Richards. "And I really wanted my children to have exposure to another language that we couldn't offer."

Richards enrolled her daughter in a French ballet program when she was 3 1/2. "She loves it," said Richards.

Richards added that since joining the program her daughter has devel-

oped a growing French vocabulary and an interest in learning other languages.

"Now she wants to learn Spanish as well," said Richards.

Kando moved to the United States when she was 27, worked as a dance therapist at a rehabilitation center, and founded the Children's Arts Corner in 1986. She introduced the foreign language programs in 1990, around the time her own children were learning foreign languages at school.

"I was trying to find ways to make foreign languages more alive and relevant for them," Kando said.