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Host: Welcome back to this two-part podcast hosted by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of English Language Acquisition, OELA. Today, we will continue discussing the contributions that Community-Based Heritage language schools make to the multilingual landscape in the United States.

I am happy to welcome back Joy Kreeft-Peyton, the President of the Coalition of Community-Based Heritage Language Schools, Ana Lucia Lico, Co-Founder and Board Member of ABRACE, Heike Feltes, Teacher and Co-Director at Bay Area Kinderstube, and Shahid Iqbal, Co-Founder and Program Director of the Indus Arts Council.

In Part 1 of the podcast, Joy Kreeft-Peyton discussed the work of the Coalition of Community-Based Heritage Language Schools, and Ana Lucia Lico talked about her organization, the Brazilian Association for Culture and Education, or ABRACE. If you have not yet listened to this episode, please access it on the NCELA website, at www.ncela.ed.gov. In this episode of the podcast, Heike Feltes will discuss Kinderstube, and its contribution to the heritage language education in the Bay Area, and Shahid Iqbal will talk about the work of the Indus Arts Council in Houston, Texas.

Please note that in this podcast, the terms "English learners" and "multilingual learners" are used interchangeably, and refer to the population of students defined as English learners in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by Every Student Succeeds Act.

Let's get the conversation started.

Heike Feltes: Thank you for the opportunity to introduce our program. My name is Heike Feltes, and I'm one of the three directors at the Bay Area Kinderstube in California, and I have worked there since 2008.

Just a little bit of context about German heritage schools. There are approximately 1.5 million people in the U.S. who consider themselves speaking German as a first or as a second language. That is only a fraction of those 50 million people who claim to be of German heritage. So the German heritage speaker schools in the United States have a large...have a really important part of the German language education, especially in California, where a lot of high school programs are being eliminated or reduced. And for example, in our chapter of Northern California, we had 357 students taking the national German exam this year. That is the standardized high school exam. 210 of those were students of Saturday or language schools. So that gives you the idea that the language in Saturday schools, especially in California but all over the U.S., are a very important part in the German language education, more and more.

So yeah, who are we? At the Bay Area Kinderstube, we have 280 students who come, starting at age two. We have our preschool that starts with age two, two to five. It's a full-time licensed preschool. And right after, they can go into our school program. Our school program runs at two different locations, because we have a very large area from where people come during the week, in the afternoon, or our high school students attend in the evening. We have over 250 students in those two locations who are in grades K to 12.

We do not have adult students. We don't teach German as a foreign language. We are a true heritage speaker program, meaning that all our children are supposed to have or hear German regularly, outside of our classroom, most likely in the home, but some elsewhere. We also run a four-week summer program, with a day camp with usually about 90 campers in Berkeley, and that has been an institution for over a decade, and we have many extracurricular activities as well that we run throughout the year.

We are, as I mentioned, a German immersion program, which means, like, our classes, all of our contact with the students, unless it's a life-threatening emergency, it will be in German. We speak English only, like, with the parents,

because half of our parents do not speak German. But with the students, the contact is exclusively in German. We are WASC accredited, which is the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. And for that, we had to provide... It was a very lengthy process to become accredited. And also, we had to show a six-year plan of how we're planning on growing, and what we want to...our areas of focus that we're going to become even better at. And there is an audit every few years, where they come in and see how we're doing in the areas of improvement that we have pointed out that we're working on.

We're also a Paschule, that is a partner school of the German government, which also means we receive funding, partial funding through the German government. And we are eligible, or we're qualified to administer the German language diplomas DSD I and DSD II, which are necessary, or which are one way of showing language proficiency in order to get access to a German university.

We've also been designated a German Center of Excellence by the American Association of Teachers of German in 2013. And that is like the Baseball Hall of Fame, once you're in, you're in, so we don't have to get recertified, but we were very proud of winning that award.

The Bay Area Kinderstube, or Kinderstube as we call it short, it's our preschool, it is in Albany, California, right next to Berkeley. We start at two years old. Our students have a minimum enrollment of three mornings a week, but most students attend five full days a week. Fun fact for those of you who are my age, this is the former recording studio of Creedence Clearwater in John Fogerty, and we're very proud to, you know, to have such a famous building.

So after the students have attended the school for three years, almost all of them will continue in our after-school program. The after-school program runs once...all the students come once a weeks, some of them come twice a week, but a minimum of once a week after the regular public or private schools. Many community-based schools in our area suffered a lot during COVID in enrollment, and because California schools were closed for over a year. We have not seen a significant drop in enrollment back then because we just continued most of our instruction either online or outdoors. And our younger

kids came, and we met outdoors, and our preschool reopened, and our school went online within a couple of weeks, and stayed online, and then we had a hybrid situation for a while.

We were the only summer camp in Berkeley that opened its doors in person in 2020 that was not only for essential workers, for children of essential workers. So our students, we had summer camp in 2020 and 2021, when all the other camps were closed. We spend a lot of time outdoors, thank goodness for California, so that helped us a lot to get through the COVID times, and our enrollment numbers are even higher now than they were before the pandemic.

Because we do not teach explicit language instruction, we use the German textbooks, and German classroom material from German elementary schools, we're following the curriculum of most states, or of many states in Germany, and so we integrate all those topics into our work. For example, I taught third grade this year, and some of the topics that were in our textbook were we learned about potatoes, we learned about Vikings, we learned about bionics, we learned about the life at the pond. So it's not language instruction, but we learned the language through the different topics that are covered in our elementary school material. So it's very much hands-on. The kids love to learn about these topics, and then they just happen to be in German. But you know, you can get even shy students, or students who are not that eager to participate if it would be only language instruction, they are very interested in the topics, and so their participation rate goes way up because they love to learn about nature or, you know, we had, like, computer...we learned about computers in third grade, too. That was also a big hit.

For us, it is important that the students use the language in a meaningful context. We want our students to use the language not in just a typical classroom setting, but they want to use the language to communicate with each other. And so another big, really big thing in our elementary school is our kids are stage kids. They love to play this, on the left-hand side, you see an impromptu Little Red Riding Hood that the second grade...first grade just came up with, and they talked their teacher into just, like, let's do this. And it was like they came up with this idea, and within the same afternoon, they performed in front of the other classes.

We sometimes have a little bit more rehearsed events. Many of our plays that we put together, the students write and develop. They invent the stories, they write the plot, they make the props, the costumes, and then they will perform in front of their classmates, and sometimes before their parents and the wider school community, so it's a very important part of our school life too.

Then, reading is a very important part. Our focus is very high on reading proficiency. In upper elementary school, starting in upper elementary school, about 90% of new vocabulary in any language is traditionally being introduced through reading. So if our students are not proficient readers, meaning reading fluent, with full comprehension, or almost full comprehension, it is very hard to build up a high content vocabulary. So this is why, in our elementary schools, our focus is very high on becoming a good, fluent reader in German. We have a lot of systems for that in place. The fourth grade this year, I challenged them to read 100 hours outside of the classroom in the month of February. The class was only nine kids, and so they managed, they read even 112 hours, and that came out to, like, 27 minutes per student per day for the month of February that they had to read in German.

So we also have a library. We have lots of other games and systems in place where we encourage the students to continuously read throughout their elementary school and middle school grades. Our students will read no matter when and where, and it is very important to us. Our kids don't come on a Saturday, they come after school. They had already a long day of school, and they are tired, and I don't blame them because, you know, after six hours of school, I'm tired too, and so we don't do a lot of direct instruction. We want them to have fun while they learn, and they learn best with their friends and with their partners, you know, in teams and in small groups. And we are very flexible, and if they are...you know, no matter what position they are comfortable in reading or writing or, you know, getting their work done, we are very flexible.

So Friday afternoon fun, or camp fun, we have, as we said, we have 90 students attending our summer camp every year. Our families...our summer camp is very popular. It sells out usually within a week or two. Our parents schedule their summer plans around the dates of our camp. And so it is so popular that we

decided that we have to provide more during the year, so we have 20 days during the school year, when schools are closed in the Bay Area is usually when we are open for extra camp days. So the days leading up to Thanksgiving or spring break or midwinter break, whatever it is, Veterans Day, whatever holidays where the schools are out, but a lot of parents have to work, we will offer camp days. And we also have enrichment classes on Friday afternoon, and we have 35 students who come on Friday afternoons for a second day of German just because it's so much fun. And it's not like, you know, class instruction, but it's an extra day, or an extra afternoon of full immersion in the German language.

So once our students get to middle and high school, our instructions get a little bit...our lessons get a little bit more formal. We do, after all, want all of our students to reap in the reward for putting in so much work, and for the parents. We do not know if our students will continue their post-high school education in a German-speaking country, or in the U.S., so we prepare them both ways. Our students will take the national German exam, and that's the standardized high school exam. And Level II, III, and IV, we have an AP prep class. So as I said, German is not offered in most high schools in our area anymore, unfortunately, so they can prepare to take the AP German exam with us, and then take it, you know, take it with the high school.

So they also have the possibility of taking the German language diploma I and II, and will with that have the access to a German speaking university. Our class participates in the contest of Jugenddebatte, the German debate contest, every year with great success. And our students are ready to go, no matter if it's in the U.S. or in Germany, for their post-school education, and I think that we play a part of that.

So and with that, I'm handing it over to Shahid. Thank you so much.

Shahid Iqbal: Thank you, Heike.

Hello, everyone. My name is Shahid Iqbal, and I'm representing the Indus Arts Council. Indus Arts Council is an arts and cultural organization based out of Houston, Texas. We are a combination of visual and performing arts organization. And one of our premier programs is the Urdu language program,

and that's called Pervaaz. So basically, the word, pervaaz, in Urdu means flight, to take off, to see another world of the Urdu heritage and language.

So very much like the German and the Portuguese colleagues of mine, our program is also based on age, and their level of understanding of the language, for kinder through 12. Urdu is also taught in many universities across the U.S., but is not very much taught in the kinder through 12 area. So that's an area that was neglected in the past, so we took on the opportunity. And then ever since the pandemic, we have gone virtual as well.

One of the hallmarks of our program is that every year, we partner with schools in Pakistan, and the students get to talk to them in Urdu, at whatever level of Urdu they have learned here in the U.S. So there's always a cross-cultural communication with the native language speakers, and to the host country.

And again, we could not leave the adults out. So adult program started...I think maybe the children's program started in 2013, right after the organization was formed, and then a couple of years later, the adults program started. And now, after the pandemic, we have gone digital in a way that now, you can actually type Urdu language on any social media platform, on any device, all you have to do is enable that keyboard, and we will teach you how to type.

As I mentioned before, we are an arts organization, so art classes, and the application of language into arts is also one of the main areas that we work with off and on. We integrate these art classes with competitions, which gives a student a complete picture of a culture that they are learning about. And as I said, with the pandemic, and closure of many buildings and facilities, we went virtual even for the art class. So most of our program people, or teachers, they have become more tech savvy over the years. So we take advantage of the technology, and don't find ourselves in any sort of trouble because of that.

Another element of our program is that since we don't have a building of our own, so we're not tied to one place at least in that sense, so we have centers across the Houston area, in Texas here. Houston is a very large city, I think the fourth largest in the U.S., and so that was also a reason that we were never interested in a building, because we could not bring everyone, dealing with the

traffic all the time in one place. So we ended up having different centers, and we partnered with different organizations to use their buildings.

Whatever language these students learn, they apply it in theater, they apply it in art, they apply it in music. We also make films. So that's another thing, that the Arts Council gives us the leverage. There are a lot of people who are involved in the Indus Arts Council from very many different, diverse backgrounds, and one of that is the independent films. So in the past 10 to 12 years, we have produced about four films, and then, these films also become a venue for our students to perform in, to act, to show their talent. And most of these films are in Urdu, some are in Urdu and English, and so on and so forth, so they do get the entire platform to showcase their language skills.

If that wasn't enough, we got ourselves into more trouble by organizing the first ever Pakistani-American film festival in Houston, and this film festival brought more than 100 films from all over the world. And again, the idea for the film festival was to have films that have either Urdu language in it, or are produced or, you know, participated by the Pakistani diaspora. So this was just a very recent event in Houston, on May 4th and 5th, where for over two days we showed more than 25 films, and received a lot of accolades, and gave out prizes and awards to the winning films.

Since we are an arts organization, it's natural for us to engage, take the art into the mainstream America, and the Main Street. And since 2018, we have started these total immersive events once a year, where as soon as you walk into the venue, you feel like you have just walked into Pakistan, as I think someone else was saying, that you walked into Brazil or Germany, or something like that. So similar concept here, but we do get the help of all the artistic capabilities, and the artists within the Houston area, whether they are visual or performing arts, so we get to have the benefit of that capability.

We also run an Urdu language summer camp, and very much like our other language colleagues, these summer camps are very popular with kids of all ages. And yes, they do run out the first couple of weeks, all the sports do run out, but during the summer is when the children get the...or the students get to participate in the music and the performance. We also have cooking classes

sometimes so they get to not just taste the food but also make the food, and that's also a very effective way of teaching language. We also started a debate competition, an arts competition, a visual arts competition, and a performing arts competition, where students get judged by our esteemed panelists, and they do get awards and accolades for their performances.

We are a 10, 12-year-old organization now, so our impact in the socio-economical, cultural element of the Houston area is considerable. With our size of an organization, and our age of an organization, I think we have brought more than $500,000, or even close to $750,000 of grants into the Houston area from federal, state, corporate, and other funders. So we are trying to make an impact wherever we are, and whatever opportunity we can get.

The other element is that through the help of organizations like ACTFL, or University of Maryland, or different universities, NYU and others, they all have Urdu-Hindi programs which do offer trainings for teachers. So we have been on a constant track to get our teachers acclimated with the latest technology and so on so forth, so it's a very robust program as well. We are actively looking to partner up with different organizations, different groups to ensure that Urdu language is in America for the long term.

Host: A big thank you to our panelists for telling us about the important work of their Community Heritage Language schools and organizations. The information, reflections, and experiences that you shared today will certainly help educators support multilingual learners across the country. We encourage you to visit the NCELA website, at www.ncela.ed.gov, and check out the many educator resources available there.

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