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## Spanish program for kids growing thanks to Bernards woman

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A Bernards woman is opening a language-immersion program to help young children learn Spanish.

Sandra Smith decided to pursue the business opportunity after her 3-year-old son played with, but couldn't converse with, another child during a vacation three years ago to the Dominican Republic.

Smith returned home from that vacation determined to find a program to help her son learn Spanish. Now almost 6, Sean Smith has been learning Spanish at an Edison-based program, as well as attending a preparatory school in the Somerset section of Franklin where two hours of each day is devoted to teaching Mandarin Chinese.

This year, his mother said, Sean also will begin learning French.

Meanwhile, Smith is preparing for the Sept. 13 grand opening of her franchise of the Salta! Jump into Spanish program at 88A Main St., Peapack-Gladstone. The program will be one of three branches of the original Salta! in Edison, where Smith said her son was enrolled soon after that 2005 trip.

The grand opening of the new school, with free trial classes, is scheduled from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sept. 13. The official opening, with classes to be offered six days a week in age categories ranging from ages 18 months to nine years, is set for Monday, Sept. 22, according to Smith.

Learning a second language has become increasingly essential for many reasons, said Smith, who has professional experience and an MBA in international business.

"It just brings out this commonality between people. You just find out more about someone," she said.

Many jobs also seek, or require, fluency in more than one language, Smith said.

For Smith, serving as director of the year-round Salta! program will draw upon many of the activities she said she herself dreamed of doing as a child, incorporating music, art, singing, dancing and games designed for learning.

Classes will be taught by Colombia native Angelica Ramirez, a teacher trained at the Edison Salta! school, Smith said.

Salta! (which translates into jump!) hires only native speakers as teachers, with the goal of teaching young students the proper accent, Smith said.

Smith said Salta! uses the ""Think in Spanish" method, with total immersion. Although students may enter classes at varying levels of fluency, groups are small and teachers will guide each through building knowledge of the language, she said.

The Edison program is in its fifth year, according to Jackie Sanin, founder and chief executive officer of that main branch. Another franchise of Salta! is also due to open this month in the Skillman section of Montgomery, according to the school's Web site, [www.saltajump.com](http://www.saltajump.com). That location's grand opening is from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sept. 14.

Information about the Peapack-Gladstone school also is available by calling Smith at 908-234-2100.

The Bernardsville library is also scheduled to offer a free sampling of the Salta! program this fall. Parents can preregister online for two age levels, 18 months to two years, or from ages 3-5, by clicking on the kid stuff link at [www.bernardsvillelibrary.org](http://www.bernardsvillelibrary.org) or by calling 908-766-0118. The program is offered once a month through November, beginning at 11:30 a.m. Sept. 16 for the younger group, and at 4:15 p.m. Fridays starting Sept. 12.



ANDREW MILLER / MyCentralJersey

From left, Sean Smith, 5, of Bernards, Sandra Smith, owner of Salta! Peapack, and David Sanin, 7, of Rahway play with maracas at the new Salta! location Sandra Smith will be running in Peapack-Gladstone.