

Overview of Our Spanish Program

Providing a unique opportunity for students to study foreign language in grades 1-8.

We are proud to offer a strong Spanish language program for our students. Spanish is one of the top six languages of the world and is an integral language of communication at the UN. Many countries of the western hemisphere speak Spanish as well as Spain. Several other countries around the world speak Spanish as the official language. Our elementary school students begin a study of Spanish in first grade. The curriculum is integrated with classroom studies and spirals through fifth grade. Students in elementary school have Spanish twice a week where they learn Spanish as a foreign language. Students completing a K-5 FLES sequence are expected to communicate at the beginning stage of language acquisition.

Middle school students in NYC are required to complete two years study of a foreign language. Our middle school students study Spanish in sixth and seventh grades. The Spanish program in middle school is designed to support students who are brand new to Spanish and to continue to support students who have been in this program since 1st grade. For example, from 1st - 5th grade, students are building upon vocabulary, familiarizing themselves with phrases, and speaking more comfortably. From 6th - 7th, students are shifting their brains towards creating their own sentences by conjugating, understanding simple translations, and learning about themselves in their new middle school role. Our 8th grade students are given the option of taking Advanced Spanish, which prepares students to take a Spanish proficiency test for a higher language placement in high school.

The goals of our program, based on the national World Language Standards, are to introduce the language and culture of the Spanish speaking world, develop vocabulary from a young age and continue to expand their knowledge and skills to all students. Our teachers insure that students build skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening. The integration of these skills allows students to have a deeper understanding of the language.

Some key goals:

- provide all students with the foundation of a second or other language.
- give students the tools and strategies to have success when acquiring a language in our school, high school and beyond.
- create a safe space for students to take risks in communicating
- build cognitive flexibility and problem solving through using another language
- prepare students to begin developing functional skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in Spanish.
- to provide a nurturing environment where students feel comfortable learning a second language.
- to develop proficiency in oral and written communication in Spanish through the integration of language skills and concepts taught in the content areas.
- to encourage all students to develop an openness, understanding and appreciation for other cultures.

The Standards

Our Spanish teachers have crafted a foreign language curriculum that is based on the national World Language Standards. The American Council on Teaching Foreign Language has published [national standards](#) for world language learning. These standards are structured around communication, culture, connections, comparisons and communities. These “Five C’s” focus instruction on how language is used in real-life situations; they assume that students learn a language so that they can use it. Guiding questions for the curriculum include: What will the students gain—by the end of this lesson, this thematic unit, this year—in communication ability, cultural knowledge, understanding of the nature of language and culture, and ability to use the language to acquire information and participate in the communities where it is spoken?

Students learn basic and common vocabulary in the elementary grades. As they enter into the middle school, students begin learning concepts to enrich their speaking, listening, reading, and writing and developing critical thinking skills within the language. Such concepts include basic conjugations, comprehension/translation, and sentence structures.

FAQs

*2 t ValjX'by' l Z,, {n {aZ yWarrj MIX'aMj' l n {jZMl ZX'@Mlba UZ_nxZ'a) n,, 'MI '*jMuMzi {Aazju' k t ValjX' Z {Ml' a{ 'l u#'*

Every year students are welcomed as new learners since they are learning a new unit of study. Students who haven't had prior knowledge in Spanish have plenty of resources located in the classroom. From students to resource sheets, workshops, group activities, and centers, new and old students can learn and help each other. Some students also use Duolingo or other Spanish language acquisition apps to provide different entry points and supports.

H ljj k t ValjX'UZVnk Z'j | Zl {b @Mlba M {ZxuM {bWlMl b' b {alyun' xR #'

That is highly unlikely. In lower grades students have Spanish twice a week. In upper grades they have it three times a week. Programs that have the most success in building fluency are immersion. Our program is not structured to provide the necessary time to achieve fluency. However, our students become more comfortable in communicating in a second language. They are willing to try out their language skills at school and in their community. They enjoy puzzling over language problems together. They use language together. Students, who speak Spanish at home, are proud to share their expertise. Some students report using their Spanish on vacation and communicating with native Spanish speakers in their communities.

*2 t ValjX'by' l n {jZMl b' {n' Vhl h' MZ' fZUy MIX' fZU' Zl yZy' AaM' by' an,, '*jZMl ZX' M_nxZb l' jMl' | MZ'a H at' by' l Xb' ZxZl {#'*

Research on learning an additional language shows that we learn best when we strive for more authentic uses of language. At the same time, in order to communicate effectively, one needs to be able to accurately conjugate verbs -- a skill we take for granted in our native language. In earlier exposures to a foreign language, the students are building vocabulary and natural use of language. More experienced students add on to this earlier language acquisition approach with more formal instruction in verb tenses and syntax.

2 t ValjX'y' | XlZX' {aly' {nu' UZ_nxZ'a H at' MZ' {aZt' Xnl b' l' MlMl #'

Expansion in vocabulary, complexity of sentence structure, grammar/conjugations. Repetition is important to build automaticity. In the lower grades use of Spanish is more scripted. In the upper grades we expect students to generate ideas in Spanish with increasing independence. Students continue to build upon the knowledge they have learned in the previous years. With this in mind, students see old vocabulary with new vocabulary and are able to feel comfort as they know most of the words. Using visuals to aid in this, students who enter into the program later on can still feel successful. For example, students learn about greetings in 1st grade, but expand on how to greet (formal and informal) from 5th - 7th grade integrating new vocabulary to strengthen their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.

2 t ValpX'YKZM'f'yuZMly@uMlba M'ank Z'a) n,, by'aZ'yaZ'UZb` V'AMJZI`ZX'f'

Frequently, students with a second language at home are proficient in speaking. Just as in reading and writing English, students are not always as proficient in their literacy skills as they are in oral language. Our Spanish teachers assess student Spanish literacy skills in similar ways to how we assess English skills. They listen to students read to identify strengths in terms of decoding and comprehension and assess student writing. Spanish speaking students engage in book clubs. They read books in Spanish and then discuss these books with their clubs. Depending on their ability to read and write in Spanish, students are also supported in developing their written communication skills. **It is important to remember** that this program is really designed to be a foreign language class. While we work to **support** native speakers, it is not technically a mother tongue class (**Native Language Arts** or **Spanish Language Arts**).

**k`MuMVI`{,, an`yuZMly@uMlba` k'a`MValpX`,, an`XnZY`f`yuZMl`k'a`H aZI`*`Z{k`f`ValpX`y`
,, nx`S{aZz`MZY`nk`Z`|`I`_M`lpM`fn`VW`jM'f`,, nx`y`H`aM`@uMlba`by`UZb``{M`a`b`VJMy`f'*

The Spanish that is taught in schools is the one from Spain. All language structures come straight from the Real Academia Española (RAE). Therefore, the language structure is common across all Spanish Speaking countries. The vocabulary words as well come from Spain. These are words most commonly used there. That being said, if you are or have family members from Central and South America or from the Caribbean, the vocabulary words may or may not be common in your country. This is a great opportunity for both native, native-like, and non-native students to reflect on synonyms, regional dialects, and connections between cultures and languages. Just as in English, there are many different ways to say a word. Students learn the most commonly used (high frequency) words in Spanish from Spain. Students of different Latin American backgrounds may use a word from their language to convey the same message, but should also know a synonym of that word from Spain or from another Spanish-speaking country other than their own.

*H aM`Vhl`y{k`|`{Zy`Mj`M{xMlyjM`hx`MIX`,, at`by`f`k`f`ValpX`MjZ`{n`|`yZ`{aly`xZyn`xVZ`b`{aZb`
,, nx`f'*

A translator can be a program such as Google translate, Babbel translate, etc. or a person who is native to the language or has native-like understanding of the language. The purpose of your child in the Spanish Foreign Language program is to promote critical thinking within the Target Language (Spanish) and create the language independently as well as spontaneously. If students are using translators to produce sentences, conjugations, etc., then it hinders the language processing factor and makes it more challenging for your child to think, create, write,

and speak independently as they have been dependent on using a translator. Human translators are a great resource to practice listening and speaking, however, many human translators naturally provide answers that are more complex, which is beyond the limit of what your child is learning in class at their level. Therefore, it is important if working with a human translator that they understand your child's level and work within the limits of their language knowledge and concepts.

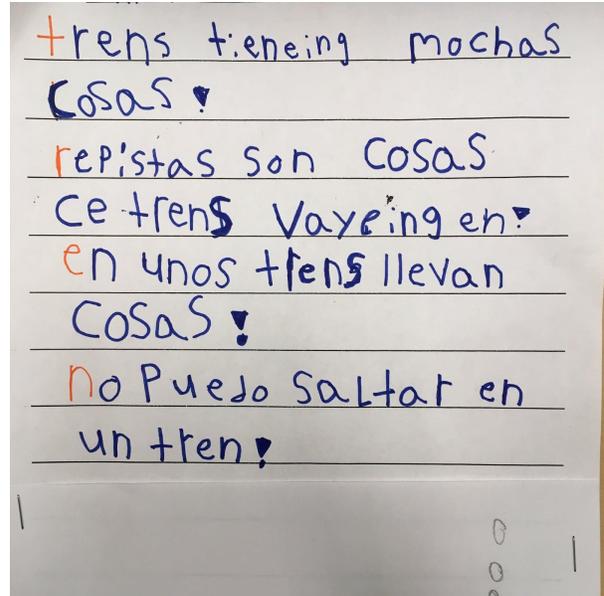
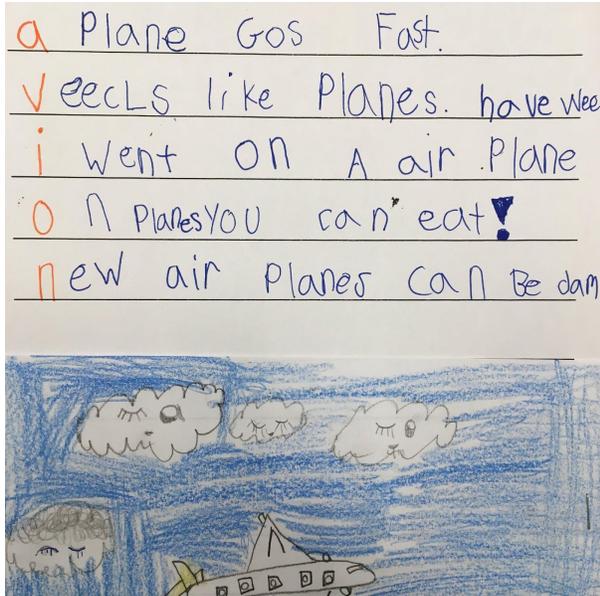
Research on the benefits of learning a foreign language

We believe it is important to introduce our students to a foreign language for several reasons.

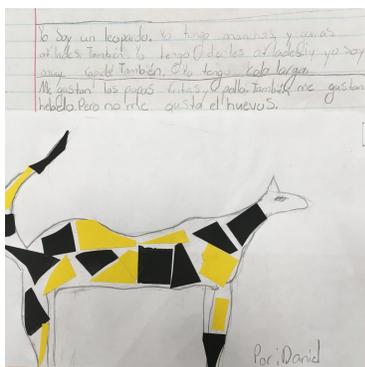
- Americans who are fluent in other languages improve global communication, enhance our competitiveness abroad, and maintain our political and security interests. (U.S. General Accounting Office, 2002)
- When children have an early start to a long sequence of language instruction that continues through high school and college, they will be able to achieve levels of fluency that have not been possible in the past due to the late start of most language programs. (Center for Applied Linguistics)
- Research has shown that young children learn languages more easily and more quickly than older students and that proficiency in a language and the cultures in which it is spoken can best be achieved when second language study begins as early as possible. (AATF K-12 Position Statement)
- "The College Entrance Examination Board reported that students who averaged 4 or more years of foreign language study scored higher on the verbal section of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) than those who had studied 4 or more years in any other subject area." Foreign Languages: An Essential Core Experience
- "Children in foreign language programs have tended to demonstrate greater cognitive development, creativity, and divergent thinking than monolingual children. Several studies show that people who are competent in more than one language outscore those who are speakers of only one language on tests of verbal and nonverbal intelligence." Benefits of Second Language Study.

Highlights of the program:

'byf' **XVZxy** begin their exposure to Spanish by listening to stories, learning vocabulary through simple songs and stories. Students begin responding to introductory questions using both written and oral skills. They learn basic introductions and conversational skills, as well as vocabulary around units they are learning with their classroom teachers (such as transportation and fairytales). The literacy skills students learn in Spanish help support the literacy skills they are learning in ELA.



'ZVh' **XVZxy** strengthen both their written and oral skills by increasing their vocabulary and having more opportunities to practice with their peers. Students begin presenting projects that they have created related to vocabulary they are learning and also build upon language they have seen in the past. In addition to learning vocabulary about families, students learn to state likes and dislikes (introducing the negative) and engage in an integrated study on the human body.



'Aabx' **XVZxy** continue building spoken fluency by engaging in conversations with peers in Spanish. Students engage in integrated studies around biomes, animals and nature. They begin writing non-fiction texts based on research they have conducted. This work is also connected to a study of Gaudi's art work and Catalan culture. Students also begin to learn vocabulary about food and meals and write and present skits in Spanish about going to a restaurant.

Students engage in conversations in Spanish with peers about their feelings and ideas. They learn vocabulary about their community, how to ask for directions to landmarks in their neighborhood, and professions. Students write brief autobiographies in Spanish and illustrate their writing with cubist self-portraits, a project that is integrated with a study of Picasso in art.



Students switch to a more academic program with tests and projects. The focus continues to be on oral communication around topics such as weather, shopping, going out for food. There is switch to more independence in using relevant vocabulary, writing sentences, and understanding spoken language. Grammar points include comparing and contrasting, adding connectors and expanders in a sentence. Students learn about some of the indigenous peoples of Central and South America --Inca, Maya, Aztec-- as an extension of topics studied in social studies.

Students describe each other and our families. Students write biographies of friends (switching from the first and second person to the third person) and learn the vocabulary around choices of where to eat and vacation. The expectation that they apply vocabulary learned in one unit to new contexts. Grammar points include identifying present tense endings, irregular verbs, stem changes, and prepositions. Country studies include Spain and Puerto Rico.

