

Heritage Language Profile for K-12 Programs Ottumwa High School, Ottumwa, IA

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Grades Taught: 9-12

Languages/Dialects taught: Spanish

Program Description

Purposes and goals of the program: To help our native Spanish speakers become literate in their home language.

Program origins: The course was founded in 2005. During a Community Advisory Board meeting, one of the parents asked the high school principal why some of the native Spanish speaking students were not allowed to take Spanish. The principal replied that the regular Spanish classes were not intended to teach students with the special skills and needs of a heritage speaker. Therefore, it was proposed to start a special language track for the school's native speakers. One of the school's Spanish teachers, Ms. Luetta Louise, was sent to neighboring school districts with Spanish heritage language programs to receive counsel on establishing a program for Ottumwa High School. The program has now completed one full year.

Program funding: The program is funded as a normal class in the school's budget.

Parent's expectations for the program: Many of the parents are hard working people and they are happy that the school is providing such a program for their children.

Staff's expectations for the program: We expect the students to appreciate the opportunity and to take full advantage of the program. We also expect the students' success in this class to have an impact on their performance in all their other classes.

Students

First Generation Immigrants
Second Generation Immigrants

A vast majority of these students are the children of parents who have moved to the area in the past ten years.

Total student enrollment: 75

Identification of a heritage speaker: The school's ESL teacher has a good sense of which students in the school could benefit from the Spanish for heritage speakers class. Therefore, the ESL teacher either recruits students for the class directly or recommends to the guidance counselors that certain students should enroll in the class.

Percentage of students that complete the program: About 80-90%

Reasons for students not completing the program: Students usually do not finish the program because of the rigorous demands of attendance and homework. The class is taught more like an English literature class than a normal foreign language course. The focus of assignments is based on composition and grammar perfection rather than simple vocabulary and sentence structure exercises.

Teachers/Administrators/Staff

Number of staff in the program: 1

Languages in which staff is proficient: English and Spanish

Extent of proficiency: The instructor is a native speaker of Spanish.

Credentials: BA in English, teaching license in English and Spanish

Instruction

Instruction duration: The students have class five times a week, for 45 minutes a day.

Student groupings: All the students are divided into 4 different sections, with about 8-20 students in each section.

Language Skills

Heritage Skills:

- Listening
- Speaking
- Reading
- Writing

Culture

- Geography
- History
- Festivals
- Customs
- Traditions/Beliefs
- Folktales
- Dances
- Songs
- Rhymes
- Social and cultural norms
- Cultural appropriateness
- Literature

Other culture-related topics or activities: The course promotes culture as the context for language learning. Therefore, the instructor strives to introduce topics that incorporate contemporary culture, history, and ethnic identity. This may include conversations about international events that include the larger Spanish speaking community, like the World Cup. Additionally, the class celebrates the national Mexican independence holiday and any other national holidays that students observe in their homes.

Student identity that the program fosters: The course promotes pride in personal identity and heritage and in the school's values for academic excellence.

Methodologies

Methodologies and instructional strategies: Since the course is intended for students with a background in Spanish, the curriculum is taught more like an English literature class. Emphasis is placed on mastering grammar and written skills through written assignments and compositions. One opportunity available to the students is the local Spanish newspaper that is published every week. Students are encouraged to make regular contributions to the newspaper to perfect their written skills. Additionally, the heritage Spanish class students are paired with students from the regular Spanish 4 class to practice their oral Spanish proficiency.

Materials

Textbook: *Entre Mundos* (Prentice Hall, 2003)

Other materials: *Entre Mundos* Workbook, supplemental Internet materials, and the weekly Spanish local newspaper

Assessment

- Weekly quizzes
- Chapter Tests

- Other: The teacher uses assigned written compositions as a standard of evaluation or observation of written skills.

What the program has in place

Assistance or collaboration that the program would like to receive: We would like access to information about standardized systems of testing for these students. Since the program is fairly new, we do not have the appropriate forms of assessment that would be able to precisely identify a student's weaknesses and strengths.

Special Challenges and Comments

Special Challenges: The students all possess different levels of written and oral proficiencies, so it is difficult to develop a curriculum that strengthens each individual student. However, the school is developing more levels as more students come through the program. Eventually we hope to have a full four-year offering of this course.