

## 9-12 Heritage Language Program Profile

### Heritage Speaker of Spanish/Gateway Charter High School/ San Francisco Unified School District

Address: 1430 Scott Street, San Francisco, CA 94115

Languages/Dialects taught: **Standard Spanish**

Grades: 9-12

Contact: **Mary J. Maya**

Spanish Teacher

Email: [mmaya@gatewayhigh.org](mailto:mmaya@gatewayhigh.org)

Telephone: 415-749-3600

Web address: [www.gatewayhigh.org](http://www.gatewayhigh.org)

#### **Purposes and goals of the program**

Students who speak Spanish will improve their formal knowledge of the Spanish language:

- Students will read and write in Spanish at the university level
- Students will recognize their cultural identity through language, literature, and cultural lessons

#### **Type of program** - Foreign language program

Mary Maya began to teach the course in 1996 in East Oakland. In 2000, Ms. Maya came to Gateway Charter High School in San Francisco. A program had been implemented, but it was not U.C. accredited. She implemented the curriculum that she had developed in East Oakland, and it was accredited and has become very successful. Mary Maya began to teach the course because of her own experiences as a heritage Spanish speaker in California.

The program is funded as part of the school district and state.

#### **Parents' expectations for the program**

Many parents have heard of the program and some have not. The parents who have had students go through the program and now have other children or family members in the program are enthusiastic and participate in parent/teacher night to explain the importance of the course and their personal reflections on their children's' positive attitudes towards the Spanish language, and cultural identity and literature in Spanish. Parents who have not read the course description and are not familiar with the materials taught in the class seem to have negative attitudes about their children's advancement in the Spanish language.

### **Staff's expectations for the program**

- Within the Spanish Department, all students after their second year of Heritage Spanish will be able to successfully pass the Advanced Placement Spanish Language Test with at least a 4 or a 5
- All students will be able to write a coherent, well-organized, analytical essay in Spanish on themes that have been discussed in class
- All students will be able to read and understand novels, short stories and poetry in Spanish
- All students will be able to write using correct grammar with little or no orthographic errors
- All students will be motivated to continue growing in their language and cultural heritage.
- Some staff members are trying to lower the expectations that Ms. Maya has established in the past and this is frustrating.

### **Students**

- First-generation immigrants: 15%
- Second-generation immigrants: 60%
- Children of interethnic marriages: 5%
- Students who have learned Spanish through Spanish/English immersion programs in grammar school and middle school in San Francisco: 20%

**Countries of origin:** Chile, Peru, Mexico, Puerto Rico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Bolivia, Honduras and others.

Total student enrollment:

- Heritage Spanish speakers 1: 22
- Heritage Spanish speakers 2: 16

The program identifies who is a heritage speaker as soon as they apply. When students apply to the school, they check off if they speak any other languages in addition to English. They are then given a placement test after being accepted. The Spanish 1 teachers then observe to see if any student has been placed in incorrectly.

The course is for students of Hispanic or non-Hispanic background that speak Spanish. All levels of Spanish are welcomed in the course.

Home language survey: At the beginning of the academic year, the students are given a placement test that is similar to the AP Spanish Language exam.

It focuses on reading and writing skills, lexical variations, and orthography. All exams are looked over carefully, and the exams are used as a guide as well as a beginning point for each individual student's learning process and mastery of the course content. Because of the different levels of Spanish that can be found in one class, each student is graded on their progress.

### **Assessment**

- Background questionnaire
- Placement test
- Oral interview

Oral interview: When students take the first placement in May prior to the beginning of the academic year, a quick interview is held between Ms. Maya and the student to get a sense of the student's level of Spanish.

Percentage of students completing the program: 100%

Percentage of students who continue to study the heritage language after completing the program: 60% - depends

At Gateway Charter High School, we have a 3-year graduation requirement. Students who pass the AP Spanish language exam are exempt from their 3rd year but may choose to continue and take AP Spanish Literature. Students who have IEP's may be waived from their 3rd year of Spanish if they are unable to pass the AP Spanish language test because of language-based learning disabilities or others.

### **Students' attitudes toward the language varieties they speak**

Many of the students become very proud and motivated and see the importance of the course for their own personal needs and their future. There is a great respect for one another, and peer help has been an exceptional trait in my classroom.

### **Instructors**

Number of staff in program: 2

Languages in which staff members are proficient: Spanish and English

Level of staff members' proficiency: Native / Near- Native

### **Credentials**

Teacher certification from California

Single Subject Teaching Credential in Spanish

BA in Spanish

MA in Spanish and Secondary Education

Teachers have opportunities for professional development when they ask for it; for example, College Board/AP, All Kinds of Minds, charter school conferences, etc.

Teachers need more professional development opportunities to improve their understanding of the heritage speaker.

Hours of instruction per week: 3 days a week (one 55 -minute class and two 1 hour and 45-minute classes)

Students are grouped in two levels:

Heritage Spanish Speaker 1 - 1st year

Heritage Spanish Speaker 2 - 2nd year

### **English skills**

- Listening
- Speaking
- Reading
- Writing

Because the course is structured like a Humanities course, many of the students use what is taught in class in their Humanities class.

### **Heritage Skills**

- Listening
- Speaking
- Reading
- Writing

At the end of the program students are likely to reach AP level of proficiency. Some students pass the AP Spanish Language exam. About 50% of those students pass the AP Spanish Literature exam in their third year.

### **Culture taught**

- Geography
- Festivals
- Traditions/beliefs
- Folktales
- Cultural appropriateness
- Literature

### **Methodologies and instructional strategies**

Because of our mission, many different strategies are used to teach each student. The course content is taught in a more progressive way. Students adapt what is being taught to their own lives. Reading, writing, grammar, culture, and history are taught, cooperative and collaborative learning, oral presentations from the students, and technology. The students discuss information and write about their observations and opinions and later develop those skills into analytical debates and essays.

### **Textbook series used**

- *La lengua que heredamos* 5th Edition for heritage Spanish speakers 1 & 2. John Wiley and Sons Publishers.
- *Abriendo Puertas* Tomo 1 (stories and poems are taken from the text to introduce students to literature in the two levels)
- Other materials: Power Point presentations, maps, movies, guest speakers.

### **Technology used in the program**

- Power Point presentations
- Online tutorials
- Students' web- sites.

### **Kinds of assessment**

- Weekly quizzes
- Chapter tests
- Final exams
- Teacher's observations

### **Connections** with local schools, colleges, and universities

Gateway Charter High School is a diverse school that represents the population of San Francisco. Students come from all over San Francisco and from the greater Bay Area. It is also a college prep school, and the majority of our students continue their education at the university level.

The program develops home-school connections and promotes parent involvement through the Gateway Parent Association (GPA).

Students have opportunities for using the language and their cultural knowledge outside the program due to the diversity of the area. The Bay Area continuously provides cultural activities throughout the year, and Spanish is one of the main languages spoken throughout California after English.

Financial support is obtained from the local and state government.

The program needs more collaboration with other professors and teachers throughout California and the United States.

### **System for graduating students and granting credit**

It is UC accredited.

### **Research**

Mary Maya did her field study on "How to motivate the heritage Spanish speaker" many years ago and recently conducted research trying to put together standards and a scope and sequence that may be compatible with other programs in the U.S.

### **Challenges**

- The designer of the program, Mary Maya, feels that the expectations she has implemented at times are not carried out by others.
- Some teachers/administrators have never taken the time to observe or read the course description. They make judgments without understanding what and how it is taught
- Being able to find qualified instructors to teach to heritage speakers enthusiastically is difficult.

**Other insights about the program**

It is very important that the student understand who s/he is so we always start the year with an autobiography. Additionally, students should understand the history of the Spanish language and why there are so many dialects found in the Hispanic world.