

## **1-6 Heritage Language Program Profile The Spanish Club: Millstone River 4-5**

West Windsor-Plainsboro School District  
Address: 75 Grovers Mill Road, Plainsboro, NJ 08536

Languages/Dialects taught: **Spanish**

Levels: 1-5/6

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

The primary outcomes for this program are

- 1) Native Spanish speakers' language and culture will be affirmed by classmates, staff and the community.
- 2) All participating students will expand their Spanish vocabulary and have a better understanding of and appreciation for Latino cultures and their diversity.
- 3) Greater home and school connections will be made for parents who struggle to stay connected because of language barriers, and with parents who have many talents and resources to share with our children, the staff and each other.

### **Type of program**

- Immersion
- Foreign language program
- Content-based
- After school extracurricular club

This is an after school enrichment program aimed to nurture and maintain our native Spanish speakers' language and culture and to give them the joy of the written word. It is an inclusive program for all students, including Spanish as World language students. We have a FLES Spanish program during the school day, which is not able to meet all the linguistic needs of our heritage Spanish speaking students.

The program was founded in January 2004. Families pay a fee to Community Education, which provides the space and advertising for the club.

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

Latino parents' expectations are that their children will elect to use Spanish more often in the home, will feel proud of their heritage, and will be inspired to read in Spanish.

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

We expect that students will be inspired to read in Spanish and to use Spanish with family members rather than opting for the more "social" tendency to use the language of their peers and mainstream media (English).

### **Students**

- First-generation immigrants 33%
- Second-generation immigrants: 27%
- Third-generation immigrants: 2%
- Others: 40% are non-Latino students participating in Spanish Club – like Indian, Chinese, African American, Caucasian

Countries of origin: Guatemala, Mexico, Colombia, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay  
Total students enrolled: 20

The program identifies who is a heritage speaker first by using the student database that shows students who have ethnic heritage Hispanic background. Secondly, we ask the students if Spanish is spoken at home. Third, we send a letter home explaining our rationale for the program.

Additionally, Spanish teachers have a general idea of Spanish proficiency through communication in class. It is an informal club for fun, exposing students to each other culture and to the joy of the written language. It meets once a week for 8 weeks .

60% of the students continue to study the heritage language after completing the program. If they do not complete the program it is because other after-school activities are selected (sports, academics).

We are in the beginning stages of this project and hope to expand to other heritage languages as well as to establish two after-school Spanish clubs - one for families who want their children to do more Language Arts type classes and another for students who are at a lower level of Spanish acquisition.

### **Instructors**

Number of staff in program: 3

Staff members are proficient in Spanish and English (2 native Spanish speakers, one non-native speaker)

Credentials:

- Teacher certification in Spanish
- K-12 New Jersey (2)
- Pennsylvania (1)
- Special Education in Chile
- Education in Colombia

- Elementary Education
- Education K-12 Spanish
- Special Education

MA:

- Teaching of English as a Second Language
- Teaching of Spanish as a Second Language

Teachers have professional development opportunities by attending national and regional conferences; sharing experiences with colleagues in workshops and regular sessions

Teachers need more professional development opportunities in teaching Spanish as a Language Arts class at the elementary level.

### **Instruction**

Hours per week that students receive instruction: approximately 2 hours  
Students are grouped in multi-level classes

### **Heritage Skills**

- Listening
- Speaking
- Reading
- Writing

Skills and levels of Spanish proficiency that students reach by the end of the program are not measured.

The program has collected feedback from native Spanish speakers on a questionnaire. Students and parents both want more focus on challenging material. In all there is a desire that students speak and read more in Spanish.

### **Culture taught**

- Geography
- Customs
- Folktales
- Arts and crafts
- Dances
- Songs
- Rhymes
- Literature

Students share what they have learned at a final presentation and community dinner where families bring a typical dish from their country.

The program fosters a positive, self-confident student identity. The goal of the program is to embrace the parents' and new cultures.

### **Methodologies and instructional strategies**

- Differentiated learning
- Multiple intelligences
- Heterogeneous & homogeneous groups
- Pair work and games

One teacher facilitates the hour with volunteers coming in to share a cultural aspect of their heritage; for example, dance, Mexican lottery, cultural symbols, story, poem, music.

Students continue their study at the high school level in a Spanish for native speakers class. The elementary schools do not have the flexibility in scheduling to allow for specialized classes for native speakers, although there is a bilingual class for first-generation native Spanish speakers who do not have the English skills to do well in other subject areas.

The program develops home-school connections and promotes parent involvement as the key to success. An introductory letter goes out to new Latino families in the school explaining the program and its primary goal of nurturing their child's first language and culture. It also asks for volunteers to share their desires and expectations and other knowledge of the culture. They are invited to share in some way during club with food, dance, stories, etc.

Students have opportunities to use the language and developed cultural knowledge outside the program, because many attend churches where there are Spanish mass and Latino religious festivals. They also use Spanish at home.

### **Financial support**

- Tuition
- Financial support from parents
- Amanda Amarotico , coordinator of the program, solicits funding from the community

The program would like to obtain scholarship assistance from the school Parent/Teacher Association

### **Challenges**

Conflict from community members who feel that the after-school club should include all students.

### **Other insights about the program**

Parent involvement is inspiring and a key to the program's success.