

INTRODUCTION

Over 300 million people in the world speak Spanish. It is the official language of the following countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Spain, Uruguay, and Venezuela. It is also spoken in many other countries in which it is not the official language, including the United States of America and the Philippines. It is one of the most widely spoken languages in the world.

The value of learning the Spanish language is enormous for Canadian society as a whole. Apart from the common advantages related to the learning of an international language, learning Spanish permits an insight into the rich and varied cultures in the Spanish-speaking world and bestows more opportunity to communicate directly with its people. As well, for some students with a prior knowledge of the language and cultures, it offers an opportunity for renewed contact and contributes to maintaining and developing literacy.

The learning of Spanish, or any other language, develops awareness of and sensitivity to cultural and linguistic diversity, is a means of cultural enrichment, and is a good way of fostering understanding and solidarity among peoples and countries. Furthermore, it gives individuals the opportunity to identify, question, and challenge their own cultural assumptions, values, and perspectives, and to contribute positively to society.

There is also significant evidence to suggest that learning another language contributes to the development of increased grammatical abilities in the first language and enhances cognitive functioning. Learning a second language increases the ability to conceptualize and to think abstractly; and it fosters more cognitive flexibility, greater divergent thinking, creativity, and metalinguistic competence.

Moreover, in today's world, knowledge of a second language and culture in general is a benefit for individuals, enabling them to communicate and interact effectively in the global marketplace and workplace. Given the important social and economic role Spanish-speaking countries are playing in the international scene, and given their increasing economic and cultural presence in Western Canada, the learning of Spanish provides an important economic advantage.

Background

In 2000, the *Common Curriculum Framework for International Languages, Kindergarten to Grade 12* was developed through the cooperative efforts of the provinces of Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Alberta, under the auspices of the Western Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Basic Education. The intent of that document was to provide a common foundation and support for the development of curricula for international language programs.

Subsequently, drafts of *Program Studies: Spanish Language and Culture Grade 7 to Grade 9* and *Program of Studies: Spanish Language and Culture 10-20-30* were developed for use in the province of Alberta. These documents provided the basis, with some adaptations, for the WNCB *Spanish Language and Culture, Four-Year High School Program* curriculum document. To support the implementation of this new curriculum, this *Spanish Language and Culture, Four-Year High School Program: Implementation Manual* has been developed collaboratively by the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba.

Purpose

This implementation manual will assist educators as they

- plan for instruction that supports student achievement of the outcomes
- monitor student progress in achieving the outcomes
- select learning resources to support their professional development
- select student learning resources to enhance instruction and assessment

Educators, administrators, and parents may use this document in a variety of ways.

Teachers (Educators)

Classroom teachers will find theoretical information and research concepts in the Spanish Language and Culture: Implementation Overview. Specific programming and classroom information are found in Achieving the (Four-Year High School Program) Outcomes.

Administrators

Administrators will find essential information in the Spanish Language and Culture: Implementation Overview, and Achieving the (Four-Year High School Program) Outcomes. These sections may be of particular value in

- developing a programming plan for a school
- identifying directions for professional development
- developing school/divisional assessment policies and procedures
- selecting professional resources

Parents

Parents may be directed to Spanish Language and Culture: Implementation Overview for information about Spanish as an international language and about second language learning in general. Achieving the (Four-Year High School Program) Outcomes provides grade-specific information and insights into classroom practices.

Notes