

Spanish (Español)

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Spanish has become a globally spoken language. After English, Spanish is the most commonly spoken language in the United States by a large margin. According to projections by the U.S. Census Bureau, people of Hispanic origin comprise the largest and fastest growing minority population in the United States, which suggests that the Spanish language will be even more widespread in this country in the upcoming decades.

Studies show that children who learn foreign languages in elementary grades generally achieve higher scores on standardized testing. Learning a second language also can help improve the understanding of their native language. Children who study a foreign language tend to show greater cognitive development than many of their peers and have an improved self concept and sense of achievement. Young children learning new languages are generally more enthusiastic, are not as self-conscious, and are willing to imitate new sounds, sing, play, and have fun with a foreign language. This enthusiasm is highly beneficial to the learning process. Starting the learning process at a young age provides more opportunity to become fluent in and to master a second language. Learning a foreign language also fosters tolerance and appreciation of different cultures.

The main goal for OWS students participating in Spanish Class is for them to learn the basic vocabulary and sentence structures essential for everyday communication, and to get an overview of the culture. The basics and fundamentals of the Spanish language, including sounds, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, general conversation, song, and culture will be taught in progressively more challenging and advanced stages for the students. Students will be encouraged to apply their learning of the Spanish language towards topics of personal interest to help promote their progress.

The primary focus for Kindergarten through Second Grade Spanish classes is to establish a strong foundation, to set the stage for more advanced learning. The instruction for these grades concentrates on introduction to the language and culture, fundamental vocabulary, and the basics to develop confidence and provide good building blocks for future growth. Based on the course materials, the students should leave Second Grade at approximately one grade level higher in Spanish capability. The instruction for Third through Fifth Grade Spanish classes ramps up to more advanced and challenging levels with increased contact time, homework assignments, more rigorous workbooks and activities, and higher expectations. The instruction and materials provided in Fourth and Fifth Grades are generally at the level of middle school and the beginning of high school, and the students at OWS have been responding well to the challenge.

More specific objectives for the Spanish learning program at the different age levels follow below.

Kindergarten Overview:

The Kindergarten students at OWS have a total of one hour each week of Spanish. At this young age, the introduction to Spanish is accomplished with songs, movement, music, books, rhymes, and simple conversation. This introduction gives them the opportunity to become interested in and begin developing a new language. The children will be able to participate in elementary conversation including responding to simple commands and answering basic questions. Teaching the fundamentals of the Spanish alphabet, reading, and writing all begin in Kindergarten.

First Grade Overview:

First Grade students at OWS have a total of one hour a week of Spanish. Building on the basic information learned in Kindergarten, Spanish students will engage in simple conversations, recite chants and songs, and learn the days, numbers, and months in addition to other general vocabulary. The students will be able to formulate simple questions about general topics in Spanish, and give basic descriptions of objects, persons, or animals. At this level, students will have a basic understanding of reading and writing Spanish and will begin to recognize words based on context.

Second Grade Overview:

Second Grade students at OWS are introduced to a program called, “¡Viva El Español! System A” (McGraw Hill) that focuses on enriching their vocabulary, language comprehension, reading and writing, and helps the students acquire a basic understanding and appreciation of the diversity of cultures in the Spanish-speaking world. This program also

teaches the children to learn and practice speaking the language and reinforces vocabulary through fun activities such as games, songs, conversations with puppets, pantomime, and role-playing activities that combine speaking skills with physical movement. This program keeps the children engaged and focused with the activities.

Third Grade Overview:

Third Graders at OWS will continue with “¡Viva El Español! System B” (McGraw Hill) which is a more complex and advanced version of the program they started in Second Grade. We will focus on more reading and writing, and different themes and topics including greetings, weather, food vocabulary, nouns and pronouns, adjectives for describing people, days of the week, months, seasons, polite expressions, the parts of the house, and commands. The students will practice short conversations when beginning the Spanish Class in pairs or in small groups, forming their own conversations about their everyday life. Starting in Third Grade the children will begin to have homework once per week to provide practice and more time with the language and will have eighty minutes of Spanish instruction each week.

Fourth Grade Overview:

In Fourth Grade at OWS the children have forty minutes of Spanish twice a week. They continue learning with the Spanish program called “¡Viva el Español! (Hola)” (McGraw Hill). This program encourages the children to develop communicative competency in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and cultural understanding in each unit. We focus on various themes including greetings, feeling/emotions, general questions and responses, using numbers in math problems, naming classroom objects, animals, shapes, going places, school activities, infinitive verbs, seasons, describing the weather, and general sentence structure and vocabulary. This program also provides each child with a workbook that can be used throughout the year to practice writing and to help understand the language. Similar to Third Grade, the Fourth Graders will have weekly assignments, although more involved and complex.