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## What Advantages Can Be Leveraged By Offering A Spanish For Heritage Learners Class As An Elective To Spanish Speaking Long-Term English Language Learners In Middle School?

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FIVE PRESENTATIONS FOR USE WHEN ADVOCATING FOR  
THE INTRODUCTION OF *SPANISH FOR HERITAGE LEARNERS CLASS* AS AN  
ELECTIVE  
TO SPANISH SPEAKING STUDENTS IN MIDDLE SCHOOL

by

Claire Milne

A capstone project submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Teaching

Hamline University

Saint Paul, Minnesota

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## Summary

This advocacy support project came out of my Master's Degree research question of *what advantages can be leveraged by offering a Spanish for Heritage Learners class as an elective to Spanish speaking long-term English language learners in middle school?* The author created a series of five presentations to different stakeholder audiences that could be adapted and used by other educators to advocate at a school district level for the introduction of a *Spanish for Heritage Learners* class to Spanish speaking students in middle school. The keynote script and accompanying google slide presentation is to the Superintendent and School Board of an upper midwest school district. The other four scripts and accompanying google slide presentations are for:

1. a professional development for secondary English as a second language (ESL) teacher colleagues and Cultural Family Advocates.
2. an informational presentation to school administration and world language teacher colleagues.
3. an information session marketing the class to potential students.
4. an information session for parents about the opportunity and potential of heritage language classes for their children, including a Spanish translation.

This series of presentations could be presented by a teacher, an administrator or any school district employee with a view to advocating for the introduction of Spanish for Heritage Learner classes into their school district.

The Master's Degree research question (detailed above) found existing research evidence that Heritage Language classes improve bilingual literacy and academic self concept of long-term

ELLs and other heritage learners. Heritage learners are students who were brought up speaking a different language at home. The presentations explain this information to the five stakeholder audiences and in addition advocate for the introduction of *Spanish for Heritage Learner* classes.

### References referred to directly in the presentations

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## School Board presentation

### Link to Accompanying Google Slides:

[https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/10za2MnXmmfHEJIL69jFpdJZetrQ3TbOYjDbvQ8yan\\_Q/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/10za2MnXmmfHEJIL69jFpdJZetrQ3TbOYjDbvQ8yan_Q/edit?usp=sharing)

It goes against my nature as an English as a Second Language teacher and an advocate of bilingual learners to refuse a child the opportunity to further their education in language; however, I find myself doing just that each January when the seventh and eighth grade students choose the next year's elective classes. **SLIDE 2** The students tell me they are going to sign up for Spanish next year. I try to explain that Spanish isn't the right class for them because they already speak Spanish. To which they reply, "but I don't speak it well and I don't know how to read or write in Spanish". My reply is always disappointing to them, because I try to explain the difference between Spanish for beginners and the type of instruction they need. I suggest they wait until high school and then sign up for Spanish for Heritage Learners. Heritage learners are those who were brought up speaking a different language at home.

The students are disappointed and confused that they cannot take a Spanish class as an elective in seventh and eighth grade. They do not feel competent in their first language, because they learned it as an oral language and are not literate in that language. However, Spanish as a world language class offered at middle schools is not an appropriate class for them, because they don't need to know how to introduce their family or learn the names for food or pets. A class they would benefit from though is one designed to build on the oral skills they do have and develop their reading and writing skills.

I am here to speak to you today to ask you to consider the introduction of a Spanish for Heritage Learners class as an elective for middle schoolers in District 500 across all six middle schools. **SLIDE 3** There is research from the 1980s through to this decade that confidently states that teaching students in their primary language increases their achievement in English as their second language and that the cultural identity of a student is strengthened by learning in their first language, which can then lead to an increase in motivation and academic confidence.

Working with the motto of *[Insert your district motto here]*, ISD 500 is the fourth largest school district in our state and has been recognized for its pioneering work in STEM, magnet schools and 1:1 technology instruction. Another growth area that we should lead in is being a multilingual and multicultural educational institution, producing bilingual or multilingual students ready for college and careers in today's global economy. We have an amazing pool of emerging bilingual students in this district, whom we should focus in on as a specific learning group. However this group is failing academically, not only in our own district, but across the nation. We have a large achievement gap at the high school graduation level for our Spanish speaking students. **SLIDE 4** The overall graduation rate last year was XX%. When that number is broken down by race, we see the Latino students only graduating at a XX% rate, compared to White students at 92.7% and African American students at XX%. That is a difference of XX% between our White students and our Latino students. This learning group in particular is not performing in line with other students, and in regard to graduation rates which are behind both African-American and White students. Today, I will present information about this significant group of learners and their needs and a dynamic solution that will increase their bilingual literacy (in both English and Spanish) and in turn reduce the achievement gap deficit.

At the end of this presentation, you will have a stronger understanding of heritage language learners, in particular Spanish speakers and will be able to consider their unique needs. The research and information for this presentation are a result of the completed capstone project for my Hamline University Master of Arts in Teaching. I have also prepared a series of four additional presentations on this subject for principals, teachers, parents and students, which may be used or adapted by this organization. The knowledge I share with you today may assist you further in discussing solutions for District 500 bilingual learners with other board members in other districts. Spanish literacy classes are already offered in some Minneapolis and St Paul middle schools, as well as some smaller school districts in Minnesota.

I would first like to speak to you about this important group of bilingual students and review the advantages of introducing Spanish for Heritage Learners to the middle school level. I hope that you will share my conviction that by improving dual language literacy earlier in a student's career, this will improve the academic success of this vital demographic group.

Over 22%, or more than one fifth of the country's school-aged student population in 2017, were raised speaking at least one other language than English at home (Carreira & Kagan 2018).

**SLIDE 5** These students are sometimes referred to as heritage language speakers - they are to some degree bilingual in their heritage language and English, with many only speaking or understanding their parents' language. This group of emerging bilinguals have strong oral skills; however, they are illiterate in their first language, also called heritage language, because they cannot read or write in that language. In this district, our Spanish speaking students are below grade level in regard to English literacy. For example, of the incoming 6th graders to Orchard Tree Middle School this year, all the English language learners are below the XXth percentile on



the MCA reading test. I would like to highlight that heritage language learners include EL students, but is a much wider group than that. Heritage language learners include all second language speakers whether they are designated limited English proficiency or not.

We refer to academic language as the language of school. All school-children are academic language learners. This language uses very specific vocabulary and constructs that we would not necessarily use in our social language. Cummins, who is a key theorist in second language acquisition, first distinguished between social language and academic language. Social language is used for day to day conversational and social interactions. He contrasted this with academic language, which is often more abstract and is necessary to discuss academic content in the classroom context. **SLIDE 6** For example, looking at this slide, notice the difference between “*What did you get on that math test?*” and “*Even though crocodiles have the same appearance, they live in different habitats*”. Often, heritage language learners are considered proficient in English long before they actually are, because they have strong social language skills. This also applies to their heritage language: for example, Spanish. As our Spanish heritage language speakers are not being educated in their home language, they do not develop those academic language skills in Spanish. They have to develop academic language skills in both languages, but they are only taught those skills in English and not in Spanish. There is a great depth of research wherein researchers agree that language classes should be provided in the home language to some extent throughout the K-12 education of the child, with some even calling for heritage language education to be mainstreamed in the future.

The ultimate goal of first language learning is bilingual literacy, having the ability to read and write in two languages. It would be unusual to find a fully bilingual student at the grade school

level whose language skills in both languages are equivalent. More typically, we have emergent bilinguals who have yet to become literate in both languages, or unbalanced bilinguals who have different levels of skills between both languages - for example, they may read in English, but not in Spanish.

There are elements of learning a language that transfer from one's first language to a second language. Not all the learning starts from a clean slate. **SLIDE 7** Looking at this dual iceberg image created by Cummins, we view a bilingual speaker's two languages represented as distinct "icebergs" or triangles rising above a dotted horizontal line that represents the surface features of a language. The surface features of a language are the visible linguistic skills of a bilingual speaker (the actual words we use). Underneath the surface features line is a large triangular shaped area where the two languages overlap. This represents the common underlying proficiency of a bilingual speaker, which is all of his or her skills used to understand or create language. For example, the concept of there being a past tense, how to decode text, or how to use strategies when answering reading comprehension questions. These skills are transferable across language learning, so learning the skill in one language creates a schema to apply to a second language - the actual skill only needs to be learned one time in order for the brain to be able to apply that skill into other languages. Research has shown that if a student has not developed an academic language register in their first language, it takes them longer to develop that academic language in English.

I have reviewed a large body of research papers that all conclude that teaching in a student's primary language promotes his or her achievement in English as a second language. This research has a bias toward elementary aged students; however, does include studies with

secondary students and reaches the same conclusion. In particular, one longitudinal study at the secondary level by Thomas and Collier found that dual language programs in varying formats and percentages of instruction in a student's first language were the only programs with outcomes of students reaching the 50th percentile in both their first language and English across all subjects. Imagine if we could move some of our bilingual students towards that level of success. The research authors confidently concluded that the strongest predictor of high achievement in a second language (English) comes from those who have received more first language grade-level schooling.

It should be noted that researchers have commented on a lack of studies into bilingual literacy at the secondary education level. In addition they question if academic achievement is increased across other content areas like Mathematics and Science. However, there is enough existing research to assertively claim increased academic achievement in English and the heritage language.

Moving on to the cultural identity of heritage language learners, research finds that language and identity are closely intertwined. Cultural identity is in simple terms a sense of belonging based on one's ancestry and cultural values. Having low skills in their first language can affect the core of a student's identity. Most of our Latino and Latina students identify as being Mexican or Mexican American (if that is the country of their heritage). The majority of these second and third generation students are not fluent in Spanish - often speaking a form of Spanglish (a mix of Spanish and English words). This lack of fluency can be seen to weaken their personal claim to Mexican heritage, because they have a lower level of Spanish proficiency. With their Mexican heritage being a source of great pride for them, this can adversely affect the identity of these

adolescents, who are developmentally working on understanding who they are. In today's political climate, speaking Spanish in an English dominant society can also be viewed negatively, because the Spanish language is at times connected with undocumented immigration. Wouldn't it be amazing if we could empower these students to master their language skills in Spanish by being fully literate, so they are informed and proud of their heritage?

Research on students' perceptions about themselves showed that students with low self concepts avoided doing what they perceived to be difficult tasks and those with high self concepts took a chance and challenged themselves. Motivation is a subject that often arises in our middle school ESL teacher Professional Learning Committee. As a group we notice that this matter of self concept is one that we believe to be extremely relevant when it comes to motivation. Spanish heritage language students tend to come from low socio-economic backgrounds and do not have role models who completed a high school education or went on to college. Oftentimes, those that did finish a college education have moved out of their neighborhoods, so school-age students don't get to see the lifestyle change that an education can bring. Consequently, the attitude of not trying because it doesn't matter anyway is incredibly difficult to overcome. If we empower these students with literacy in their own language, which will then feed into improved academic achievement in English and potentially other areas, we may be able to break this cycle and positively affect the achievement gap. That is why we have pushed so hard to have the Spanish for Heritage Learners class at all high schools in our district. I would like you to seriously consider how we can offer that opportunity at an earlier age and in particular in the middle grades.

In District 500's high schools, the *Spanish for Heritage Learners* is taught 100% in Spanish and works on the development of students' linguistic skills - enhancing those oral language skills they already have and increasing their literacy using texts through the lens of cultural practices and Central/South American history. Research has shown that students have a higher level of comprehension when the texts feature an area or issue in which they have background knowledge. The introduction of culturally relevant pedagogy into all teacher education is representative of this core understanding. **SLIDE 8** This quote in a Spotlight article that featured some of our students sums up the goal of these classes beautifully:

*“XXX and XXX from XXX High School said, “For us, being in this class means that we can discover more about our Hispanic culture, and our identity as hispanics in our community and we know that our voice should be taken into account. We can be great global citizens.”*

There is an incongruity between our economy needing a bilingual workforce and actually establishing an education system that succeeds in developing bilingual speakers and writers. I really hope that District 500 can continue its leadership in this vital area of education and extend our resources into the middle school arena, starting with a pilot project at one of the middle schools.

I have provided a link to my script, and this presentation has been forwarded to each of you. I would like to contact you each personally after this presentation with a questionnaire to collect your thoughts and to ask if I can provide any additional information you may need.

I do hope that this presentation has been informative and of use to all of you. I would also like to invite you to contact myself or Helen Brown (our Secondary ESL lead teacher) to arrange a visit to one of our high school's Spanish for Heritage Learners classes. You will experience the

vitality of our emerging bilingual students and understand our enthusiasm about introducing this opportunity at a younger age in middle school. **SLIDE 9**

(District number and school names are pseudonyms).

## Presentation to ESL Teacher Colleagues and Cultural Family Advocates

### Link to Accompanying Google Slides:

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1j3T4PZgIJNIgPDwiKw6rOrkAtVXrXgHg1cqI4s8rvh4/edit?usp=sharing>

In our middle school Professional Learning Committee meetings (PLCs), we have often discussed and lamented over the lack of progress made in English proficiency and general academic engagement of our long-term EL students. One solution came up time and time again of being able to offer our students a Spanish language class, tailored specifically to their needs. We were all thrilled to hear that Spanish for Heritage Learners is now being offered at all four high schools - wouldn't it be great to extend that opportunity to our middle schoolers? **SLIDE 2**

My capstone project came out of these conversations and I researched the advantages of offering a *Spanish for Heritage Learners* class in middle school, with a view to using this research as a platform from which to launch a campaign to introduce such a class to our district. The keynote speech, in a series of five presentations, is to the School Board and I will present to them at an upcoming School Board Meeting. I am sharing this with you today, so that you can also join in, and as a PLC, we can advocate for this group of learners. After listening today, you will be able to use the resources I created for my capstone project and lobby your building principals and world language departments. We will be focusing on two key learning elements, bilingual literacy and cultural identity and how we can increase our students' academic success by offering a *Spanish for Heritage Learners* class in middle school.

ISD 500 is the fourth largest school district in our state and has been recognized for its pioneering work in STEM, magnet schools and 1:1 technology instruction. Another growth area

that we should lead in is being a multilingual and multicultural educational institution, producing bilingual or multilingual students ready for college and careers in today's global economy.

**SLIDE 3** We have an amazing pool of emerging bilingual students whom we should focus in on as a specific learning group. However this group is failing academically, not only in our own district, but across the nation. We have a large achievement gap in our school district at the high school graduation level for our Spanish speaking students. **SLIDE 4** This learning group in particular are not performing in line with other students, and in terms of graduation rates are behind both African-American and Caucasian students.

Over 22% or more than one fifth of the country's school-aged student population in 2017 were raised speaking at least one other language than English at home (Carreira & Kagan 2018). These students are sometimes referred to as heritage language speakers - they are to some degree bilingual in the heritage language and English, with many only speaking or understanding their parents' language. This group of emerging bilinguals have strong oral skills, however are illiterate in their first language, also called heritage language, meaning they cannot read or write in that language. In this district, our Spanish speaking students are below grade level in terms of English literacy. For example, of the incoming Spanish speaking 6th graders to Orchard Tree Middle School this year, all the English language learners are below the XXth %ile on the MCA reading test. I would like to highlight that heritage language learners include EL students, but is a much wider group than that. It includes all second language speakers whether they are designated limited English proficiency or not.

Academic language, as we all know, is the language of school. All school-children are academic language learners. **SLIDE 5** This language uses very specific vocabulary and



constructs that we would not necessarily use in our social language. Social language is used for day to day conversational and social interactions. This contrasts with academic language, which is often more abstract and is necessary to discuss academic content in the classroom context. Often, heritage language learners are perceived as proficient in English long before they actually are, because they have strong social language skills. This also applies to their heritage language, for example Spanish. As our Spanish heritage language speakers are not being educated in their home language, they do not develop those academic language skills in Spanish. They have to develop academic language skills in both languages, but they are only taught those skills in English and not in Spanish. Researchers overwhelmingly agree that language classes should be provided in the home language to some extent throughout the K-12 education of the child, with some even calling for heritage language education to be mainstreamed in the future.

The ultimate goal of first language learning is bilingual literacy, having the ability to read and write in two languages. It would be unusual to find a fully bilingual student at the grade school level whose language skills in both languages are the same. More typically, we have emergent bilinguals who have yet to become literate in both languages, or unbalanced bilinguals who have different levels of skills between both languages - for example, they may read in English, but not in Spanish.

**SLIDE 6** I have reviewed a large body of research papers that all conclude that teaching in a student's primary language promotes their achievement in English as a second language. This research has a bias towards elementary aged students, however does include studies with secondary students and reaches the same conclusion. In particular, one longitudinal study at the secondary level by Thomas and Collier found that dual language programs in varying formats

and percentages of instruction in a student's first language were the only programs with outcomes of students reaching the 50th percentile in both their first language and English across all subjects. Imagine if we could move some of our bilingual students towards that level of success. The research authors confidently concluded that the strongest predictor of high achievement in a second language (English) comes from those who have received more first language grade-level schooling.

There are elements of learning a language that transfer from one's first language to a second language. **SLIDE 7** As a reminder, here is Cummins' Common Underlying Proficiency Theory. Not all the learning starts from a clean slate. Looking at this dual iceberg image created by Cummins, we view a bilingual speaker's two languages represented as distinct "icebergs" or triangles rising above a dotted horizontal line that represents the surface features of a language. The surface features of a language are the visible linguistic skills of a bilingual speaker (the actual words we use). Underneath the surface features line is a large triangular shaped area where the two languages overlap. This represents the common underlying proficiency of a bilingual speaker, which is all of his or her skills used to understand or create language. For example, the concept of there being a past tense, how to decode text, or how to use strategies when answering reading comprehension questions. These skills are transferable across language learning, so once you have learned it in one language, you have created a schema to apply to a second language - you do not need to learn that skill again. Research has shown that if a student has not developed an academic language register in their first language, it takes them longer to develop that academic language in English.

It should be noted that researchers have commented on a lack of studies into bilingual literacy at the secondary education level. In addition they question if academic achievement is increased across other content areas like Mathematics and Science. However, there is enough existing research to confidently claim increased academic achievement in English and the heritage language.

Moving on to the cultural identity of heritage language learners, research finds that language and identity are closely intertwined. This is an area we often discuss at our PLCs, as we ponder why motivation is so low for our long-term ELLs. We talk about the students being stuck between two languages and knowing they are not proficient in either one. This ties into cultural identity which in simple terms is a sense of belonging based on one's ancestry and cultural values. **SLIDE 8** Having low skills in their first language can affect the core of a student's identity. Most of our Latinx students identify as being Mexican (if that is the country of their heritage) or Mexican American. The majority of these second and third generation students are not fluent in Spanish - often speaking a form of Spanglish (a mix of Spanish and English words). This lack of fluency can be seen to weaken their personal claim to Mexican heritage, because they have a lower level of Spanish proficiency. With their Mexican heritage being a source of great pride for them, this can negatively affect the identity of these adolescents, who are developmentally working on understanding who they are. In today's current political climate, speaking Spanish in an English dominant society can also be viewed negatively, and the Spanish language is at times connected with undocumented immigration. Wouldn't it be amazing if we could empower these students to master their language skills in Spanish by being fully literate, so they are informed and proud of their heritage?

Motivation is a subject that often arises in our middle school ESL teacher Professional Learning Committee. As a group we notice that this matter of self concept is one that we believe to be extremely relevant when it comes to motivation. Indeed, research on students' perceptions about themselves showed that students with low self concepts avoided doing what they perceived to be difficult tasks and those with high self concepts took a chance and challenged themselves. In addition, Spanish heritage language students tend to come from low socio-economic backgrounds and do not have role models who went on to college, or who even completed a high school education. Those that did finish a college education have moved out of their neighborhoods, so school-age students don't get to see the lifestyle change that an education can bring. Consequently, the attitude of not trying because it doesn't matter anyway is incredibly difficult to overcome. If we empower these students with literacy in their own language, which will then feed into improved academic achievement in English and potentially other areas, we may be able to break this cycle and positively affect the achievement gap. That is why the EL department pushed so hard to have the Spanish for Heritage Learners class at all high schools in the district.

In District 500's high schools, the Spanish for Heritage Learners is taught 100% in Spanish and works on the development of students' linguistic skills - enhancing those oral language skills they already have and increasing their literacy using texts through the lens of cultural practices and Latinx history. Research has shown that students have a higher level of comprehension when the texts feature an area or issue in which they have background knowledge. **SLIDE 9** This quote in a Spotlight article that featured some of our students sums up the goal of these classes beautifully:

*“XXX and XXX from XXX High School said, “For us, being in this class means that we can discover more about our hispanic culture, and our identity as hispanics in our community and we know that our voice should be taken into account. We can be great global citizens.”*

There is an incongruity between our economy needing a bilingual workforce and actually establishing an education system that succeeds in developing bilingual speakers and writers. I hope that you share my call to action and will advocate with me by sharing this information with principals and world language departments at your buildings. It would be great to have District 500 continuing its leadership in this vital area of education and extending its resources into the middle school arena. By presenting to the School Board and then following that with the same information and ideas to the principals, we can raise awareness and enough curiosity to have a pilot plan introduced at one of the middle schools. This would provide us with a unique circumstance of being able to collect data on a specific program in order to have the program extended into all middle schools.

If we are successful, there are many research opportunities that would arise out of a pilot program in middle school, which would need a group of motivated researchers to coordinate the collation and analysis of information. A longitudinal study should be started that follows these learners through the next six years of heritage language learning. During that time, measurements should be taken of grades across a variety of their classes, test results, namely state language proficiency tests like ACCESS for WIDA and standardized testing in English and Math. A control group should also be established of students who do not choose to take the Heritage language for Spanish speakers class. In that way we can make direct comparisons across data points. A further idea would be to use a control group who only took this class in

high school and compare their results against those who started their Spanish literacy journey in middle school. With regards to measuring other advantages, in particular those of increasing academic self concept and motivation, a system of qualitative research would need to be established. So, for those of you who are looking for research ideas for your Master's or Doctorate's degree, or know anyone who is, there is potentially a widespread amount of data to collect and analyze.

Thank you so much for your time and attention today. I know that you share my excitement about this opportunity for middle school Spanish speakers. Imagine the pride on their faces as they begin to read and write in their own language and learn about Latinx world leaders, thinkers and influencers. Their academic achievements could grow and increase the percentage of graduating Spanish speakers from high school. Then imagine our pride as they pass the bilingual seals of distinction in Spanish, after having had the opportunity to study the language for five years, and go onto college or careers where their bilingual skills are highly lauded. The opportunity for middle school EL students to partake in a Spanish for Heritage Learners class could turn their world around. **SLIDE 10**

(District number and school names are pseudonyms).

## Administration and world language teachers presentation

### Link to Accompanying Google Slides:

[https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1jlNUXVr\\_zZh4J5vDNfHlLgMA3vGZq0E5z6HIsW0sbo/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1jlNUXVr_zZh4J5vDNfHlLgMA3vGZq0E5z6HIsW0sbo/edit?usp=sharing)

As you know, we repeat the same message every January during electives sign-up - *Spanish speakers may not sign up for Spanish*. We try to explain to our bilingual students that world language Spanish isn't the right class for them because they already speak Spanish. **SLIDE 2** To which they reply, "but I don't speak it well and I don't know how to read or write in Spanish". My response is always disappointing to them, because I try to explain the difference between Spanish for beginners and the type of instruction they need. I suggest they wait until high school and then sign up for Spanish for Heritage Learners (heritage learners being those who were brought up speaking a different language at home). It does not sit well with me as an ESL teacher and an advocate of bilingual learners to refuse a child the opportunity to further their education in language. The students are disappointed and confused that they cannot take a Spanish class as an elective in seventh and eighth grade. They do not feel competent in their first language, because they learned it as an oral language and are not literate in that language. However, Spanish as a world language class offered at middle schools is not an appropriate class for them, because they don't need to know how to introduce their family or learn the names for food or pets. A class they would benefit from however, is one designed to build on the oral skills they do have and develop their reading and writing skills.

It is very exciting to know that Spanish for Heritage Learners is now being offered at all four high schools for our Spanish speaking students. That class introduces academic discourse to their

existing oral skills and introduces reading and writing skills through a culturally relevant curriculum. I would really like to provide that opportunity to our middle schoolers.

Consequently, my capstone project for my Master's in Teaching led me to research the advantages of offering a *Spanish for Heritage Learners* class in middle school, with a view to using this research as a platform from which to launch a campaign to introduce such a class to our district. I have written five presentations to the stakeholders involved with this potential new class. The keynote speech is to the School Board and I will present to them at an upcoming School Board Meeting. I am sharing this with you today to ask for your consideration or support of a pilot Spanish for Heritage Learners class at Orchard Tree Middle School.

There are two major research findings that underpin the argument for introducing this class.

**SLIDE 3** There is research from the 1980s through to this decade that confidently states that teaching students in their primary language increases their achievement in English as their second language and that the cultural identity of a student is strengthened by learning in their first language, which can then lead to an increase in motivation or academic confidence.

Working under the mantra of *One District, Infinite Possibilities*, this district should lead in being a multilingual and multicultural educational institution, producing bilingual or multilingual students ready for college and careers in today's global economy. We have an amazing pool of emerging bilingual students right here whom we should focus in on as a specific learning group. However this group is failing academically, not only in our district, but across the nation. We have a large achievement gap at the high school graduation level for our Spanish speaking students. **SLIDE 4** The overall graduation rate last year was XX%. When that number is broken down by race, we see the Latino students only graduating at an XX% rate, compared to White



students at 92.7% and African American students at XX%. That is a difference of XX% between our White students and our Latino students. This learning group in particular is not performing in line with other students, as evidenced by the district's graduation rates which are behind both African-American and White students.

Over 22%, or more than one fifth of the country's school-aged student population in 2017, were raised speaking at least one other language than English at home (Carriera & Kagan, 2018). These students are sometimes referred to as heritage language speakers - they are to some degree bilingual in the heritage language and English, with many only speaking or understanding their parents' language. **SLIDE 5** This group of emerging bilinguals have strong oral skills; however, they are illiterate in their first language, because they cannot read or write in that language. In this district, our Spanish speaking students are below grade level in regard to English literacy. For example, of the incoming 6th graders to Orchard Tree Middle School this year, all the English language learners are below the XXth percentile on the MCA reading test. I would like to highlight that heritage language learners include EL students, but is a much wider group than that. It includes all second language speakers whether they are designated limited English proficient or not.

We refer to academic language as the language of school. All school-children are academic language learners. This language uses very specific vocabulary and constructs that we would not necessarily use in our social language. Cummins who is a key theorist in second language acquisition first distinguished between social language and academic language. Social language is used for day to day conversational and social interactions. He contrasted this with academic language, which is often more abstract and is necessary to discuss academic content in the

classroom context. **SLIDE 6** For example, looking at this slide, notice the difference between “*What did you get on that math test?*” and “*Even though crocodiles have the same appearance, they live in different habitats*”. Often, heritage language learners are considered proficient in English long before they actually are, because they have strong social language skills. This also applies to their heritage language: for example, Spanish. As our Spanish heritage language speakers are not being educated in their home language, they do not develop those academic language skills in Spanish. They have to develop academic language skills in both languages, but they are only taught those skills in English and not in Spanish. There is a great depth of research wherein researchers agree that language classes should be provided in the home language to some extent throughout the K-12 education of the child, with some even calling for heritage language education to be mainstreamed in the future.

The ultimate goal of first language learning is bilingual literacy, having the ability to read and write in two languages. It would be unusual to find a fully bilingual student at the grade school level whose language skills in both languages are the same. More typically, we have emergent bilinguals who have yet to become literate in both languages, or unbalanced bilinguals who have different levels of skills between both languages - for example, they may read in English, but not in Spanish.

There are elements of learning a language that transfer from one’s first language to a second language. Not all the learning starts from a clean slate. Cummins also presented a theory about the common underlying proficiency of a bilingual speaker, which is all of his or her skills used to understand or create language. For example, the concept of there being a past tense, how to decode text, or how to use strategies when answering reading comprehension questions. These

skills are transferable across language learning, so learning the skill in one language creates a schema to apply to a second language - the actual skill only needs to be learned one time in order for the brain to be able to apply that skill into other languages. Research has shown that if a student has not developed an academic language register in their first language, it takes them longer to develop that academic language in English.

I have reviewed a large body of research papers that all conclude that teaching in a student's primary language promotes his or her achievement in English as a second language. This research has a bias toward elementary aged students; however, does include studies with secondary students and reaches the same conclusion. In particular, one longitudinal study at the secondary level by Thomas and Collier found that dual language programs in varying formats and percentages of instruction in a student's first language were the only programs with outcomes of students reaching the 50th percentile in both their first language and English across all subjects. Imagine if we could move some of our bilingual students towards that level of success. The research authors confidently concluded that the strongest predictor of high achievement in a second language (English) comes from those who have received more first language grade-level schooling.

Moving on to the cultural identity of heritage language learners, research finds that language and identity are closely intertwined. Cultural identity is in simple terms a sense of belonging based on one's ancestry and cultural values. Having low skills in their first language can affect the core of a student's identity. Most of our Latino and Latina students identify as being Mexican or Mexican American (if that is the country of their heritage). The majority of these second and third generation students are not fluent in Spanish - often speaking a form of Spanglish (a mix of

Spanish and English words). This lack of fluency can be seen to weaken their personal claim to Mexican heritage, because they have a lower level of Spanish proficiency. With their Mexican heritage being a source of great pride for them, this can adversely affect the identity of these adolescents, who are developmentally working on understanding who they are. In today's political climate, speaking Spanish in an English dominant society can also be viewed negatively, because the Spanish language is at times connected with undocumented immigration. Wouldn't it be amazing if we could empower these students to master their language skills in Spanish by being fully literate, so they are informed and proud of their heritage?

Research on students' perceptions about themselves showed that students with low self concepts avoided doing what they perceived to be difficult tasks and those with high self concepts took a chance and challenged themselves. Motivation is a subject that often arises in our middle school ESL teacher Professional Learning Committee. As a group we notice that this matter of self concept is one that we believe to be extremely relevant when it comes to motivation. Spanish heritage language students tend to come from low socio-economic backgrounds and do not have role models who completed a high school education or who went on to college. Those that did finish a college education have moved out of their neighborhoods, so school-age students don't get to see the lifestyle change that an education can bring. Consequently, the attitude of not trying because it doesn't matter anyway is incredibly difficult to overcome. If we empower these students with literacy in their own language, which will then feed into improved academic achievement in English and potentially other areas, we may be able to break this cycle and positively impact the achievement gap. That is why the EL secondary PLC have pushed so hard to have the Spanish for Heritage Learners class at all high schools in

our district. I would like to see these classes in middle schools, so we can impact these students before high school when the stakes are a little higher.

In District 500's high schools, the Spanish for Heritage Learners class is taught 100% in Spanish and works on the development of students' linguistic skills - enhancing those oral language skills they already have and increasing their literacy using texts through the lens of cultural practices and Central/South American history. **SLIDE 7** This quote in a Spotlight article that featured some of our students sums up the goal of these classes beautifully:

*"XXX and XXX from XXX High School said, "For us, being in this class means that we can discover more about our Hispanic culture, and our identity as Hispanics in our community and we know that our voice should be taken into account. We can be great global citizens."*

In our high schools, Spanish for Heritage Learners comes under World Languages with teachers being fluent Spanish speakers. This does not have to be the case for middle schools because we are not restricted by curricula and credits as is the case for high school. This elective could certainly fall under the World Languages department with possibly a study skills class on the opposite day or it could be a daily class.

Essential to the introduction of a Spanish for Heritage Learners class would be research considerations, so that we could measure data and compare that to the anticipated results. There are many research opportunities that could arise out of a pilot program in middle school, which could be analyzed by teachers working on Master's or Doctorate degrees. A longitudinal study should be started that follows these learners through the next six years of heritage language learning. During that time, measurements should be taken of grades across a variety of their classes, and test results, namely state language proficiency tests like ACCESS for WIDA, if

applicable, and standardized testing in English and Math. A control group should also be established of students who do not choose to take the Heritage Language for Spanish speakers class. In that way we can make direct comparisons across data points, using a control group. A further idea would be to use a control group who only took this class in high school and compare their results against those who started their Spanish literacy journey in middle school. With regards to measuring other advantages, in particular those of increasing academic self concept and motivation, a system of qualitative research would need to be established.

Thank you so much for your time and attention today. I know that you share my excitement about this opportunity for middle school Spanish speakers. Imagine the pride on students' faces as they begin to read and write in their own language and learn about Latinx world leaders, thinkers and influencers. Their academic achievements could grow and increase the percentage of graduating Spanish speakers from high school. Then imagine our pride as they pass the bilingual seals of distinction in Spanish, after having had the opportunity to study the language for five years, and go onto college or careers where their bilingual skills are highly lauded. The opportunity for middle school EL students to partake in a Spanish for Heritage Learners class could turn their world around. **SLIDE 8**

(District number and school names are pseudonyms).

**Student presentation,  
assuming that Spanish for Heritage Learners class is approved:**

**Link to Accompanying Google Slides:**

**[https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1YhNMneQsstlSvy7VAPBn-yDwE5rC5k9TFmmtrN\\_ZEV4/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1YhNMneQsstlSvy7VAPBn-yDwE5rC5k9TFmmtrN_ZEV4/edit?usp=sharing)**

We are here today to talk to you about an exciting new elective for Spanish speakers at Orchard Tree Middle School called Spanish for Heritage Learners. You will be able to decide if this is a class you are interested in for 7th and 8th grade. This class involves many elements, however, the one I believe you will be most interested in is that you will be learning to read and write in Spanish. **SLIDE 2** I will introduce the class to you and let you know about the curriculum, then I will give you some solid reasons why selecting this elective is so important. I also have with me two former students who are now in high school and are taking a similar class at the high school level. They will be able to tell you a little bit about their experience. I believe this class will also help you improve in other classes in school - in fact, I researched on this subject for my master's degree in teaching and will share some of that with you today. So, let's get started and find out about the Spanish for Heritage Learners elective.

This class is designed for Spanish speakers who speak Spanish at home, but may need to develop their skills in reading and writing. You are heritage learners, which means that the first language you learned at home was Spanish, which is the language of your family. Heritage is another word that describes family. You speak Spanish, yet you learned English as a second language and learned to read and write in English. You have wonderful language skills and being bilingual will help you greatly in college and in your future careers. You are not yet fully bilingual, because you need to learn to read and write in Spanish. You are very skillful at

speaking Spanish socially, which means with your friends and family, and can do the same in English. There is another kind of language that we talk about in school and that is academic language, sometimes called the language of school. This includes longer, more specific words that connect with a school subject. All students, whether they were brought up speaking English or Spanish, or Somali, are academic language learners. **SLIDE 3** Look at this slide for some examples. You might ask your friends, “What did you get on that Math test?” or “What is your favorite class in school?” This is social language. Compare that to writing or speaking the following, “Compare and contrast Math class to English class.” This is an example of academic language - do you hear how much more formal that sounds? In Spanish for Heritage Learners, you will learn how to speak and write in academic language in Spanish, which is challenging, but will have a huge impact on your success at school.

So, how do we teach you to read and write in Spanish and to work on academic language?

**SLIDE 4** The class is taught 100% in Spanish and will focus on reading and writing in Spanish. You already have strong speaking and listening skills and this class will help you to improve your academic language in those areas. This class will use original Spanish texts from a variety of different Central and Latin American countries. You will learn about important people and communities that have influenced the history and culture of the United States. You will also learn more about your family’s culture and heritage. The academic language skills that you learn will help you with future success in school, in colleges and careers. As fully bilingual speakers, companies and organizations will want you to work for them and will choose you over a monolingual person (someone who speaks only one language). Another fun consequence of this class is that when you are in high school, you will have the option to take the Bilingual Seals



exam, which can award college credits (free tuition) to bilingual students. **SLIDE 5**

I mentioned earlier about my research into this subject and I learned that by learning to read and write in Spanish, you will improve in your English skills also. Many college people have done research studies and proved that to happen!

So, I have given you some great reasons to sign up for this elective and will be sending information home with you in Spanish and English for your families to look at. Do you have any questions for our friends here from high school about what the class will be like and what you will learn? **SLIDE 6**

(School name is a pseudonym).

## Parent presentation in English

### Link to Accompanying Google Slides:

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1zAb1NdEjLpdW7Uk24rMXFnXN8nHe0poLSry-r1ARw9w/edit?usp=sharing>

Thank you so much for taking time to come to school today. I am very excited to share with you a wonderful Spanish learning opportunity for your children. In the past, I have often been asked by our Spanish speaking students why they cannot take Spanish as an elective class in 7th and 8th grade. **SLIDE 2** It is difficult to explain to them that the type of Spanish class they need is very different from the Spanish as a world language that we teach here at school. Your children are already Spanish speakers and have a high oral (spoken) skill level in that language. The regular Spanish class we teach at school is for non-Spanish speakers and teaches basic vocabulary to English speakers. I am happy to share that we now offer a Spanish for Heritage Learners class in middle school in District 500. Heritage learners is another term for students who grew up speaking the language of their parents in a country where there is a different dominant language. I am going to give you some information about that class, so you and your child can make an informed decision about the advantages of that class for you. First we will consider the existing language skills your children have, then I will explain what the Spanish for Heritage Learners class is, and then share the advantages your child will benefit from by taking this class. Please ask any questions you have at any time during this presentation. I also have with me two former students who are now in high school and are taking a similar class at the high school level. They will be able to share their own experiences with this class. My goal is

that at the end of our time together today, you will feel confident in signing up your children for this new elective class in middle school.

Introducing this class in middle school is the culmination of my master's degree capstone project which was to research the advantages of offering a 'Spanish for Heritage Learners' class as an elective to Spanish speaking students in middle school. Following a presentation to the School Board, our district has agreed to trial the class at Orchard Tree Middle School.

Let's start by affirming that your students are in an amazing position to launch themselves into colleges and careers as bilingual speakers of Spanish and English. They already have strong social language in both. However, the majority of them are missing the literacy piece - they have not learned how to read or write in Spanish. The students recognize this - and have asked teachers, myself included, for a class where they can learn to read and write in their first language. They are not yet fully bilingual and will only be so when they can read and write in Spanish. There is another kind of language that we focus on in school called academic language.

**SLIDE 3** It is the language of school and is a more formal language. All students are academic language learners. This language is more challenging for second language speakers because these are not regularly used words and some words they have probably never heard of before. So, students are not only working on how to read and write, but also are learning how to read and write using academic language so they can be successful in school, college, and beyond.

Every high school in our district now offers a class for Spanish heritage learners, the goal of which is to help students move towards being fully bilingual. We are now delighted to share that this class is available in middle school and is being trialed here in this school.

**SLIDE 4** The Spanish for Heritage Learners class will be taught 100% in Spanish and works

on the development of our students' existing linguistic skills. Your children already have strong oral skills, both in listening and speaking, however, they are for the most part unable to read or write in Spanish. **SLIDE 5** In this class, we will enhance their oral language skills and introduce reading and writing in Spanish, using original Spanish texts from a variety of different Central and Latin American countries. These texts will focus on their culture and family heritage.

Students will also be able to understand how Hispanic cultures have impacted the United States, by learning about different communities, and also about key individuals, events or artifacts that have shaped the United States. **SLIDE 6** Students will also learn academic language skills to use in colleges and professional settings, so they can become fully bilingual, making them valuable employees in today's global economy and job market. **SLIDE 7** Another great opportunity is that once students are in high school, they have the option to take the Bilingual Seals exam, which can award college credits (free tuition) to bilingual students.

**SLIDE 8** Did you know that the graduation rate for Hispanic students is the lowest across the racial groups at high schools in District 500? It is only XX%, compared to XX% for White students and XX% for Black students. There are many reasons for this disparity, but one that stands out to teachers is that most of these students learned English as their second language. Spanish is their first language and until they started in elementary school was probably the majority of language that they heard. Then they were taught to read in English - think about how difficult that is when you don't know what the English words mean.

The academic benefits of teaching students to read in their home language are numerous.

**SLIDE 9** There are many research studies stating that if we teach children how to read in their first language, they will have better outcomes in literacy in their second language (in this case,

English), so should be stronger readers in English. One long-term study showed that children enrolled in first language literacy programs had better or equal achievements than peers not enrolled in first language literacy programs. One research study I looked at said that by fifth grade, Spanish speakers could read grade level words correctly, but did not understand what the words meant - they were about two-three grades behind on comprehension. This is partly why they are underperforming.

**SLIDE 10** Another reason for choosing the Spanish for Heritage Learners is to help your children understand who they are in this multicultural society we live in, and to have confidence in their home language. All children going through adolescence are working out who they are as individuals and where they fit into society. Speaking more than one language and having more than one nationality can make this increasingly challenging. Students feel more capable in one language than another, and that might affect how they see themselves - for example, they might ask if they can really call themselves Mexican if they can't read in Spanish? If they have a low opinion of their Spanish skills, this spills over into other academic areas which research has shown can stop them from trying more difficult tasks in the classroom. This can then lead to a motivation problem - why bother trying if it's too difficult? The Spanish for Heritage Learners class addresses identity and the influence that Spanish speaking countries and people have had on the United States. The goal of this class is to increase student confidence by teaching how to read and write through authentic literature. **SLIDE 11** This quote from current high school students captures the success of this class.

*“For us, being in this class means that we can discover more about our Hispanic culture, and our identity as Hispanics in our community, and we know that our voice should be taken into account. We can be great global citizens.”*

Students  
Spotlight, Spring 2019.

With the extension of this class into middle school, District 500 is now a leader in bilingual education in our state. We hope that by improving our students' literacy in their first language of Spanish, that the academic achievement in their second language, English, will be improved. In offering Spanish for Heritage Learners, this District is working towards the goal of graduating students who are fully bilingual into our colleges and beyond, while also encouraging the self confidence and motivation of these students.

We encourage you to speak to your child about choosing Spanish for Heritage Learners as an elective class in 7th and 8th grade. Information about elective classes will be going home next week in both Spanish and English classes. In the meantime, if you have any questions about the class or our presentation today, I would be happy to help. **SLIDE 12**  
(District number and school names are pseudonyms).

**Parent presentation in Spanish or Presentación a los padres  
(Translated by L Moya)**

Muchísimas gracias por tomarse el tiempo de venir a la escuela el día de hoy. Estoy sumamente feliz de compartir con ustedes una fantástica oportunidad de aprendizaje del idioma español diseñada con sus hijos en mente. Muchas veces los estudiantes que hablan español me han preguntado por qué no pueden tomar Español como una de sus clases electivas en el 7<sup>mo</sup> u 8<sup>vo</sup> grado. Es difícil explicarles que el tipo de clase de español que ellos necesitan es muy diferente a la que enseñamos acá en la escuela intermedia como asignatura de Lenguajes del Mundo. Sus hijos ya hablan el español y tienen un nivel alto de las habilidades orales (o habladas). La clase regular de español que enseñamos en la escuela es para chicos que no lo hablan y enseña el vocabulario básico. Me complace informarles que ahora el Distrito ofrecerá una clase llamada *Spanish for Heritage Learners “Español para estudiantes de herencia habla hispana”* en una de las escuelas intermedia/secundaria. Estudiantes de Herencia es otro término que se usa para describir a los estudiantes que han crecido hablando el idioma de sus padres en un país en el cual hay una lengua dominante distinta. Yo les voy a dar información sobre esta clase de manera que ustedes y sus hijos puedan tomar una decisión informada sobre sus ventajas. Comenzaremos considerando las habilidades de lenguaje que el estudiante tiene, luego les explicaré de qué se trata la clase de Español para estudiantes de herencia habla hispana y finalmente hablaré sobre las ventajas que sus hijos recibirán al tomar esta clase. Por favor hágame cualquier pregunta en cualquier momento durante esta presentación. He invitado a dos estudiantes que ahora están en la preparatoria tomando una clase similar a este nivel, los cuales hablarán de su experiencia en la misma. Mi objetivo es que al final de esta sesión ustedes entiendan lo que significa inscribir a sus

hijos en esta nueva clase electiva en la escuela intermedia. La incorporación de esta nueva opción en la escuela intermedia es la culminación del proyecto para mi maestría, la cual era investigar las ventajas de ofrecer una clase de Español para estudiantes de herencia habla hispana como un electivo para estudiantes hispanohablantes de las escuelas intermedias. Luego de una presentación al consejo directivo escolar, nuestro distrito ha accedido implementar dicha clase en la Escuela Orchard Tree Middle School.\*

Empecemos por ratificar que sus hijos cuentan con una maravillosa ventaja para continuar con sus carreras o educación superior al ser bilingües. Ellos ya cuentan con el lenguaje de ámbito social en ambos idiomas, sin embargo, a la mayoría les falta la lectoescritura, es decir que no han aprendido a leer o escribir en español. Los estudiantes están conscientes de esto y han preguntado a maestros incluyéndome a mí, si existe una clase donde ellos puedan aprender a leer y escribir en su primer idioma. Ellos aún no son completamente bilingües y solamente llegarán a serlo si pueden leer y escribir en español. Hay otro tipo de lenguaje en el que nos enfocamos en la escuela y se llama "lenguaje académico". Este es el lenguaje educativo de la escuela y es más formal. Todos los estudiantes aprenden este lenguaje académico, el cual es un desafío más grande para los estudiantes del inglés como segunda lengua, porque en este lenguaje académico se usan palabras que no son comunes y algunas palabras que quizás jamás hayan escuchado. Por lo tanto, los estudiantes no solamente desarrollan la lectura y escritura, sino que también el cómo leer y escribir en el lenguaje académico de manera que puedan tener éxito en la escuela, la universidad y más allá.

Todas las escuelas preparatorias de nuestro distrito ofrecen ahora Español para estudiantes de herencia habla hispana y el objetivo es ayudarles a los estudiantes a llegar a ser completamente



bilingües. Estamos dichosos de poder contarles que esta clase ahora se ofrecerá a nivel intermedio, y que será se le está dando marcha blanca en esta escuela.

Los estudiantes de esta clase recibirán 100% de instrucción en español y el objetivo es desarrollar las habilidades lingüísticas que los estudiantes ya poseen. Sus hijos ya tienen fuertes habilidades en el ámbito oral, tanto al escuchar como al hablar, pero por lo general no pueden leer o escribir en español. En esta clase aumentaremos las habilidades del lenguaje y presentaremos la lectura y escritura en español usando textos originalmente escritos en español que provienen de una variedad de países de Latinoamérica.

Estos textos se enfocarán en su cultura y herencia familiar. Ellos también podrán entender cómo la cultura hispana ha tenido un impacto en los Estados Unidos al aprender sobre diferentes comunidades y al hablar sobre ciertas personas claves, eventos y artefactos que han dejado una huella en los EE.UU. Los estudiantes también aprenderán las habilidades del lenguaje académico que se usan en los ámbitos universitarios y profesionales, de manera que lleguen a ser completamente bilingües y haciendo que se conviertan en empleados más valiosos en los actuales mercados de trabajo y economía global. Otro beneficio resultado de estas clases es la oportunidad que los estudiantes tendrán en la escuela preparatoria, donde tendrán la opción de tomar el examen *Bilingual Seals* (Sellos Bilingües), el cual otorga créditos universitarios gratuitos a los estudiantes bilingües.

¿Sabía usted que la tasa de graduación para los estudiantes latinos es la más baja dentro de los grupos raciales en las escuelas preparatorias del Distrito 500? Solamente un XX% de los estudiantes latinos se gradúa, comparado con un XX% de los estudiantes blancos y un XX% de los estudiantes afroamericanos. Hay muchas razones para esta disparidad, pero hay una que nos

llama la atención como maestros y es que la mayoría de estos estudiantes han aprendido el inglés como segunda lengua. El español es su primera lengua y la que escucharon hasta que empezaron la escuela primaria. Y luego a ellos les enseñaron a leer en inglés -- piensen en lo difícil que es cuando no se saben lo que significan las palabras en inglés.

Los beneficios académicos al enseñarles a los estudiantes a leer en el idioma de su hogar son numerosos. Hay muchos estudios de investigación que afirman que si les enseñamos a leer a los niños en su primer idioma, ellos tendrán un mejor rendimiento en la lectoescritura en un segundo idioma (en este caso, el inglés), por lo tanto ellos deberían ser mejores lectores en inglés. Yo leí sobre un estudio a largo plazo que mostraba que los niños que estaban inscritos en programas de lectoescritura en su primer idioma obtenían mejores o iguales logros que sus compañeros que no lo habían hecho. Otro estudio que yo revisé decía que para el 5<sup>to</sup> grado, los hispanohablantes podían leer palabras del 5<sup>to</sup> grado en forma correcta pero sin saber su significado -o sea que estaban retrasados dos o tres grados en lo que se refiere a comprensión de lectura. Esto explica parcialmente por qué el rendimiento de ellos se encuentra por debajo de lo esperado.

Otra razón para escoger esta clase de Español es porque ayuda a sus hijos a que entiendan quiénes son en esta sociedad multicultural en la que viven y a obtener confianza sobre la forma en que hablan el idioma de su hogar. Todos los niños que están pasando por la adolescencia están tratando de entender quiénes son como individuos y buscando su lugar en la sociedad. El hablar más de un idioma y el tener más de una nacionalidad pueden hacer que este proceso sea más desafiante. Los estudiantes se sienten más capaces en un idioma que en el otro, lo cual puede afectar la manera en que ellos se ven a sí mismos - por ejemplo, podrían preguntarse ¿puedo llamarme realmente mexicano solamente cuando puedo hablar bien el español? Si ellos tienen

una baja opinión de sus habilidades al hablar español, esto puede verse reflejado en otras áreas académicas y hay estudios que muestran impedimentos al ejecutar tareas más difíciles en el salón de clases. Esto puede llevar a un problema de motivación - ¿para qué esforzarme en algo que es tan difícil? Los estudiantes de la clase de Español para estudiantes de herencia habla hispana se plantean la identidad y la influencia que personas y países como los de ellos y sus padres han tendido en los Estados Unidos. El objetivo es aumentar su confianza al enseñarles a leer y escribir a través de literatura auténtica. La siguiente cita de un estudiante de la escuela preparatoria capta el éxito de esta clase.

*“Para nosotros, estar en esta clase significa que podemos descubrir más sobre la cultura hispana y sobre nuestra identidad como hispanos en nuestra comunidad y sabemos que nuestra voz será considerada. Todos somos ciudadanos globales fantásticos”.*

Estudiantes  
Spotlight, Primavera 2019.

Con la extensión de esta clase en la escuela intermedia, el Distrito 500 es ahora un líder en la educación bilingüe de nuestro estado. Esperamos que al mejorar las habilidades de lectoescritura en el primer idioma de nuestros estudiantes que hablan español, el rendimiento académico en su segundo idioma, el inglés, mejorará. Al ofrecer la clase *Español para estudiantes de herencia habla hispana*, este distrito está intentando lograr el objetivo de graduar estudiantes que sean completamente bilingües, que vayan a la universidad y más allá, y al tiempo que fomentar la confianza en sí mismos y la motivación de estos estudiantes.

Les recomendamos hablar con sus hijos sobre la elección de la clase Español para estudiantes de herencia habla hispana como opción electiva de 7<sup>mo</sup> y 8<sup>vo</sup> grados. La próxima

semana se enviará a casa información sobre los electivos en español e inglés. Mientras tanto, si ustedes tienen preguntas sobre la clase o sobre nuestra presentación, yo estaría dispuesta a ayudarlos.

**Post presentation questionnaire**

<https://forms.gle/qPJUD4nbcR2ymdBN8>