

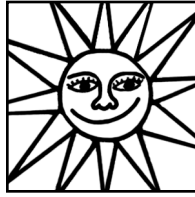
“Through the inner flexibility of their speech organ, the children find their way to a flexibility of soul and an openness that has an effect on their entire later life and especially on their social abilities. The foreign language lesson is suited like practically no other lesson to encourage openness and awaken interest for what is foreign to oneself—and in our time of widespread racism and social conflict on both a small and large scale this is a pedagogical mission of the first order.”¹

—Rudolph Steiner

sonrisa [son•rrí•sa] *f.* smile

Central to teaching early childhood foreign language, and the central philosophy around which this curriculum is designed, is the desire to offer our young students two things: The first is a positive foreign language experience for each student. The second, wholly dependent on the first, is language acquisition.

So when choosing the name of our Spanish school and, subsequently, the name of this text, the choice seemed obvious. Sonrisas, or smiles, are the most important requirements of a successful early childhood language class. Spanish class must be fun. It must be something to smile about, and that smile goes beyond the lesson itself. A positive language experience fosters openness to the sounds, the songs, the stories, the culture, and the people of that language.



How To Teach the Sonrisas Curriculum

Each lesson in the Sonrisas curriculum consists of three sections: circle time, story time, and art time. These three sections, along with a greeting at the beginning of class and a goodbye at the end, provide a consistent structure and routine for each lesson.

Most of the lessons included in this book span two days of Spanish class with each class lasting approximately 45 minutes. We have found this sequence to be extremely effective. Spanning a lesson over two days allows the covered material to sink in before it is reviewed. Both classes center around the same theme, but the first class introduces new vocabulary and concepts, and the second class reviews the vocabulary and concepts and applies them in activities. In general, a book is read and an art project is begun on the first day, and on the second day, the book is reread and the art project finished.

The Spanish/English Ratio

Although there are some educators who believe that only the target language should be used, we view the Spanish-only setting to be a goal rather than a rule. Sometimes, in order to lower anxiety, establish routine, or give directions, English may be used. It is not appropriate, however, to translate concepts and vocabulary into English. Translation removes language from its natural context and intellectualizes the learning process. If acquisition is the ultimate goal, translation will not bring students any closer to it but rather breed confusion, and in many cases, boredom.

For circle time, the Spanish-only goal is easily attainable once the routine has been established. The songs are all in Spanish, so it is the language that you use in between that is the issue. As the class progresses and the students become familiar with the routine and the Spanish language, you can use Spanish more exclusively to conduct circle time. Using Spanish in this informal, kinetic setting is highly effective because you can use Spanish in a physical context that students easily understand. For example, if students are sitting and you want them to stand, you can make a raising motion with your

hands, stand up yourself, and say, “¡Levántense!” Commands like these are effective ways to establish a Spanish base that you can use and build on during the entire lesson.

Predictable and short questions also work very well to establish a language base in the class. For example, after the lesson on colors you can begin pointing to objects or clothing and ask, “¿De qué color es?” Likewise, after the lesson on numbers you can ask, “¿Cuántos...?” The goal here is to place language in a meaningful context so that students will comprehend what you are saying even if they do not know what each word means. Read your students’ comfort levels to determine whether you are using an appropriate Spanish/English ratio. If you give a command and are confronted with blank stares or anxious eyes, try stating it another way, using gestures, familiar vocabulary, or a familiar context. If you try all of these and are still met with confused faces, you may choose to give students a brief explanation in English. For example, you may say, “When I say ‘juntos’ I mean that we are going to do it or say it together. Let’s try that.” Normally, this brief English explanation will give students enough confidence to proceed in Spanish. You may also choose to use English when introducing a new dance or game. Sometimes the complexity of the lesson’s activities makes a brief introduction or explanation in English appropriate.

Greeting and Goodbye

A greeting at the beginning of every lesson sets the tone and establishes a friendly, comfortable setting for the Spanish class. Greeting each student in Spanish effectively transitions the child from the rest of his or her day into the Spanish language experience. It also provides students with an opportunity to use their Spanish in a very real context. Because this is the first activity in the Spanish lesson, the greeting is crucial to setting the lesson’s tone—greet each student with enthusiasm in anticipation of the fun to come.

Have students line up at the entrance to the room where Spanish class is being held. Then greet each student individually with a handshake while you exchange greetings, either “Buenos días” or “Buenas tardes,” depending on the time of the day. After the student repeats the greeting, direct him or her to sit in the circle to prepare for the beginning of circle time.

Just as the greeting sets the tone for the Spanish lesson, the goodbye provides closure. Depending on whether the students finish their art projects at the same time or each finishes individually, you can either have them line up for the goodbye or simply exchange goodbyes with each student as they finish. Again, shake each student’s hand and say “adiós” or “hasta luego.” Have the student repeat the phrase.

We have found that most students really enjoy the greeting and goodbye portions of the class because they are communicating in Spanish in an easygoing, realistic context. By shaking hands with the students, you are engaging in an act of mutual respect, which further establishes a positive tone for the Spanish class. Furthermore, once the framework for the greeting and goodbye has been set, and the students’ Spanish has reached a more advanced stage, these salutations provide an excellent opportunity to expand vocabulary. For example, after the students learn the days of the week, you may alter the form of the goodbye from “Hasta luego” to “Hasta miércoles” or even “Nos vemos el jueves.”

Circle Time

Directly following the greeting, circle time allows students to participate in songs, dances, and games that require them to be verbally and physically active. This is the part of each lesson that makes use of the kinesthetic and musical intelligences of the students. In circle time, students use Spanish in a very informal, playful, and natural way. The emphasis here is on fun—the more students enjoy the activities of circle time, the more they develop a positive feeling toward learning a second language.

What does circle time look like?

Circle time can be just as the name suggests—students sitting in a circle—although you may position the students to sit or stand according to your teaching style or the particular lesson’s activity. You can control how still or active students are while they are sitting and standing, but it is important to remember that students should be comfortable and in a physical space that allows for fun.

What do you do?

Activities in circle time include taking roll, singing songs, reciting poetry, dancing, playing games, and short questions and answers. Taking roll at the beginning of circle time provides students with a very real context in which to use their Spanish and, like the greeting, further establishes the tone of the Spanish classroom. Take roll by asking “¿Emilia, dónde estás?” Have each student respond with “Estoy aquí.” To reinforce meaning, combine “¿Dónde estás?” with an appropriate gesture. Students may point at or tap the floor as they say “Estoy aquí.” If a student in the class is absent, have the class say together, “No está aquí,” after calling out the absent student’s name. Accompany this with an appropriate gesture such as shaking the head.

After roll, the class begins singing songs, reciting poetry, and dancing. For each song and poem in the Sonrisas classroom, we have created accompanying gestures and movements, or dances. This combination of the verbal and the kinesthetic is extremely effective in bringing the language to life for young children. Some songs and poems may be performed sitting, while others may be performed standing. Mix these up according to your students’ energy levels. After the songs, you can play games or engage in the activities that the lesson plan calls for. The games are often activities designed to provide a good introduction or review for vocabulary and concepts learned in the lessons. Circle time is a great opportunity to ask your students short questions in Spanish. Start simply, and as your lessons progress, increase the complexity of your questions and answers. Be sure to make participation voluntary and never put a child on the spot. Our experience has been that once children are comfortable, they are more than eager to show the teacher and their peers how much they know.

It bears repeating that this class time should be fun. To that end, smile while you sing and model enthusiasm for your students. Students will not even be aware of any learning process; rather, they will be acquiring language naturally through the experience of having fun while speaking and singing Spanish. The focus of circle time is to give students an opportunity to experience Spanish in a lively, playful context. This linguistic focus, accompanied by the opportunity to release energy, places students in an appropriate mood for the next segment of the lesson: story time.

Story Time

As any teacher or parent of a young child knows, children love to hear a good story. Story time is an opportunity for a child's vivid imagination to develop and is a valuable part of the lesson because much of the vocabulary is introduced and reinforced through literature. This part of the lesson directly informs students' developing linguistic, spatial, and interpersonal intelligences.

What kinds of books are used?

There are many different styles of books that are effective tools in the Spanish classroom. One style is the familiar, traditional tale. *The Three Little Pigs*, *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, and *Little Red Riding Hood* often have a Spanish version that can be checked out at the library. By choosing a story with which students are already familiar, meaning is conveyed through prior knowledge. The teacher's role as storyteller allows him or her to give life to the Spanish words through pictures and gestures.

When using an unfamiliar story, we choose books that contain vivid, interesting pictures that help tell the story by providing a context for understanding the Spanish words. There are many books, however, with beautiful and interesting illustrations but with too much text for the purposes of a Spanish lesson. These books may lose your audience because meaning is not being conveyed entirely through the pictures. Occasionally we come across a book that we really want to use, but the text is a little too complex for the students' current Spanish level. In these cases, we may read the book in English the first day to instill prior knowledge, then in Spanish on the second day. Generally, however, when choosing stories that are unfamiliar to your students, look for repetition of vocabulary, vocabulary that your students have previously been exposed to, and language that can be conveyed through tone, expression, and gesture. As students progress in Spanish with a broader vocabulary and concept base, you can choose increasingly complex stories. All of the suggested books in the lesson plans included in this book have been used effectively in Sonrisas classrooms. There are hundreds of books, however, that are not listed in the recommended reading lists in our lessons that would provide a wonderful context for the lesson. We recommend that you simply use your best judgment. If you have a favorite story that you know your students will love, then by all means, read it.

What is shared reading?

When we read stories during Spanish class, we use a form of storytelling that is commonly called "shared reading" in the educational world. In her book *Invitations*, Regie Routman defines shared reading as "any rewarding reading situation in which a learner—or group of learners—sees the text, observes the expert reading it with fluency and expression, and is invited to read along."³⁷ The atmosphere during shared reading is relaxed and social with an emphasis on enjoying and appreciating the text. In shared reading, students learn high-frequency words and conventions of print naturally, without boring drill.³⁸ Although in our preschool and early elementary classes we focus on the oral experience of the language as opposed to the written language, this form of sharing stories serves as an effective foundation for reading and writing Spanish in subsequent years. Children learning to read in English often begin reading in Spanish in our classes with very little formal reading instruction.

What does shared reading look like?

Have students gather together, preferably on the floor. Make sure that each student has a clear view of the book. Begin by introducing the book (a more complex story may warrant an introduction in English). This is your opportunity to “hook” students by piquing their curiosity and enthusiasm. As you begin to read the story, engage students in the reading process by asking questions and using the pictures to review previously learned vocabulary. When the story includes repetition or predictable text, encourage students to join in and participate in the storytelling.

As with all activities in Spanish class, there should be no pressure for students to perform. When asking questions, address the entire group or ask for volunteers. Try not to single out any student who may feel uncomfortable speaking. If you feel the need to engage a particularly quiet child or to check a student’s understanding, perhaps you could ask her, in Spanish, to point to a picture.

Story time provides an opportunity to review previously learned material by asking routine questions and eliciting responses that use known vocabulary. Pacing is very important: Keep the story flowing and keep opportunities for questions and answers simple. Often, the stories lend themselves to many possible lessons. Choose one or two concepts to teach in the story and save the rest for another lesson. Once students have been introduced to the target vocabulary and concepts of the lesson during story time, they are now ready for the art project.

Art Time

During art time, students use Spanish vocabulary in a hands-on, creative setting, drawing on their intrapersonal, bodily/kinesthetic, linguistic, and spatial intelligences. The focus here is not for students to create exactly what the teacher creates, but rather to enjoy the process of creating. To this end, the tone of art time should be focused but relaxed. Children love to manipulate, create, build, explore, and imagine. The process of making art gives them a sense of accomplishment and a physical aid for remembering and using Spanish vocabulary. Further, the projects that the students take home provide a meaningful context for children to share with their parents what they are learning in Spanish class. Eventually, as the students’ language skills develop, they can use the projects to talk about Spanish concepts without the aid of translation.

What does art time look like?

If you have a small table or a group of small tables available, the class can sit together to do the art project, although most projects can be done on the floor if necessary. The lesson plans will tell you what materials need to be prepared before each project.

Most of the art projects follow a two-day sequence. Begin the art project by modeling the steps involved in the project and then showing the students the finished product. This will give the students clear direction on what they will be doing. Then you can facilitate by helping those students who are having difficulty, especially younger students. Remember that the priority is fun: If a child gets frustrated by not being able to perform a task, he will be in no mood to speak a second language.

What about the language?

During the art time segment of each lesson, it is important that students understand what they are being asked to do. Depending on the level of Spanish comprehension in your class, you may want to give directions in English. Once the students are busy doing the project, you can resume speaking in Spanish using the context of the activity to guide your language usage. If a child needs clarification or further direction, you may want to reinforce in English, but the hands-on nature of the art project provides an excellent opportunity for you and the students to put Spanish in a meaningful context. With our elementary school children we call the art table “la mesa de Español.” To maintain a Spanish focus during art time, students are expected to speak only Spanish when seated at the table.

Pacing

The overall pacing of the lesson is something that each teacher will ultimately decide according to the different settings and circumstances in his or her school. Follow the cues of your students. Their age requires that they be interested and engaged. If students appear to be antsy or disengaged in circle time, you may need to move on to story time. If they appear to be fully engaged, continue. A good guideline for pacing is to consider the time requirements for the rest of the lesson. Is the book long or short? Do the students need a lot of time to finish the art project? You can then adjust circle time, the most flexible segment of the lesson, accordingly. Some lessons may require a five-minute circle time; others may require thirty minutes. Likewise, the length of the story time segment of each lesson is flexible depending on how you read the book. According to the interests and energy levels of your students, you can manipulate this time by asking several contextual questions for each page, or just a few questions during the course of the entire story. It is important to remember that a well-focused, 30-minute lesson holds much more value than a 45-minute lesson with distracted, fidgety students. Although each lesson is designed to last about 45 minutes, the lessons are entirely flexible. If your class only has 30 minutes available, you may adjust each lesson accordingly.

When and How to Review

Each segment of the lesson provides many opportunities for review. The more you can incorporate review into each lesson, the stronger your students’ language base will be. The sequence of lessons begins with the introduction of simple yet critical vocabulary: Learning colors, numbers, and body parts in the first three lessons gives children a vocabulary base you can use for review and extension in subsequent lessons. If you are teaching a lesson about a frog, for example, you may ask questions such as “¿De qué color es la ranita?” or “¿Cuántos ojos tiene la ranita?” These questions provide an appropriate contextual review of vocabulary. Likewise, the repetition of songs and poems provides opportunities for review. As their language skills improve, students glean more meaning and better pronunciation skills from these poems and songs. Songs also provide a “skeleton” into which you can plug new vocabulary. For example, our students love to sing “Moscas en la leche” (“Flies in the Buttermilk”); so around Easter, in honor of the Easter Bunny, we change it to “Conejitos en la leche.” At Halloween, we change it to “Fantasmas en la leche.”

Occasionally you may be teaching a lesson and realize that your students could use a review of a previously taught concept. Our lessons are designed to be retaught as necessary. If, for example, you are

reading a story with a picture of the night sky and you ask, “¿Es el día o la noche?” only to be met with blank stares, it may be a good time to review the *Buenas noches* lesson the following week.

Starting a New Class

Starting a new class presents exciting challenges that you can easily meet by establishing a routine as quickly as possible. A good strategy is to tell the students in English what they will be doing and then model it for them in Spanish. For example, begin your new class with the greeting. Tell your class, “Before every Spanish class, we are going to shake hands and say ‘good morning’ in Spanish.” Then model this in Spanish. Before circle time, inform students that they will be singing lots of songs in Spanish. Tell them that they won’t know the words at first, but that very soon they will be singing them with you.

Another challenge of starting with a new group is that many of the students may be reluctant to participate at all during the first classes. They may be curious about the new language, but also shy or even frightened. This is why it is so important to immediately associate language learning with fun activities. It is also important to remember that all students go through a “silent period” when they are acquiring a new language. This is a period during which they are taking in but not yet speaking the new language. For some students this period is very short, lasting only one class or even half of a class. But for others the silent period can last a month or more. This is normal. During this time, students are still learning, observing, and internalizing the language and the classroom experience until they feel comfortable enough to use the second language. It is important that students do not feel pressure to speak or sing during this period. Language will naturally emerge when students have absorbed enough of it to comfortably reproduce it.

How to Integrate New Students

Integrating new students into an existing class is easy and beneficial to both the new student and the students already in the class. Young children learn primarily through imitation (what’s more, they enjoy imitating their peers). You can prepare the class for the arrival of the new student by telling them that they can help by singing and speaking in their best Spanish. They will be motivated to share the Spanish they know and will simultaneously be strengthening their Spanish skills. The new student will be motivated to learn what the others know and will do so simply by observing and imitating. When previous vocabulary is reviewed in each class, the new student will easily develop a base vocabulary and comprehension. We have found that new students generally assimilate quickly.

The Sonrisas Report

The Sonrisas Report is a useful tool that you can use to inform the parents about what their kids are learning in Spanish class and to provide them with a guide for at-home reinforcement. Each lesson has a corresponding report that includes the theme, a song list, book titles, and a vocabulary list. Reports can be sent home with each student after each two-day lesson sequence. Note that the vocabulary list may include words that you may not have covered directly in the lesson, but that do appear in the story or songs. Don't worry about teaching every word on the list; in fact, in our experience this very rarely happens. The list is intended to give parents an overall view of the vocabulary associated with a particular lesson.

The Assessment

In Appendix II you will find an assessment form. The form was designed as a tool for both teachers and parents to follow student progress. We strongly feel that grading the children in Spanish is counter-productive and unnecessary. At the same time, parents want some way of measuring what their children are learning. The form that we created is designed to help both teacher and parents focus on what the child has learned. If a teacher notices that the child performs the task listed, he or she simply notes this with a check mark. This form of assessment is commonly called authentic assessment.

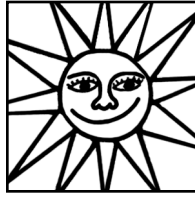
The assessments can be filled out and sent home to the parents as frequently as the teacher feels comfortable doing so. Most teachers choose to send them home monthly or twice per semester, depending on the work load of the teacher.

What Is the Role of the Parents?

Parent interest and involvement in Spanish class can greatly enhance student' language acquisition. It is important, however, that the parents understand and respect the silent period. If a child is not ready to talk about his Spanish class in Spanish, forcing the issue may cause anxiety. It is also important that parents understand that the child's language experience is contextual; hence, they should avoid translation. For example, if a parent says to her child "How do you say 'red' in Spanish?," her child may not know how to respond. If, on the other hand, the parent points to her child's sweater and asks, "¿De qué color es?," the child may not hesitate to say "rojo," or even "red," indicating that she understands the Spanish question.

There are several ways that parents can participate: by using the report to review vocabulary at home, by reading the same books at home, by listening to the Sonrisas CD at home, and by asking questions about the art projects. The latter does not require that the parent know any Spanish at all. Because the art project that students take home each week is directly related to the theme and vocabulary of the lessons, parents can ask their children to tell them what they have made in Spanish, ask them to describe it in Spanish, or point to different parts and ask them what they are in Spanish. Encourage parents to purchase the Sonrisas CD, which they can listen to with their child at home or in the car. The songs on the CD are the same songs the students will be singing in class, and they will enjoy showing their parents how they can sing along in Spanish. If students see that their parents are interested in what they are doing in Spanish class, then they will inevitably want to do well and value the experience all the more.

In Appendix V you will find a sample letter that you can use to introduce your students' parents to the Sonrisas Spanish School curriculum. This letter not only tells them what to expect from their child's Spanish classes, but it also gives some suggestions for parent participation. We encourage you to send this letter, or write your own, to the parents of each new student.



Reading and Using the Sonrisas Lesson Plans

The following section contains lesson plans for at least one entire school year. The lessons are divided into three groups: thematic, literary, and holiday lessons.

Lessons 1–18 are thematic lessons. This means that the songs, games, stories, and art projects all focus on teaching one idea, such as body parts or shapes, for example. Each activity of the lesson provides a different approach to learning the thematic material. We recommend that you teach the thematic lessons in order as they build on one another. However, you may choose to repeat a thematic lesson at any time you feel that reviewing a particular concept is necessary.

Lessons 19–26 are what we call literary lessons. This means that the vocabulary and concepts emphasized in the activities of the lesson come directly from a story. The value of these lessons is that through literature, students can acquire a very rich and varied vocabulary. Further, the stories provide a natural review for many of the preceding thematic lessons. We recommend that you teach the literary lessons throughout the school year, doing approximately one every month. You do not have to wait until you have completed the thematic lessons to teach the literary lessons.

Lessons 27–33 are considered holiday lessons. Although these lessons are all located at the end of the curriculum sequence, they are meant to be inserted during the week of each particular holiday. Holidays provide ideal lessons. Because children are already focused on and experiencing the holiday excitement outside of Spanish class, the concepts and vocabulary surrounding the holiday easily come alive. In choosing which holidays to include in our lesson plans, we have selected the most commonly celebrated, as well as some Mexican holidays. If you have parents who are uncomfortable with the celebration of Christian holidays, we recommend skipping them or adapting them. For example, la Navidad can be expanded to include Hanukkah, or a teacher can turn it into a cultural lesson by teaching students about the Spanish holiday Three Kings Day. It is also possible to focus your lesson as a “winter celebration.”

How to Use the Lessons

Each lesson consists of three sections: the lesson plan page, the art project page or pages, and the home report page. These three sections combine to form a comprehensive guide for teaching each lesson.

The Lesson Plan Page

The lesson plan page contains an overview of the entire lesson. Under the title of the lesson, you will find a brief statement summarizing that lesson.

The first box contains a list of the vocabulary that students will be exposed to in that lesson. Obviously you will use more words than those listed, but the list is to help you focus on a few words or phrases associated with the lesson. Don't feel that it is necessary that each student leave your classroom knowing every word on the list. Remember that the goal is to expose your students to the vocabulary in a meaningful context.

The second box contains the activities to be carried out during circle time. The left side of the box shows a list of songs and poems to be performed during circle time. The list is arranged with new songs following the songs that have already been covered. Each song is accompanied by its track number on the CD. Lyrics to the songs and any accompanying dance or movement directions can be found in Appendix I and in the CD cover booklet. It is very important to familiarize yourself with the songs and dances before you teach them. Although the CD may be used in the classroom, we encourage you to memorize the songs and teach them using your own voice. As we discussed in the chapter on multiple intelligences, young children respond more quickly and enthusiastically to interpersonal communication than to a CD. Even if singing is not one of your strengths, we encourage you to try it. The children will appreciate your efforts. It is also very important to incorporate gestures and movements when teaching each song. Bringing the songs into their bodies will help the children enjoy and remember the songs much more quickly.

On the right side of the box you will find games or activities recommended to accompany the lesson. Read these over carefully before you teach a lesson. Familiarize yourself with the new games before you teach them. Often the activities require gathering household items to bring in for teaching a new concept. Make sure that these have been gathered and prepared ahead of time.

At the bottom of the box you will find a review suggestion. Often the review is a form of incorporating new material into previously learned material. Other times it is a game or activity from a previous lesson that warrants review. You may also choose to return to something not listed that you feel your particular class could use reviewing.

The third box contains a list of book suggestions for each lesson. Especially in the thematic lessons, there are often several different books that we have used with success to teach the vocabulary. We have included all of them so that you may choose which book will work best for your class. Also, when you return to a thematic lesson for review, you may want to use a different story and art project to teach the same vocabulary and concepts in a fresh way. The books are all available for sale at major bookstores, but we recommend looking at your public library. This is where we find the majority of our books. Look ahead at the lesson to see which books are available from your public library; if you have difficulty finding a book in this way, this will give you time to order it or find it at a bookstore. If you have a classroom budget for buying literature, there are many obvious advantages to having a permanent copy in your possession.

The fourth box contains a list of possible art projects that complement the lesson. The procedure for each project follows the lesson plan page. Be sure to read through all the art projects to decide which one will work best for your class. Keep in mind that some projects are better suited to particular books, so you may want to match your book with your project. Also, some projects are designed for smaller groups. If you teach large groups of young students, you will want to consider the amount of prep time needed for each project.

The Art Time Pages

After each lesson plan page you will find one or more art time pages. On these pages, the first box contains the materials necessary for the project. Occasionally a project will require a template to be photocopied. These are all located in Appendix III. On page 236 in Appendix IV is a list of commonly used materials. We recommend stocking all of these materials so you can have them on hand throughout the school year. Although the art project materials are generally inexpensive, depending on your budget, you may consider sending home a “wish list” at the beginning of the year so that parents may donate supplies if they would like to.

The second box contains the project procedure. Often, the procedure is broken down into two sessions. Read through the procedure for both days carefully and estimate how long you think it will take your class to complete the project. Then adjust the length of circle time and story time accordingly so that you may have time for all three segments. Make sure that each child’s name is written on her work when it is carried over to a second session.

Be sure to read through the suggestions section at the bottom. This section often contains useful information for planning and carrying out a smooth and successful art project, including suggestions to help adapt a project for a larger group of students.

The Home Report Page

Following the art project pages, the final page of each lesson is a home report page. The home report provides an indispensable link between your students’ home and Spanish class. You should send home a report with each student at the end of every lesson. Below the lesson title you will find a place to date the report and write the student’s name. The first box contains the vocabulary covered in that week’s lesson. Be sure to explain to the parents that the vocabulary list includes words that the children were exposed to in the context of circle time, story time, and art time. Although the words have been internalized, more than likely the children will not be able to translate the words to English for their parents. Emphasize to the parents that quizzing children with the vocabulary by asking them questions like, “How do you say ‘night’ in Spanish?,” is neither developmentally nor educationally appropriate. All Spanish review at home should reflect the style of learning the children experience in Spanish class; that is, a context should be given for using Spanish vocabulary meaningfully. Obviously this is not easy for a non-Spanish-speaking parent, but it can be done through the context of the art project, which will usually be sent home with the report.

The second box of the home report page contains a list of the songs and poems performed during circle time. Many of our parents request a CD and a list of the lyrics to the songs we sing because their children come home singing the songs from Spanish class. As many of the children are young, however, their Spanish is difficult to follow. We encourage any parent that is interested in continuing Spanish at home to purchase a CD and learn the songs along with their child.

The third box on the home report page contains the book suggestions for the lesson. We recommend

highlighting the book or books that you read during that lesson. Parents can then check those books out at the library or purchase them for their children to read again and again. This is most effective if the parent can read Spanish to the child. However, even if the parents don't speak Spanish, the children can enjoy the books through the illustrations and even perhaps their own budding ability to read simple Spanish.

We've left open space at the bottom of the home report to write notes to the parents. This may be a general note written and photocopied on each report, or it may be more personal—perhaps an anecdote involving the child, or an observation you made about his or her learning style.

This report, along with the art project, provides parents with a clear idea of what was covered that week in Spanish class. Recommend to your parents that they start a Spanish folder and box where they keep all of their children's reports and art projects. We have known parents who have done this for their children, and they have told us about frequently going through the box and reviewing the projects with their children, even years after the lessons were taught.