



SPANISH FOR ALL

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Bilingual & Bicultural

Spanish for Native Speakers at *Spanish For All*

By Marc L. Nash

In most American schools with predominantly Spanish-speaking students, the Spanish for native speakers course is called Spanish for heritage learners. Spanish heritage learner is an umbrella term that refers to anyone who grew up listening to or speaking the Spanish language at home and in his or her surrounding community. Some heritage learners consider themselves to be 'native' or fluent in the language and others feel that their proficiency in the language is marginal and can be improved. Even the more proficient speakers of the language tend to have an elementary writing ability.

The primary aim of the courses at Spanish For All is to give heritage learners the skills to gain more control over their bilingualism, allowing them to switch easily from one language to another in any situation. A great deal of attention is paid to correct spelling and developing an expanded vocabulary for the purpose of refining the students' speaking and writing abilities in Spanish. The hope is that heritage learners will learn to express themselves in standard Spanish and drop their 'Spanglish' whenever possible.

The students, all of whom are bilingual and bicultural, are developing a more critical understanding of the social issues surrounding bilingualism. By learning about the broader cultural experience of Hispanics/Latinos in the United States, they are able to reconcile their own personal histories. In addition, these students are also getting a more complete understanding of the richness, diversity and idiosyncrasies of the Spanish-speaking world by studying customs, traditions, and dialects. Geography, history, current events, politics, and literary works as they relate to the students' home countries are important components of our studies at Spanish For All.

By offering Spanish for native speakers, Spanish For All is giving the heritage learner valuable skills for achieving fluency and a range of expression similar to what they possess in English. These skills will greatly benefit these students in the future.