

British Columbia Ministry of Education

Curriculum Branch

Spanish 5-12 Curriculum Review Report

**Prepared by: Elizabeth McAuley
International Languages Coordinator**

Introduction

The Importance of Second Language Learning

In the 21st Century, communication across distances and cultures will be key to global understanding and economic prosperity. British Columbia, a province of cultural, linguistic, and economic diversity, promotes cultural and international economic relations. It is, therefore, important for British Columbia students to have the opportunity to develop strong language skills which will assist them to function more effectively in British Columbia's ethno-culturally diverse environment, in a bilingual Canada, and in the global economy.

Learning a New Language:

- broadens the social and cultural horizons of students
- promotes the continued vitality of all cultures
- enhances mutual understanding and respect by promoting interaction among students from a variety of language communities and backgrounds
- is essential to the intellectual development and socialization of all students
- contributes to personal growth and cultural enrichment
- provides opportunities to link with the past, to one's multicultural heritage, and to community, provincial and global diversity
- serves to prepare British Columbia students for the future of British Columbia

The Goal of Language Learning

Proficiency in another language is not simply a matter of ordering dinner in a restaurant, exchanging a few words with a schoolmate, or E-mailing a student in another country. Rather, students must be able to establish meaningful contact with other people, exchange relevant information and opinions, talk or write about experiences, likes and dislikes, explore and value their similarities and differences, and communicate technical material in a job setting. Proficiency in a foreign language also includes understanding historical context, sensitivity to nuances and values, and an appreciation for dialects.

Second Language Teaching Today

Second or foreign language teaching today combines two approaches. Students learn vocabulary and grammatical structures while practising the skills of interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational communication, known as the communicative approach. Students considered language proficient have absorbed a basic understanding of the structure and form of the new language as they use it in both speaking and writing in a culturally appropriate manner.

Second Language Research

Research has consistently demonstrated the most effective way to ensure that students can both employ and enjoy the target language. The method calls for an early introduction of the language, with a content-rich environment that challenges them to use the language to exchange meaningful information in a wide variety of academic and social contexts. Such a program helps students to develop proficiency by listening, speaking, reading, and writing the target language.

Second Language Curricula in British Columbia

The International Languages Integrated Resource Packages, produced between 1995-1998, were developed with an emphasis on the communicative-experiential approach to language teaching. This approach has as its premise that the aim of language education is communication for a purpose, and that it is easier to learn a language when it can be practised in context. The communicative approach emphasizes authentic interaction among people by concentrating on developing abilities in speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

The British Columbia Language Education Policy

The Language Education Policy is designed to recognize the two official languages of Canada, the growing number of languages spoken by British Columbians, and that all students, particularly those of Aboriginal ancestry should have the opportunity to learn an Aboriginal language whenever possible and to do so with the support of the Aboriginal community. The policy is based on the understanding that language skills are transferable and thus the study of a second language enhances students' ability in their first language.

Current Thinking on Content Standards in Foreign Language Learning

The content standards outline what students should know and be able to do. In the United States the standards were published in 1996 as *Standards for Foreign Language Learning: preparing for the 21st Century*. This document identified five goals for foreign language learning that have come to be known as the "Five C's. These goals are Communication, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities.

The Goal and Standards

Goal 1 Communication: Communication in Languages other than English

Standard 1.1 Students engage in conversation, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions and exchange opinions.

Standard 1.2 Students understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics.

Standard 1.3 Students present information, concepts and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics

Goal 2 Cultures: Gain Knowledge and Understanding of Other Cultures

Standard 2.1 Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied.

Standard 2.2 Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied.

Goal 3 Connections: Connect with Other Disciplines and Acquire Information

Standard 3.1 Students reinforce and further their knowledge of other disciplines through the foreign language.

Standard 3.2 Students acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the foreign language and its cultures.

Goal 4 Comparisons: Develop Insights into the nature of Language and Culture

Standard 4.1 Students demonstrate an understanding of the language through comparisons of the language studied and their own.

Standard 4.2 Students demonstrate an understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own.

Goal 5 Communities: Participate in Multilingual Communities at Home and around the World

Standard 5.1 Students use the language both within and beyond the school setting.

Standard 5.2 Students show evidence of becoming lifelong learners by using the language for personal enjoyment and enrichment.

Standard 5.3 Students engage in activities which prepare them to use the target language to attain career goals.

McRel Foreign Language Standards

1. Uses the target language to engage in conversations, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions and information
2. Understands and interprets written and spoken language on diverse topics from diverse media
3. Presents information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics
4. Understands traditional ideas and perspectives, institutions, professions, literary and artistic expressions, and other components of the target culture
5. Understands that different languages use different patterns to communicate and applies this knowledge to the target and native languages

B.C. International Languages Curricula

The development and publication of the International Languages 5 to 12 Integrated Resource Packages (IRPs) began in 1995 and were completed in 1998.

Core French 5 to 12 - 1995

Punjabi 5 to 12 - 1995

German 5 to 12 - 1997

Japanese 5 to 12 - 1997

Spanish 5 to 12 - 1997

Mandarin Chinese 5 to 12 - 1998

American Sign Language 5 to 12 - 1998

The Ministry of Education K 12 Provincial Curriculum Cycle requires the regular review of provincial curriculum to ensure currency and relevancy. The Spanish curriculum is currently in phases 1 and 2 of the Curriculum Cycle. The focus of these two phases is the review of the Spanish 5 to 12 IRP for the purpose of determining what action, if any, should be taken in terms of IRP revision. Phase 3 involves producing the revised curriculum, leading to the last phase of implementing the revised IRP. The four phases are defined below.

Curriculum Cycle

Phase 1: Input, Research, Review, and Planning

- Maintenance of a database of comments and input from several sources
- Coordination of provincial assessment activities with the curriculum cycle for the subject area
- Collection of assessment results where available

Phase 2: Work Plan Development and Consultation

- Use of standard questionnaire instrument to seek input on several aspects of the IRP and its implementation

- Preparation of a report on the status of the IRP/curriculum, including requests for decision where changes, development work, or revisions are proposed
- Provision of collected input to Overview Team and other partners for responses and recommendations

Phase 3: Curriculum Development or Revisions

- Work plan completion
- Production phase completion (print and electronic versions)
- Implementation plan development in conjunction with Field Services and other partners where appropriate

Phase 4: Implementation

- Curriculum has Minister's Order
- Implementation plan executed by School Districts in conjunction with Field Services and other partners where appropriate

Summary of Spanish 5 to 12 Teacher Questionnaire for Curriculum Review

The Spanish 5 to 12 Curriculum Review questionnaire was carried out as part of the Curriculum Cycle for the Integrated Resource Package (IRP) review. Educators in British Columbia who teach Spanish were invited to answer a Spanish curriculum review questionnaire. This questionnaire was used to determine what is happening with Spanish in B.C. schools as well as to gain feedback on the IRP structure.

Questionnaire Distribution

- Mailed to every school in the province to the attention of the Languages department Head or the Languages Contact Teacher with an introductory letter and a copy of the questionnaire to be photocopied
- Mailed to every School District superintendent with an introductory letter
- Posted on the "What's New" page of the Curriculum Branch Website
- Distributed to the BC Languages Coordinators Association and to the BC Association of Teachers of Modern Languages

Questionnaires

The questionnaire had a first page common to all subject questionnaires that included 9 questions relating to teacher demographics and general IRP questions. The subject-specific section contained 14 questions. The questionnaire objectives were to determine:

- The usefulness of the different components of the IRPs
- The preferred IRP versions (print, CD-ROM or Web)
- The appropriateness of the Prescribed Learning Outcomes (PLOs)
- The principal learning resources used by educators
- The factors that determine the content of Spanish teaching

- The use of information and communication technology in Spanish teaching
- The barriers that hinder the implementation of the school Spanish program

The information from the questionnaires was entered into a comprehensive database and then analysed to identify any patterns and trends. Similarities and differences among the answers were identified and a synthesis of common responses provided.

Analysis of Questionnaire Respondents

Demographics of Returned Questionnaires

Respondents were asked to indicate:

- Their current teaching assignment
- How many years they have been teaching
- Their school district
- The type of school in which they teach
- The size of the school

Number of Respondents: 38

Teaching Experience

The number of years of teaching experience ranged from one year to 30 years, with a mean of 9.96 years.

Type of School

There were respondents from 29 public schools, 7 independent schools, and 1 Francophone school

Size of School

Respondents were asked to indicate the size of school in which they worked. The majority teaches in large schools with more than 500 students. (31/ 38 responses)

Analysis of General IRP Questions

IRP Version Preference

Respondents were asked to indicate the IRP versions (print, CD-ROM, and Web (HTML)) that they have used and the version of the IRP that they prefer to use. There was overwhelming response for the print version.

Version used

Print – 33

CD-ROM – 2

Web – 5

Version preferred

Print – 34

CD-ROM – 1

Web - 4

Rating of IRP Components

Respondents were asked to rate the different components of the IRP. The following percentages show which sections are deemed to be either **very useful** or **useful**:

Introduction, including philosophy, rationale, content overview - 64.86%

Main Body of the Spanish Integrated Resource Package – 81.57%

Appendix A – Prescribed Learning Outcomes – 65.79%

Appendix B – Learning Resources and Grade Collections – 50%

Appendix C – Cross-Curricular Interests – 30.55%

Appendix D – Assessment and Evaluation – 70.27%

Results of how Respondents Rated the Following Elements of the IRPs

The following percentages are based on the ratings **excellent**, **very good**, and **good**.

Organization of Content – 100%

Readability – 97.37%

Ease of Use – 89.19%

Currency of Information – 83.78%

Design, Including 4 Column Format – 100%

Subject-Specific Responses

Prescribed Learning Outcomes

Wording of the Prescribed Learning Outcomes

Respondents were asked to select the statement which best described their opinion about the wording of the Spanish prescribed learning outcomes. 55.88% of the respondents feel that changes to the wording are required.

The wording of the current PLOs is appropriate as is – 44.12%

The wording of the current PLOs is vague and requires more specificity – 41.18%

The wording of the current PLOs is too detailed and requires less specificity – 2.9%

The wording of the current PLOs requires significant revision – 11.76%

Number of Prescribed Learning Outcomes

Respondents were asked to select the statement which best described their opinion about the number of Spanish prescribed learning outcomes.

The number of PLOs in the IRP is appropriate to cover the content – 66.67%

The number of PLOs in the IRP is excessive – 18.18%

The number of PLOs in the IRP is insufficient to cover the content – 15.15%

Use of PLOs for Lesson Planning

Respondents were asked to select the statement which best described their use of the Spanish prescribed learning outcomes in lesson planning

Always use PLOs to guide lesson planning – 0%

Mostly use PLOs to guide lesson planning – 45.71%

Somewhat use PLOs to guide lesson planning – 54.29%

Not at all use PLOs to guide lesson planning – 0%

Grade Appropriateness of Prescribed Learning Outcomes

Respondents were asked to select the statement which best described their opinion of the grade appropriateness of the Spanish prescribed learning outcomes

Strongly agree that the PLOs are grade appropriate – 20.59%

Agree that the PLOs are grade appropriate – 61.77%

Disagree that the PLOs are grade appropriate – 14.71%

Strongly disagree that the PLOs are grade appropriate – 2.94%

Topics of Study

Respondents were asked whether topics should be changed, added, or deleted.

No – 69.23%

Yes – 30.77%

No comments or suggestions were made to this question.

Grade Collections Knowledge and Resources

Respondents were asked if they were familiar with the Spanish Grade Collections.

Yes – 68.57%

No – 31.43%

Respondents were asked whether there were sufficient resources to deliver the curriculum

Yes – 67.74%

No – 32.26%

Common Comments about Resources

- Need for more resources and videos to support study of Spanish-speaking countries
- Resources should be updated every year
- Need for more authentic resources
- Datedness of some of the resource information

Factors that determine teaching content

Respondents were asked to select the factors that determine the content of their teaching.

Topics in the IRP – 71.05%

Topics in the Textbook – 97.37%

Current Events – 50%

Student Interests – 92.12%

Teacher's Interests – 57.89%

Other – 34.21%

General Spanish 5 to 12 Curriculum Organization

Respondents were asked to select the word that best described the appropriateness of the curriculum organizers.

Strongly agree – 20%
Agree – 71.43%
Disagree – 5.71%
Strongly disagree – 2.86%

Common Comments about the Curriculum Organization

- It is not realistic to have grade 5-8 Spanish as almost all schools in the province begin Spanish at the grade 9 level

Usefulness of the Instructional Strategies

Respondents were asked to select the word that best described their opinion of the instructional strategies.

Strongly agree – 11.11%
Agree – 77.78%
Disagree – 5.56%
Strongly disagree – 5.56%

Usefulness of the Assessment Strategies

Respondents were asked to select the word that best described their opinion of the assessment strategies.

Strongly Agree – 17.14%
Agree – 77.14%
Disagree – 5.71%
Strongly disagree – 5.71%

Comment Comments about the Assessment Strategies

- Excellent, clearly stated and well organized
- More rubrics for composition writing

Appendix A Format

Respondents were asked whether they prefer the present format of Appendix A or whether they would find a one page per grade a useful format.

Present Appendix format – 21.62%
One page per grade format – 78.38%

Integration of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) into the Spanish Curriculum

Respondents were asked to indicate and to provide examples of Information and Communications Technology integration.

Conducting Research – 78.95%
Communicating knowledge and understanding – 60.53%
Contributing to projects – 68.42%
Creating products – 52.63%
Designing and planning – 36.84%
Carrying out and investigation – 36.84%
Solving a subject-related project – 21.05%
Other – 7.89%

Common Comments about the Integration of ITC

- Limited or no access to computers
- Lack of time
- Lack of web addresses
- Not always relevant at certain age levels
- Students prefer other tools

Barriers which Hinder Delivery of the Curriculum

Respondents were asked to identify barriers that hinder in the delivery of the curriculum

Lack of background knowledge – 26.32%
Insufficient class time – 28.95%
Insufficient prep time – 44.74%
Lack of textbook/resources – 47.37%
Lack of teacher in-service – 31.58%
Lack of student interest – 31.58%
Lack of subject expertise – 21.05%
Other – 18.42%

Comments on barriers under the category of “Other”

- Lack of administrative support
- Lack of administrative support for funding technology resources
- Too often Spanish is used as a dumping ground for the French disgruntled
- Program not completely developed
- Lack of finances to run Spanish 12
- Begin to teach Spanish too late
- Timetable conflicts
- Emphasis on Math and Sciences courses at the grades 11 and 12 levels
- Lack of funding to buy more learning resources
- Not having a three-month exchange (like German exchange which is now handled privately)

Strengths of Spanish 5 to 12 IRP

Respondents were asked to comment on the strengths of the Spanish 5 to 12 IRP. The following is a synopsis of the most common comments.

- Well organized and designed program
- Good and helpful instructional strategies
- Useful assessment and evaluation strategies
- Easy to read
- Lots of good suggestions and lists of resources
- Integration of the four skills of language learning
- Communicative/ interactive nature of the curriculum
- Open-ended learning outcomes
- The IRP aspires to a philosophy that reflects current trends in language teaching
- Helps guide teachers in planning lessons which incorporate all aspects of language learning as well as exposing students to the cultures of Spanish-speaking countries around the world
- Creative works are experienced in the first year and continue every year

Concerns, questions, or suggestions about the Spanish 5 to 12 IRP

Respondents were asked to note concerns, questions, or suggestions. The following is a synopsis of the most common concerns and suggestions.

- Prescribed learning outcomes need more specificity
- Realistically Spanish begins in Grade 9
- Too much grammar to be covered in Grade 12
- Include visual samples within the ITP to show the final product
- Need for more current resources of all types, including magazines, etc.
- Need for more hands-on activities

- Budget cuts affecting staff ratios
- Senior classes cancelled if below a certain number
- Grade 12 provincial exam does not match the vocabulary and exercises according to the texts
- Lack of Spanish material published in Canada
- Too much content for the time allowed for the course
- Lack of financial resources
- Gap too large between the PLOs for grades 5-11 and what is expected of them for the grade 12 exam
- Consider a list of themes or topics to be covered for each level of “Communicating” and “Acquiring Information”
- Will Spanish 12 continue to be an examinable course. If so, will the exam be adapted to reflect a more communicative approach (oral/aural)
- Consider the same type of changes that have been made to the Core French IRP (e.g., removal of Appendix C). Such changes would make the IRP more user friendly.

Summary and Recommendations

The Ministry of Education requires the regular review of provincial curriculum through the Curriculum Cycle. The 5 to 12 Spanish curriculum has completed Phases 1 and 2 of the cycle. Data collection has included formal and informal input from educators, literature searches, and a Spanish teacher Questionnaire for Curriculum Review distributed to every school in the province.

Spanish Participation Rate

The number of students taking Spanish continues to grow each year and it is likely that this trend will continue. The number of students completing Introductory Spanish 11, Spanish 11, and Spanish 12 in 1999-2000 is as follows:

Introductory Spanish 11 – 2026, a decrease of one student over 1998-1999

Spanish 11 – 3696, an increase of 723 over 1998-1999

Spanish 12 – 1104, an increase of 179 over 1998-1999

Summary of the Spanish 5 to 12 Curriculum Review Questionnaire

The number of responses was 38. The average teaching experience of respondents is 9,96 years, considerable lower than the general B.C. average teaching experience of 16.1 years.

The print version is the overwhelming version of choice of the IRP. Respondents also indicated that they find the IRPs useful, particularly the four-column format, Appendix A, Appendix D, and the Introduction. Educators rated Appendix D as useful provided the content can be updated. Appendix C was considered to be of limited use and this appendix has already been eliminated in the first IRPs to be revised. Respondents gave

high ratings to the organization of the IRP content, readability, ease of use, currency of information, and the four-column design.

Spanish K-12 Prescribed Learning Outcomes

Wording of the Prescribed Learning Outcomes

Responses indicate that more than half of the teachers view the Spanish PLOs as too vague. The wording of the PLOs does not always provide clear direction.

Number of Prescribed Learning Outcomes

Two thirds of the respondents indicated that the number of PLOs was appropriate to cover the content.

Use of the Prescribed Learning Outcomes for Lesson Planning

The majority of respondents reported using the PLOs for lesson planning most or some of the time.

Grade Appropriateness of the Prescribed Learning outcomes

The majority of the respondents are satisfied with the grade level of the PLOs.

Topics of Study Changed, Added, Deleted

The majority of the respondents indicated satisfied with the topics as they are. Those who felt that there should be some alteration did not provide any information.

Learning Resources and Grade Collections

Most respondents indicated that there were sufficient resources to deliver the curriculum, but they were concerned about currency, resource funding, and the need for additional resources to support Spanish-speaking countries and the need for authentic materials.

Factors that Determine the Content of Spanish Teaching

Topics in the text book and student interests were the most important factors in determining content, followed by topics in the IRP.

Spanish 5-12 Curriculum Organizers

Respondents to the questionnaire appeared satisfied with the current curriculum organizers of **Communicating, Acquiring Information, Experiencing Creative Works, and Understanding culture and Society.**

Usefulness of the Instructional Strategies

Just under 90% of the respondents found the instructional strategies useful in their teaching practice. The instructional strategies clarify the PLOs and are a starting point for new ideas and are of particular use to new teachers. There were comments, however, that some of the instructional strategies are not practical due to student ability or time allotments.

Usefulness of the Assessment Strategies

More than 90% of the respondents found the assessment strategies useful. Comments indicated that experienced teachers tend to use their own assessment strategies. Teachers found the various rubrics to be most helpful and would like additional rubric support.

Appendix A Format

Almost 80 % of respondents said that they would prefer a one page per grade format for Appendix A.

Use of Information and Communication Technology in Teaching Spanish

Educators reported that students used ITC most often for conducting research, communicating knowledge and understanding, and contributing to projects. Comments about the integration of ITC centred on limited or no access to computers, lack of time and lack of web addresses.

Barriers that Hinder Delivery of the Curriculum

The top three barriers were determined to be:

1. Lack of textbook/resources
2. Insufficient prep time
3. Lack of teacher in-service
- Lack of student interest

In addition insufficient class time was also seen to be an important factor.

Recommendations

1. That the revision of the Spanish IRP be put on hold until the completion of the revision of the Languages Policy document
2. That the Spanish 5 to 12 IRP be revised to:
 - a) Review the existing prescribed learning outcomes with a view to providing more specificity without compromising the communicative-experiential nature of the curriculum
 - b) Include visual examples of teaching strategies within the revised IRP as has been done with the revised Core French document
 - c) Consider a list of themes or topics to be covered at each level of the Communicating and Acquiring Information organizers
 - d) Seek comprehensive and additional resources to update Spanish Grade Collections
 - e) Consider the same types of changes that have been made to the Core French IRP which would make the IRP more user friendly.
1. That there be increased integration of information and communication technology.
4. That the revision of the Spanish IRP begin in January, once the Languages Education Policy has been approved
5. That an implementation package be provided as support to new teachers as has been done for Core French