A FREE GUIDE FOR PRINCIPALS AND DISTRICT LEADERS

The Principal's Guide to Simplifying Language Education

The decisions to make, the questions to ask, and what a world language program looks like week to week, whether or not you have a Spanish teacher.

INSIDE

- Why start in elementary
- Two paths: with or without a Spanish teacher
- Five decisions to make before you start
- What a week looks like
- Questions to ask any language provider
- A one-page summary to share with your team

Sarah's Spanish School

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START HERE

Who this guide is for

Most schools want to offer a world language. The hard part is staffing it, scheduling it, and making sure it holds up to a curriculum review. This guide walks through the decisions that matter, in the order you'll face them.

It's written for principals, but it's built to be passed along. If you're sharing it with a superintendent, curriculum director, or world language lead, the last page is a one-page summary they can read in two minutes.

THE CASE FOR AN EARLY START

Why start in elementary

The earlier students start, the further they get. Language proficiency builds over years, not semesters, so a student who starts in kindergarten reaches high school with years more practice than one who starts in grade 9.

- Students who start young can enter upper-level courses in high school instead of starting over at Spanish 1.
- Steady instruction from the early grades builds toward the Seal of Biliteracy, which high school graduates can now earn in states across the country.
- Young children pick up pronunciation and listening skills easily, and they're less self-conscious about speaking.
- A weekly language class gives students a regular window into other cultures and communities.

ACTION STEP
Decide what you want students to be able to do by the end of grade 5. That answer shapes every decision that follows.

THE FIRST QUESTION

Do you have a Spanish teacher?

Your answer decides which kind of program fits. Most schools land in one of two places.

If you don't have a Spanish teacher

Our certified teachers teach your classes virtually. You choose live classes, on-demand video lessons, or a hybrid of both. A classroom teacher or aide facilitates in the room and doesn't need to speak Spanish. We handle lesson plans, grading, and support, from elementary through high school, in Spanish, French, or ASL.

If you have Spanish teachers

We give them a complete curriculum so they aren't building one from scratch. It runs from PreK through grade 8: a full elementary sequence, then an exploratory course in grade 6 and Spanish 1A and 1B in grades 7 and 8, so students reach high school ready for the next level. Every grade comes with lesson plans, a scope and sequence, pacing guidance, assessments, and student materials, and it's built to run the same way in every school in a district.

One of the ten largest districts in the U.S. adopted it under a five-year contract after a competitive bid. For IB schools, it's mapped to the PYP and MYP frameworks.

	No Spanish teacher	Spanish teachers on staff
Who teaches	Our certified teachers, virtually	Your teachers
Who's in the room	A classroom teacher or aide (no Spanish needed)	Your Spanish teacher
What you get	Live, on-demand, or hybrid lessons, plus grading and support	Curriculum, pacing, assessments, materials, training, and support
Grades	Elementary through high school	PreK through grade 8
Languages	Spanish, French, ASL	Spanish (ask about French and ASL)
Best for	Schools that can't hire or keep a language teacher	Districts that want the same program in every building

PLANNING

Five decisions to make before you start

Settle these early and the rest of the planning goes quickly.

1. **Which grades, and how often.** Most elementary schools schedule a language once or twice a week, often in the specials rotation or a homeroom block. Middle and high school classes usually meet two to five times a week.
2. **Who will be in the room.** For a virtual program, that's a classroom teacher, aide, or librarian who starts the lesson, manages the room, and keeps students on task. They don't need to speak the language, and they're trained before day one.
3. **Standards and board approval.** Ask any provider for documents showing alignment to your state's world language standards and the ACTFL World-Readiness Standards. If you're adopting a curriculum, build your board's approval timeline into the plan, and have documents ready for any state curriculum review.
4. **How you'll measure progress.** Decide whether language appears on report cards. Many schools grade the upper grades and keep the early grades ungraded. Add regular assessments and a simple check-in with teachers and parents each semester.
5. **Budget and funding.** Compare the full cost of a program with the cost of hiring, including salary, benefits, and time spent recruiting. Schools fund language programs from general funds, parent organizations, and federal Title IV-A dollars for a well-rounded education.

ACTION STEP

Write down your answers to these five before your first call with any provider. It turns a sales conversation into a planning conversation.

SCHEDULING

What a week looks like

There's no single schedule. These are the patterns we see most often in the schools we work with.

Grades	Classes per week	Common format	Grading
PreK-2	1-2	On-demand lessons with a facilitator, or live	Usually ungraded
3-5	1-2	On-demand, live, or hybrid	Optional
6-8	2-5	Often hybrid: one live class plus on-demand lessons	Usually graded
9-12	3-5	Live or hybrid	Graded

One K-8 school we work with runs PreK-5 twice a week with on-demand lessons, and grade 6 as a hybrid with one live class and four on-demand lessons each week. Other schools run Spanish before or after school, or as a club for younger grades and a graded class for older ones.

EVALUATING OPTIONS

Questions to ask any language provider

Use this checklist with every provider you talk to, including us. A good provider will answer each one in writing.

- ☐ Are your teachers certified, and certified in our state?
- ☐ Can we see documents showing alignment to our state standards and the ACTFL World-Readiness Standards?
- ☐ What does our facilitator do each class, and how are they trained?
- ☐ Who grades student work, and can grades go on our report cards?
- ☐ What happens when our schedule changes or a class is interrupted?
- ☐ Can we start with a pilot, or start mid-year?
- ☐ Can we talk to schools like ours that have worked with you for more than a year?
- ☐ What's included in the price: lessons, curriculum, grading, training, and support?

GETTING STARTED

Start small, then grow

You don't have to launch in every grade at once. Many schools start with one grade or one school, see it working in classrooms, and expand the next year.

- **Pilot:** one grade or one school, often in the spring, ahead of a full rollout the next school year.
- **Mid-year starts:** begin in January or any time during the year, with prorated pricing.
- **Onboarding:** we train your facilitators, set up logins and rosters, and check in after your first weeks. Schools can launch in as little as two weeks.

ACTION STEP
Pick the grade or building where a pilot would be easiest to schedule, and start there.

SEE IT FOR YOURSELF

Sample lessons

Open these on your own time, or share them with your team. More samples, the scope and sequence, and committee leave-behinds are at sarahsspanishschool.com/curriculum.

- Kindergarten: La Mariposita Bonita (butterfly life cycle)
- Grade 2: Yo Como (food preferences)
- Grade 4: Continents and Oceans (map work and directions)
- K-5 Curriculum Overview
- Grades 7-8 Scope and Sequence

FROM OUR PARTNERS

What schools say

“We have witnessed a very positive impact from the program with our 3rd-5th graders. We're thrilled that it's been working great!”

Marlene McLellan, Spanish Teacher, East Amwell Township School, NJ

“Our school district offers Spanish in all 25 elementary schools and Sarah's Spanish School makes this possible. The curriculum is the best we have ever had... I recommend them with the highest honor to anyone I get the chance to serve as reference.”

Angela Lauridsen, Kids, Teens and Adults Program Coordinator, Boulder, CO

NEXT STEPS

Let's talk about your school

The fastest way to see what fits is a 15-minute call. We'll ask about your grades, schedule, and staffing, then walk you through the options that make sense for your school or district.

Book a call: sarahsspanishschool.com/lets-talk

Call: (866) 325-4652

Email: sarah@sarahsspanishschool.com

Sharing this with your team? Forward it to your superintendent, curriculum director, or world language lead, or hand them the summary on the next page.

Scan to book

SHARE WITH YOUR TEAM

Sarah's Spanish School at a glance

World language curriculum and virtual instruction for PreK-12 schools and districts.

Two ways to work with us	Our certified teachers teach your classes virtually, or your Spanish teachers use our curriculum.
Formats	Live, on-demand, or hybrid, with a classroom teacher or aide facilitating. No Spanish needed in the room.
Languages	Spanish, French, and ASL
Curriculum	PreK through grade 8, from early elementary through Spanish 1A and 1B, with lesson plans, scope and sequence, pacing, assessments, and student materials
Standards	Aligned to the ACTFL World-Readiness Standards, with alignment documents for your state or district on request
IB schools	Mapped to the PYP and MYP frameworks
Proof	Adopted district-wide by one of the ten largest U.S. districts under a five-year contract
Getting started	Pilot in one grade or one school. Mid-year starts are prorated. Launch in as little as two weeks.
Founded	2016, by Sarah Thiemann, a former Spanish teacher

Book a 15-minute call

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