

Dear Family:

**Welcome to Spanish class at Washington Irving Middle School!** My name is Señorita Barbour. As you can probably guess from my last name, I am not a native speaker of Spanish. I was born in Washington, DC and grew up in Maryland. No one in my family speaks a foreign language, except me. I developed my interest in foreign languages as a child by watching *Sesame Street* and the original *Electric Company* and by becoming friends with the children of recent immigrants from around the world. I studied and learned Spanish and German in high school and college, and I have studied Spanish in Barcelona, Spain and French at West Virginia University and in Les Sables d'Olonne, France. I speak Spanish and French and some German still. Due to my service in the Navy, I have also learned a variety of helpful phrases in several other languages. I know what it is like to be a student of a foreign language and am happy to share my knowledge and experiences with you and your child. If you are a native speaker of Spanish and would like to talk with my classes about your native country and/or your experiences living here in the United States of America arrangements can be made. Please inquire if you are interested.

**Spanish I and Spanish 2 are high school credit classes.** You might consider Spanish to be the most challenging subject your child has ever studied because it combines elements from every other subject. In both classes your child will be learning to read, write, speak and understand both written and oral Spanish. He/She will also be exposed to elements of math, history and culture through art, science, cuisine, film, music, dance, and current events.

**Our classroom** is a dynamic, interactive classroom. It is not lecture driven but participation driven. Students are expected to participate and express themselves in Spanish. They will learn how to ask and respond appropriately in a variety of real life situations in Spanish. Therefore, it is necessary that your child be prepared for class every day. Class time is primarily dedicated to the oral production of the language and instruction.

**Homework.** There will be a **daily homework** assignment. Your child is expected to spend a little bit of time every day studying and preparing for the next class. This daily assignment, to study and review vocabulary and grammar, should take no more than fifteen (15) minutes. We have a saying: ***Fifteen minutes a day and you'll get an A.*** To be prepared for class every day your child should have reviewed both old and new vocabulary and grammar structures, as well as any cultural tidbits. They should also take that time to review and practice the memory activities we do more or less weekly. If there is an additional assignment, that assignment should be a simple completion activity and should have been started in class. Occasionally, there will be an extended homework assignment.

Our **textbook** is Realidades. Your child will not be issued this book but will use it exclusively in class, as most of the activities are for oral production. Our goal is to cover up to nine units from the textbook by the end of the year. Because textbooks are for classroom use only, **all Spanish 1/2 students will receive a three-ring binder which he/she is expected to bring to class and take home every day.** This binder contains vocabulary lists, grammar notes, and a place to record cultural tidbits and track themes and concepts learned. Students are encouraged to keep pertinent worksheets and activities in the binder in a neat and orderly fashion. These materials are great to have for review for quizzes, tests, and semester exams. **The notebook, in other words, functions as your student's study guide.** Your student will also receive a spiral notebook in which he/she is to record notes and complete warm up activities.

Following the taking of the national Spanish exam, **your Spanish 2** student will read a short novel in Spanish. We will be reading a beginning student's version of *El Cantar de Mío Cid*. *El Cantar de Mío Cid (The Song of the Cid)* is one of the oldest surviving examples in Spanish literature. It is a tale of palatial intrigue, romance, and war involving the exploits of historic figures that lived in Spain during the 11<sup>th</sup> century. We will read the book as a class entirely in the classroom. We will also likely watch the American film *El Cid*, starring Charlton Heston and Sofia Loren.

**Family involvement is an essential part of a child's education.** From time to time, your child will bring home activities which will require your participation. For example, your child may bring home a series of questions which require you to express your opinion about historical or current events. Your child may even prepare a basic recipe for a Hispanic food (with ingredients you have in your kitchen already) and have you taste and critique it. You may do a simple art project or watch a few minutes of a film in Spanish together. Please participate in these activities. They are rare and oftentimes occur only at the request of the student.

**You can help your child study even if you do not know a word of Spanish or proper pronunciation.** Let your child teach you what they know and then review the rest together. Also there are additional materials from me that your child may check out and return that will assist you and him/her in this process. If interested, **just ask.**

**A weighted grading system will be used in the Spanish 1 and Spanish 2 classes.**

**Categories and percentages** are as follows:

**15% Participation**—Participation is evaluated daily. **Your child is expected to participate in class.** Participation consists of but is not limited to: one word responses, identifying vocabulary, conjugating verbs, phrasal responses, answering questions, asking questions, volunteering to write answers on the board, offering opinions, participating in cultural experiences like singing and dancing, etc. **For Spanish 1/2 students,** to encourage participation your child will earn participation points (in the form of Popsicle sticks called *palitos*) not just for correct answers but also for actively engaging in class activities. At the end of each class, a tally of *palitos* is taken, and a running tally is kept for the week. A class average is determined and your child's grade is based on their percentage of the average. Example: if the average of the week is 50 *palitos* and your child earns 50 or more, he/she gets full credit 100%, if your child earns 40, he/she gets 80% for the week. The *palitos* are a training device and will be phased out after the first nine weeks. It is designed to encourage your child to participate.

**15% Practice (Homework/classwork)**—Just as a football player must practice throwing and catching the ball and blocking and tackling in order to win in the game, a student in a Spanish class must practice the vocabulary and grammar in order to succeed in and out of the classroom. Therefore, we will spend lots of time in class on a variety of short vocabulary and grammar based activities in order to build the necessary skills needed to speak, write, read, and understand Spanish. Homework assignments in addition to the regular review of vocabulary and grammar can be completed by your child independently at home. The assignments will practice the vocabulary and grammar concepts already presented and practiced in class. These practice activities will normally be started in class and your child should only have to finish them. He/She should use the grammar notes and vocabulary provided to help him/her to complete the assignments. Some assignments will be reviewed in class and others will be collected for a grade. Homework assignments will be posted in the classroom.

Additional assignments include short poems, phrases, riddles, tongue twisters, etc. These assignments are for oral grades and need to be done from memory. For many of these assignments your child will have a week in class and at home to prepare these activities. For larger written assignments such as paragraphs and letters, your child will be given an extended period to complete the assignment. These assignments should be completed **without the aid of translators. Bilingual dictionaries may be consulted, however.**

**All collected assignments must be turned in complete and on time.** Some assignments require a lot of time for correction, especially writing assignments. In order to facilitate quick feedback and allow for rewrites when required it is imperative that these assignment be turned in and completed in a timely manner. I can collect, grade, and return such assignments in two to three days. Immediate feedback is very important when learning Spanish. Please help me help and help yourself by completing your assignments on time.

**Late assignments will not be accepted** unless your child informs me that he/she does not understand the assignment, requests further instruction or explanation and asks for more time. In all such cases, extra time will be given and no penalty assessed. **Always ask.**

**If your child is absent or there are cancellations due to inclement weather,** at a minimum the daily review should be done as well as any activities assigned before the cancellation. Assignments missed due to absence will also be available in class for your child to pick up, complete, and turn in two to three days later upon his/her return. Do not hesitate to contact me via email for these assignments if your child is absent for an extend period of time. I can send many of these assignments as an attachment in an email to be printed. I will also try to make these available electronically via Live Grades and a linked website. This is a personal goal of mine this year.

**15% Comprehension**— As your child increases his/her knowledge of Spanish vocabulary and grammar his/her comprehension of written and spoken Spanish will also increase: words to phrases to sentence and beyond. We will spend time in class reading short passages, listening to conversations and watching video clips. These will be accompanied by class discussion and comprehension activities. Some activities will be immediately reviewed; others will be collected and graded.

**15% Production**— Your child's ability to speak and write Spanish will increase throughout the year. Written activities will progress from single simple sentences to simple paragraphs to simple essays. Speaking activities will also progress

from memorized and recited information (like reciting the Spanish alphabet or counting aloud from 0-20 in Spanish) to practiced conversations to actual conversations on familiar topics.

Skits are a fun way to converse in Spanish. When skits are done in class they are video recorded so that we can review our speaking skills and determine the areas in which we need to improve. If you would like a copy of your child's performances, a DVD can be made at your request. The recordings are deleted at the end of the year.

**10% Culture**— Culture can be defined as the attitudes and behaviors that are characteristic of a particular group of people. We will spend time in class learning about the Spanish-speaking world: people, places, music, dance, cuisine, art, crafts, traditions, celebrations, and much more. Cultural assignments may be based on class discussions, arts and crafts projects, written assignments, or research projects.

**10% Quizzes**— There will be many short quizzes. Quizzes will check your student's progress in the learning of vocabulary, grammar, oral response, recitation, and culture. Some quizzes will be announced in advance, some will not.

**20% Tests**— Our textbook is divided into Units, we will cover approximately five to six units this year. Each Unit is divided into two lessons. There will be one test for each lesson presented. The tests will usually consist of a listening comprehension section, a multiple choice/fill in the blank section covering vocabulary and grammar, a written section for self-expression, and a reading comprehension section. Occasionally, the test will take the form of an oral exam (speaking test). Your child will be informed at least three days in advance of test dates. There should be at least three tests per marking period. In the event of a school cancellation, the test date may be adjusted if necessary (or the first day back to school if the test day was cancelled). In the event of extended cancellations, a review day will take place before the test is given.

**Semester Exam**—School policy will be followed with regard to semester exams.

**Grades/Report Cards**—Because both Spanish 1 and Spanish 2 are high school credit classes, these classes will run on the high school time interval of six week periods. Three weeks into the marking period I will issue your child an interim report and at six weeks I will issue your child a report card. For the first semester, your child will receive three interim reports and two report cards from Livegrades. The final grade and grade for the semester exam will appear on the report card issued at the end of the semester.

**Tutoring**—I am available to tutor any student after school from 3:00-3:30 in room 106 (Spanish classroom) every day. Additional time may be scheduled after school, as needed. If your child wants or needs to come to tutoring, he/she should be prompt. If no one comes by 3:00, tutoring will be automatically cancelled for the day. If I need to cancel a scheduled tutoring session, I will do my best to let you know in advance. Your child should come to tutoring prepared to work and bring his/her notes from class. I have provided your child with a three-ring binder or a folder in which to keep his/her notes and completed assignments. I am also available during the 8<sup>th</sup> grade lunch period (I am happy to have students spend their lunch period with me) and before classes begin. In addition, I can help your child live through the internet if you are willing to obtain a yahoo messenger account. It is free.

**Travel Abroad**—There are opportunities for travel abroad. Currently, there is a trip to Spain, France, and Italy in the works for next June. This is an opportunity of a lifetime for you child. If you are interested, please let me know as soon as possible so that an informational meeting can be scheduled.

**National Spanish Exam**—Every year my students voluntarily take the National Spanish Exam. It is open to all students in Spanish 1 and Spanish 2 for a fee of \$4-6. Students compete nationally against students from around the country in their level (number of years of study and skill level (native or non-native speaker)). Students who achieve a rank of gold, silver, or bronze are eligible for a variety of scholarships. Students who place fourth are recognized nationally for their achievement. So far, Washington Irving Middle School has had eleven nationally ranked students. Just taking the exam or achieving one of the four ranks on this test is noteworthy for college applications.

**Seventh Grade Spanish 1 students**—If your child is a seventh grader taking Spanish 1, your child will have the opportunity of earning two high school credits and completing his/her foreign language requirements for high school graduation.

**National Spanish Honor Society**—As a result of being able to take two consecutive levels of Spanish, I may be able to start a chapter of the National Spanish Honor Society here at WI. If I am able to do so, being a part of this organization

will also open up additional opportunities for travel and scholarships. Acceptance into the Honor Society is based on your child's achievement in Spanish. It is also noteworthy for college applications. Stay tuned for further details.

**La Extravaganza**—La Extravaganza is a variety show that my students perform for the school. All students in my classes participate. It is a grade in class as we take a tremendous amount of class time preparing for it. In this show, students perform songs, dances, skits, play instruments, recite/read poetry, etc. in a variety of different languages, not just Spanish. You are invited to see the show during school hours. All you have to do is check in at the office. We are hoping to perform this show in the evening. If we are able to do so, only those students wishing to perform will perform in that show. We hope to see you there if we are able to make those arrangements

**Projects**—Throughout the year, we do a variety of projects: posters, arts and crafts, scrapbooks, etc. For the most part, I am able to provide my students with the materials necessary to create a nice final project. Large and involved projects are designed to be keepsakes. **Spanish 1 students** do two large projects during the year. At the beginning of the year, they create an illustrated alphabet book in Spanish and at the end of the year create an illustrated autobiography in the form of a scrapbook. Through the years, students have made these projects their own. Many students buy scrapbooks, especially for the final project. Fancy scrapbooks are not required and not having one does not negatively impact the student's final grade. For the scrapbook, however, personal pictures are necessary. All projects are to be completed in nice, presentable manner, as they are meant to be kept for posterity. I know printer ink is expensive; I am happy help with the printing as much as I am able. **Projects for Spanish 2 students have not been yet finalized.** Three potential projects are: Mexican sugar skulls (not edible), homemade maracas and pan flutes, and yarn paintings and worry dolls. There will be other less involved projects throughout the year.

Some projects require the use of a computer. If a computer is not available, alternative arrangements can be made so that your child may complete these computer based projects. If a printer is not available, I will send a flash drive home with your child so the completed project may be transferred to another computer and printed by me. The flash drive must be returned. It is your child's responsibility to notify me of any problems and make arrangements to complete these projects with me well before the due date.

**Extra Credit**—There will be extra credit available on each test and quiz. During one six week marking period each semester students may earn extra credit by attending an evening with me at El Rey Mexican Restaurant. Those attending are required to use as much Spanish as possible while at the restaurant. The owners of the restaurant and the staff enjoy having my students speak Spanish with them. Students also may earn extra credit for taking the National Spanish Exam and meeting set scoring goals. They do not have to achieve a ranking. These will be the only extra credit opportunities.

If you have any questions feel free to contact me. My email is [dbarbour@k12.wv.us](mailto:dbarbour@k12.wv.us). Please include your child's name in the subject bar of the message. Never forget, I am always available and willing to help your child succeed in this class.

Gracias,

Srta. Barbour

**PS: We are going to have a fantastic year and learn a lot.**

**Please read, sign, and return the slip below**

---

*I have read the syllabus for Spanish 1/2 and understand its contents.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Print Student's name*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Student's signature*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Parent's signature*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*