

# Descubre el español con Santillana

## Introduction

*Descubre el español con Santillana* is a K–5 FLES and Spanish Dual Language program designed to promote communicative proficiency and literacy in Spanish. It is a standards-based, research-based program that provides teachers with the tools to differentiate instruction for all learners, develop and expand Spanish language literacy, identify the Essential Questions vital to early Spanish as a second language instruction, and support the literacy of both English speakers learning Spanish and Spanish speakers developing literacy in their own language.

*Descubre el español con Santillana* supports communicative proficiency and literacy in Spanish by: Making language-learning a cultural adventure, Exploring language and culture through explicit presentation and integration of the National Foreign Language Standards (also known as the “Five Cs”: Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities), Focusing on contextualized language experiences that support both communicative proficiency and the development of literacy in Spanish, and Providing instructional support for all students, from beginners to Heritage Speakers, and from struggling to gifted learners.

***This research brief has been organized as a “question and answer” document with the intention of addressing the most commonly asked questions posed by educators about elementary FLES and dual language materials.***

## How is *Descubre el español con Santillana* a research-based program?

*Descubre el español con Santillana* is a comprehensive, research-based program designed to introduce students to Hispanic and Hispanic American culture, to foster a positive

attitude toward language learning, and to provide a solid foundation for basic communication skills with the dual goals of attaining cultural knowledge and communicative competence in the Spanish language. The research-based concepts include the following considerations:

- The teaching of language is the teaching of culture.
- The Five Cs reflect the notion that foreign language instruction should include more than just communicative and grammatical competence.
- Meeting the needs of all students in FLES classrooms is a call for differentiated instruction.
- Curriculum must contain a variety of methodologies, including the principles of Backward Design.

## How is the teaching of language and culture presented in *Descubre el español con Santillana*?

- D. Thanasoulas (2001) suggests that culture and communication are inseparable because “culture not only dictates who talks to whom, about what, and how the communication proceeds, it also helps to determine how people encode messages, the meanings they have for messages, and the conditions and circumstances under which various messages may or may not be sent, noticed, or interpreted.”
- Daily language contains unconscious cultural cues and insights. Language and culture cannot be separated; language is one’s means of social understanding.
- As noted by C. Kramsch (1993), the learning of culture is not an expendable fifth skill, but rather is attached to the teaching of speaking, listening, reading, and writing.
  - Thus, language teachers must progress beyond simply monitoring linguistic production in the classroom and become more aware of the complex and numerous processes of

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intercultural mediation that any foreign language learner undergoes.

**How do the Five Cs, as presented in *Descubre el español con Santillana*, reflect the notion that foreign language instruction should include more than just communicative and grammatical competence?**

- In the past, advocates of the audio-lingual method of language teaching (which was based on the structural linguistics hypothesis of Leonard Bloomfield (1933), as anthologized by Hockett, 1970) noted the importance of culture, not for the study of literature, but for language learning.
- As sociolinguistics theory and research resulted in greater emphasis on the context and situation in which the target language would be used, the role of teaching culture began to flourish.
- The National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project (1996) reflected this notion by advancing the idea that foreign language instruction should include more than just communicative and grammatical competence.
- By conceptualizing language learning in terms of five goal areas: Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities, the National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project therefore promotes linguistic and cultural competence.
- Additionally, the National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project redefined the concept of language learning, moving from focus on the four skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) to a more communicative framework that stresses the three modes of communication: Interpersonal, Interpretive, and Presentational.
- By weaving together the five goal areas and structuring learning within a communicative context, foreign language teachers no longer fall short of

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(ACTFL, 2006)

the mark when it comes to equipping students with the cognitive skills they need in a second-culture environment.

- Culture-specific meanings now become clearer, language learning becomes more significant, and culture is set as the foundation of communication.
- In *Descubre el español con Santillana*, language learning is grounded in multicultural learning and understanding; this allows for the enhancement of

the social processes of language learning. This is especially important for the increasingly heterogeneous student population that enters elementary schools and that may participate in FLES and/or dual language programs. These students arrive with a variety of cultural experiences, understandings, and knowledge.

- With the emphasis now placed on linguistic and cultural competence, students learning Spanish with *Descubre el español con Santillana* therefore have the opportunity to explore the Spanish language and cultures through contextualized contents.

**How is *Descubre el español con Santillana* meeting the needs of all students in FLES classrooms by responding to the need for differentiated instruction?**

- The American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL, 2006) has stated that “All students, regardless of learning styles, achievement levels, race/ethnic origin, socioeconomic status, home language or future academic goals, have opportunities for language study.”
- Since Spanish is the language of choice for many FLES programs, the popularity of teaching Spanish as a world language creates a great demand among parents and administrators. This, in turn, fosters Spanish FLES and dual language classrooms whose student populations reflect the heterogeneous cultural, socioeconomic, and linguistic plurality of U.S. schools.



- Therefore, the Spanish FLES and dual language teacher must search for ways to address the needs of children who come from many different ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds, and who represent a complex spectrum of learning needs and styles that vary from the struggling to the gifted.
- Often, the Spanish FLES or dual language teachers serve these students during a limited instructional time that is not equal to the instructional time dedicated to English instruction. In the case of FLES programs, the teacher is usually a visitor (in a push-in or pull-out model) to the regular classroom. Even in dual language (and two-way bilingual) programs, the portion of instructional time dedicated to Spanish is often less than the instructional time dedicated to English instruction. Even in the best-case-scenario of a "balanced" dual language model, the distribution of real time-on-task instruction delivered is close to 40% in Spanish, where the portion dedicated to English is close to 60 %.
- As the FLES Spanish teacher moves from class to class, seeing hundreds of students each week, the task of meeting the individual needs of every child poses special challenges that are not faced by the regular classroom teacher. Therefore, the FLES Spanish teacher (and to a certain extent, the dual language teacher teaching the Spanish portion of the instructional day) are in need of instructional materials that offer special support and guidance on how to effectively differentiate instruction for all students.

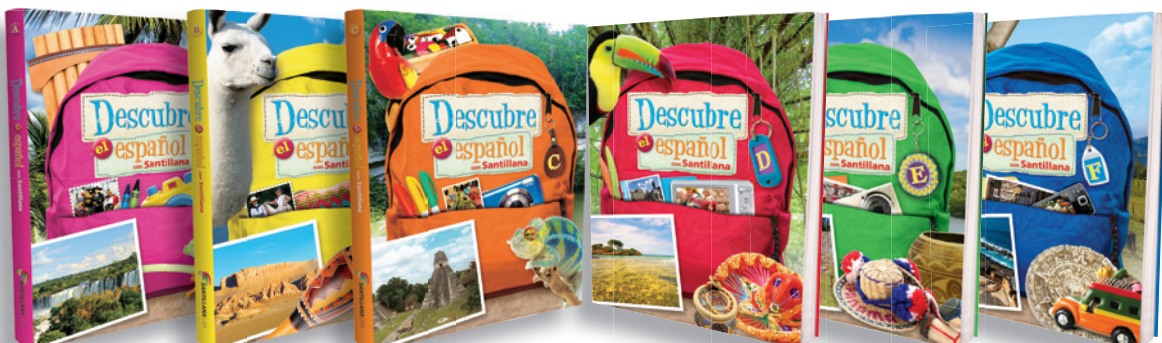
*Descubre el español  
con Santillana  
understands the  
importance of  
differentiating the  
learning environment  
for Spanish FLES  
and dual language  
students.*

- Tomlinson (1999) suggests that, in general, elementary classroom teachers can differentiate at least four instructional elements: content, process, products, and learning environment. She further states that the differentiation of content can be accomplished by choosing "big idea" unit themes and vocabulary that activate prior knowledge in all students. Thus, students can relate what they already know to what they are being taught in the FLES or dual language experience and to what they are being taught in the regular classroom.

- Tomlinson (2001) also suggests that the differentiating process can be further accomplished by utilizing a variety of activities in which students engage to access the content. Whenever possible, these activities should be tiered and/or scaffolded activities, allowing students to work on the same content with different levels of support. These types of activities can help all students in the process of learning the second language.

- Differentiating products, or the ways in which students

demonstrate what they learn, is also important. Because young students, such as those who receive FLES or dual language instruction in elementary settings, often understand more language than they can produce, it is essential to provide them with opportunities to demonstrate what they know and understand by pointing or physically demonstrating their learning, using one-word and yes/no responses, and "acting out" meanings. FLES and dual language teachers can employ oral/aural rubrics assessments that match students' skill levels and the language modality being taught.



*Descubre el español con Santillana* understands the importance of differentiating the learning environment for Spanish FLES and dual language students. Every lesson in the Teacher's Guide provides opportunities for teachers to differentiate instruction by language proficiency level, learning styles, and special needs. Appropriate and contextualized Spanish FLES and dual language instruction in *Descubre el español con Santillana* provides the foundation for communicative competence in learning Spanish as a second language, and for heritage language speakers. Differentiated instruction in every lesson can enable all students to feel successful, and can encourage them to continue studying the language in middle school, high school, and beyond.

#### **How Does *Descubre el español con Santillana* use a variety of methodologies, and what are the elements of Backward Design?**

- In the Backward Design process, a part of Understanding by Design ©, developed by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe (2005), objectives and corresponding assessments are developed first, before lesson plans and the activities are developed. Once the objectives and assessments are set, teachers begin planning instruction with the end

goals in mind. In *Descubre el español con Santillana*, there are specific unit objectives stated at the beginning of each unit, and the informal and formal assessments are included throughout and at the end of each unit. They measure and show evidence of attainment of objectives and progress in the curriculum.

- One of the elements of Backward Design is the "Big Idea." This is what teachers want students to remember and what should endure when students are out of the classroom. In *Descubre el español con Santillana*, the "Big Idea" is the theme that revolves around the concepts and vocabulary that all students should acquire by the end of that unit.
- Another element of Backward Design is the "Essential Question." These open-ended questions help organize and focus learning. In *Descubre el español con Santillana*, there is an "Essential Question" at the beginning of each week of study. This question is revisited by the teacher and answered by students at the end of each week.
- Other proven and successful methodologies included in *Descubre el español con Santillana* are: Total Physical Response, Cooperative Learning, Role-Play, and others.

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