# TEACHING SPANISH AS A WORLD LANGUAGE IN WALDORF SCHOOLS FOR GRADES ONE TO EIGHT

by

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**Abstract**

Waldorf education provides a unique opportunity for students to fully experience their lessons in an integrative, artistic, and purposeful way, and this is certainly true for world language classes. Throughout a typical curriculum, various art forms are utilized along with physical movements and actions, allowing students to live through the lessons in an interesting and enjoyable way. At times, it becomes difficult to separate between songs, poems, skits, gestures, plays, or games, when all of these methods can be interwoven simultaneously. By integrating rhyme, repetition, gestures, music, movement, and visuals, classes become quite lively and interactive. It takes a lot of planning and preparation to teach this way, and Waldorf teachers typically juxtapose songs, poems, skits, plays, games, and activities that reinforce important topics, vocabulary, and themes throughout the year. In addition to memorizing material and delivering enthusiastic, heartfelt, and artistic lessons from memory, the teacher must gather all the various resources for a topic and decide on the best way to present them to the class. This project offers many of those connections for Spanish language lessons in a Waldorf setting, and it can also be altered and adapted for other world languages. Much of the foundational theory is common across different world languages, but it is helpful to find enough authentic and original material in the target language that has not been translated. Specific examples are given for Spanish language classes, as well as many commonly known stories that can be delivered in any language. Goals, activities, topics, skills, and milestones are suggested for each grade. This project provides the world language teacher with a solid outline or template for creating lessons in each grade, with enough material and references to start right away.

## Table of Contents

## Introduction: Teaching Spanish as a World Language in Waldorf Schools for Grades One to Eight

Several key questions guide the research for this project. What are the best practices for world language education in Waldorf schools, and how do Waldorf schools align with the process of second language acquisition? What are some of the ideal daily rhythms for teaching a world language in various grades from one to eight? How can various methods and artforms be interwoven in world language lessons? The primary goal of this project is to offer a digital handbook to world language teachers, especially those who are new to Waldorf education, or for those who wish to expand their repertoire. This project is designed to guide teachers in creating language lessons for each day, throughout the year, and across a wide variety of topics. Specific examples for the Spanish language teacher are included.

The principles and philosophies of Waldorf education are deep, widespread, and profound, and it can be difficult to describe them succinctly. There are many resources outlining and explaining Waldorf education and pedagogical methods, so a brief summary will suffice. Waldorf classes foster a sense of reverence and beauty, creating joyful and memorable experiences for their students. Waldorf education is known for integrating art, music, poetry, movement, and games into most classes, and this is certainly true for world language lessons.

Many Waldorf classroom teachers typically remain with their class for eight years, bringing them from first to eighth grade before the teacher returns to teach a new first grade class, potentially for the next eight years. The world language teacher likewise has many of the same students for eight years, and can utilize all that they have taught them in previous years as material for further expansion and development in later years.

This project demonstrates the changes that occur between the grades, giving reasons for the differences between the grades while pointing out common features and methods that continue throughout the eight years. These lessons integrate singing, speaking, listening, reading, writing, illustrating, moving, and playing through poetry, drama, culture, puppetry, story telling, and music into world language classes. These tools and techniques are backed by research, and they constitute an important aspect of Waldorf education in many grades and subjects. Some parts of this project could be utilized in school and community performances, with each class of students performing a different play, song, or skit.

This project demonstrates how much of Waldorf pedagogy complies with many of the best known practices for world language teaching and learning. Waldorf educational practices began development over one hundred years ago when the first Waldorf school opened in Stuttgart, Germany by Rudolf Steiner. A significant portion of the research in second language acquisition supports many of the methods and techniques practiced by Waldorf world language teachers and schools.

The topics, themes, subjects, and delivery methods for each grade throughout the year are included in the handbook, with reasons to support these choices. This document can be used as a practical guide to help world language teachers in grades one through eight, especially for Spanish language teachers in various types of Waldorf-inspired schools. With this project, educators can develop specific lesson plans for their classes that include all of the necessary activities, themes, and repertoire. This document will cover the practical and theoretical principles underlying the best practices in Waldorf world language classes.

Students will develop a familiarity with the vocabulary and topics over several years, with many themes and routines repeating throughout the different grades. The first three (or two and a half) years are taught without reading and writing, learning exclusively through oral, aural, visual, tactile, and kinesthetic means. When writing and reading are introduced, students are already familiar with much of the content and vocabulary, so spelling and pronunciation can be matched without trying to explain what all the words mean. By middle school, students are able to tackle in-depth and inspiring topics that feel relevant, interesting, and inspiring, and grammar is explored more explicitly. Authentic poetry, songs, texts, and sources are used throughout the grades to promote the natural beauty and style of the language.

## Rationale

Although there are several wonderful books about Waldorf language teaching in Spanish, and many more books and articles about teaching other world languages in Waldorf schools, there are not many resources that include all of the information for Spanish classes in one simple format that is easy for educators to use. The two books by Elena Forrer offer the most extensive and comprehensive examples for the Spanish teacher. Many other books and articles provide wonderful information that language educators can use to deepen their understanding of second language pedagogy, but it requires the reader to make their way through a lot of material in order to extract all of the necessary components. This project offers a concise, user-friendly format for

creating lessons in a world language classroom that a teacher can use as a quick reference or as a way to plan lessons for the week, the quarter, and the year. Educators can use this project to quickly develop an understanding of the necessary lesson components for each grade, with a checklist of all that should be included and how to best present the material. I would encourage readers to delve into the resources referred to in this literature review, as well as many other great books and articles about Waldorf education and various methods for teaching a world language, in order to fully understand the significance and nuances of Waldorf philosophy and second language pedagogy.

It can be difficult to put into words the activities that are created in a Waldorf world language class, but it is possible to experience the phenomenon. When the words flow with rhythm and melody along with gestures and actions that tell a story, something wonderful happens. The students absorb the language in a way that does not feel like they are being taught, but instead they are creating their own learning experience, bringing the language to life through actions, songs, and games. Elena Forrer (2014) suggested that students' share a lived experience with the language lessons. This project is meant to help teachers understand and create this type of learning environment in their classrooms through beautiful and original presentations of authentic material, and by creating the environment for students to have an artistic, interactive, and stimulating experience.

## Literature Review/Theoretical Perspectives

The goal for many teachers is to create classes in which students learn through meaningful and creative processes, but it can be challenging to consistently provide excellent lessons. When students are immersed and engaged in a lesson, they tend to absorb and retain more information. When lessons incorporate various arts and activities, students are often more willing to participate without as much resistance, and with more joy and interest. The integrative nature of Waldorf world language lessons provides students with multiple methods for learning and engaging with the subject, while simultaneously making the lesson more interesting, exciting, and memorable. The different integrated ways that students learn in a Waldorf setting is inspiring and rewarding for students, teachers, and parents alike.

### How Waldorf Principles Align With Best Practices for Second Language Education

Among the sources that were used in this project, references are made to Waldorf foreign language classes in Belgium, Czech Republic, England, Estonia, Germany, Sweden, the United

States of America, as well as other countries. Much of the research done in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries support the methods used in Waldorf foreign language education. Several of the papers draw connections to the Total Physical Response method, developed by Dr. James Asher in the 1960s, that uses many of the same practices as Waldorf foreign language lessons. Comparisons between first language acquisition and learning a second language in an immersive, playful, and natural environment show that Waldorf classes have a way of teaching without directly translating words, sentences, or questions. Instead, the classes offer a rich environment full of activity, discovery, repetition, movement, artistry, music, and play, using the language in context as the means to achieve goals and tasks.

When the class engages in chanting, clapping, and gesturing along with music, a "deep connection" is created within each student (Forrer, 2014, p. 190). Students are able to interact with their peers in conversations and dialogues that seem relevant and meaningful, and are often connected to the subjects in their main lesson classes. Forrer (2014) supported the idea that many classes often include "clapping or stamping" along to the rhythm of verb conjugations counting, or other choral recitations (p. 18).

There are some commonly found elements in Waldorf foreign language pedagogy that most sources agree upon, and this review will offer an overview of those key factors. Many educators follow a schedule of dividing the lesson into several parts that alternate between input and output, or between passive and active learning. All lessons include time for activities and games that children enjoy playing, and the language is a tool that is used throughout the lessons. Students are exposed to authentic poetry, songs, and literature from the first classes all the way into high school.

In Waldorf education, the importance of learning a language goes beyond the ability to communicate effectively, as it exposes children to other points of view and helps them to appreciate different cultures. The Waldorf approach is holistic because it aims to address various qualities in the students, including beauty, curiosity, emotions, imagination, senses, and artistic qualities. Waldorf foreign language lessons strive to achieve a rhythm of input and output, or to balance receptive learning and productive activities. Classes function well when students feel relevant connections to the topics, and the language lessons are often designed to include themes that are taught in their main lesson classes as well. It is the goal of Waldorf language teachers to have their students speak as much as possible, and to engage in dialogue and conversation every

class session. Songs, poetry, games, movement, drama, puppetry, and other activities are used to enhance and support the language, offering a context or situation in which the language becomes useful and interesting.

As to the importance of learning a foreign language, authors like Christoph Jaffe (2023) and Alena Kellerová (2013) mention the enrichment and diversification of the child through exposure and appreciation of another culture. Kellerová (2013) states that "learning foreign languages involves a strong social and multicultural aspect" which is a fundamental aspect of Waldorf world language lessons (p. 31). Jaffke (2023) holds a similar view, writing that "the different languages in our world shape the inner life and viewpoints of the speakers" that can aid us in acting with "tolerance and mutual understanding" ( p. 1). Motivation and a positive atmosphere are some of the key factors at play in creating a learning environment free of stress or anxiety and full of expression, beauty, and appreciation (Ostolaza Fernández, 2014; Sibul, 2018).

The holistic aspect of Waldorf education encompasses a wide range of attributes and skills, including many that are not commonly addressed in other schools. As stated in works by Warinka Ostolaza Fernández (2014) and Maria Sibul (2018), the students are encouraged to engage their artistic, emotional, and social skills, as well as to develop autonomy, curiosity, imagination, motivation, and persistence. Martyn Rawson (2022) claimed that Waldorf pedagogy aims to teach to the children in ways that engage different aspects of their thinking, feeling, and willing. Many teachers strive to cultivate the "spiritual knowledge" and "spiritual development" of students through an "individual inner experience" of "self expression" and "social conscience" (Sibul, 2018, pp. 8-9). Ruhi Tyson (2023) referred to the view of Stolz & Wiehl (2020) that "spirituality, creativity, and development" are integral to Waldorf pedagogy (p. 4). Elena Forrer (2014) suggested that students should be encouraged to create with beauty, imagination, and clarity in their work. According to Randoll & Peters (2015), Waldorf schools strive to foster the "emotional and personal development" of students through artistic activities that incite a "positive development of their personality" (pp. 37-38).

Learning a language is so much more than just memorizing words and grammar, it is learning to understand different ways of seeing the world. Rawson (2022) noted the importance of socialization and civics when learning a foreign language due to the impact of multicultural and multilingual skills that inform the children's awareness. Maria Sibul (2018) argued that by

“encountering a new culture, and thus expanding their horizons,” language teachers are able to “awake children’s emotions or feelings” to the “beauty of the language” (p. 10). It is this beauty and awe of the language that teachers strive to cultivate as early as the first grade.

Including many "artistic elements” that promote “the pupils’ imaginative forces” is a great way to cultivate children’s holistic growth (Kellerová, 2013, p. 70). Tyson (2023) noted the role of imagination in Waldorf schools as researched by van Alphen (2011), Nielsen (2004), and Stehlik (2008), and the role that imagination plays in the classroom. Michael Stott (1995) urged teachers to “include an element of play with limited new material” to achieve a high level of engagement and understanding (p. 14). Warinka Ostolaza Fernández (2014) identified motivation, confidence, and anxiety as three of the main factors that influence students’ successes and challenges in learning a foreign language at school, and noted how creating enjoyable social interactions in the classroom is a way to combat negative feelings toward language learning.

Positive attitudes and genuine motivation are key factors for successful language learning in school (Ostolaza Fernández, 2014). According to Peter Lutzker (2022), Waldorf teachers find success in their classrooms by creating situations that feel meaningful and purposeful, allowing students plenty of opportunities to engage in conversations with their peers. The article by Randoll & Peters (2015) emphasized the importance of helping children develop emotionally as a way to strengthen their intellectual capacity. Fostering positive emotional development is one of the reasons why arts, crafts, games, and music are so integral in many classes in Waldorf schools, especially in language classes.

**Daily Rhythm of Language Lessons**

Many authors agree that there should be a daily rhythm to the foreign language lessons, working with the students’ flow of energy throughout the day and within the session (Forrer, 2014; Forrer et al, 2000; Jaffke, 2023; Kellerová, 2013; Kiersch, 2014; Rawson, 2022; Sibul, 2018; Stott, 1995). This rhythm of the lesson often involves a period of input or actively listening to the teacher followed by some activity or output in which the students participate in conversations or dialogues (Forrer, 2014; Jaffke, 2023; Kellerová, 2013; Sibul, 2018). Many teachers agree that by alternating activities in this way the lessons can “lead to more productive work” (Sibul, 2018, p. 14).

In a foreign language lesson, the class generally starts chorally with a song, poem, verse, or other recitation followed by the teacher leading the students into a few new verses or stanzas of whatever material they are learning, and the whole class recites the verses from memory. Next, the students will usually move around the room while using the language, act out part of their recent verses, or play games where they follow the teacher's commands. Finally, students will engage in speaking or writing activities that practice what they have just learned. The "rhythmic teaching" approach and attention to "movement and rhythmic repetition" works with the students' natural rhythms in order to improve their attention and learning (Forrer, pp. 15-16). Some Waldorf educators refer to this concept as breathing in and out, which can be applied in various ways to a lesson, a day, a week, a season, or the entire year. Rawson (2022) referred to a state of "relaxed alertness" that students have when they balance input and output in this way, leading to higher engagement and productivity (p. 10).

Keeping students motivated and excited about lessons can be difficult, but by addressing the "individual interests of the pupils", we have a better chance of educating them (Kellerová, 2013, p. 37). Creating a purposeful and interesting balance of different activities sets the tone for an effective daily rhythm and encourages student engagement and participation. Teachers can make the teaching and learning processes more inspiring and meaningful when students are "interested in the subject" (Randoll & Peters, 2015, p. 38). Rawson (2022) suggested that an effective lesson "engages the students' interest in real issues" (p. 13). Busuladzic et al. (2010) stated that one way to keep students motivated and engaged is by "taking the songs students are interested in and then singing them together" in the target language (p. 28). We can promote a more productive learning environment for the students when we include "activities that they find enjoyable and motivating" (Sibul, 2018, p. 9). Many of the games and conversational opportunities in Waldorf language classes offer "personally meaningful activities and conversation" with plenty of peer interactions, "awakening genuine interest and engagement" in the activities (Lutzker, 2022, p. 69, 81). It is important to consider using meaningful materials and making connections to real life situations (Forrer, 2014).

**Uniqueness of the Waldorf Approach**

One of the main goals in a Waldorf world language class is to have the students speak as much as possible, engaging in conversations, games, and dialogues. Many sources see that communication and willingness to speak is the primary objective, even if mistakes are being

made (Busuladzic et al., 2010; Kiersch, 2014; Rawson, 2022; Sibul, 2018). We can consider how "utilizando una segunda lengua como herramienta," or *"using the second language as a tool"* [my translation] helps the class achieve higher goals (Ostolaza Fernández, 2014, p. 41). This view looks at using the language as a necessary step to participate in the activities and games, without stressing the language learning itself, or to value "fluidity as superior to accuracy" in order to encourage peer interactions (Busuladzic et al., 2010, p. 36). Busuladzic et al. (2010) stressed that the teacher's role in these situations is often to "steer and keep the discussion alive" (p. 43). Jaffke (2023) underlined the importance of not translating the foreign language, but rather to teach almost exclusively in the target language, accompanying the language with purposeful gestures and actions. He explained how poetry teaches rhyme, rhythm, and intonation patterns, and that it helps children get into the flow of the language (Jaffke, 2023).

One unmistakable quality of Waldorf foreign language lessons is the amount of activities in which the students participate. Jaffke (2023) noted that the title for early grades is often something like "*Rhythms, Rhymes, Games and Songs"* (p. 2). Using speech accompanied with actions and movements helps students remember what they learned because they have a kinesthetic memory attached to the words and phrases (Jaffke, 2023). These movements and actions are quite similar to the methods used in Total Physical Response lessons. If one observes a Waldorf world language class, it is evident that children take part in a multitude of activities, including singing, reciting poetry and verses, playing games, moving around the room, acting out stories or using puppets, role playing, and a variety of other routines (Forrer, 2014; Forrer et al, 2000; Jaffke, 2023; Kellerová, 2013; Kiersch, 2014; Lutzker, 2022; Ostolaza Fernández, 2014; Rawson, 2022; Sibul, 2018; Stott, 1995). There are many examples of classroom activities that apply purposeful and meaningful movements, dramatic representations of stories and poems, and performative activities using the target language (Forrer, 2014; Jaffke, 2023; Kellerová, 2013; Lutzker, 2022; Ostolaza Fernández, 2014; Rawson, 2022; Sibul, 2018).

Jaffke (2023) suggested that children share in "the enjoyment of active participation in a language game" because the activities are enjoyable and engaging (p. 4). Foreign language classrooms can utilize lyrical theater, chamber theater, reader's theater, and other forms of dramatic interpretation to bring to life stories and poetry (Lutzker, 2022). Performative learning practices are proven to be a great way to learn foreign languages, and they also provide wonderful opportunities for performances (Lutzker, 2022). Elements like games, gestures, body

percussion, rhymes, puppetry, and tongue twisters can be connected to language in active and engaging ways (Rawson, 2022).

The immersive nature of these language classes is evident when "activity is always embedded in a social and cultural context through language" (Rawson, 2018, p. 7). Students are essentially taught through "immersion and participation in social practices" in the classroom setting by creating a performative atmosphere of activities using the target language (Rawson, 2018, p. 8). Students are able to "artistically and performatively engage with and embody literature in imaginative ways," thus "bringing a poem or a story to life" in the target language (Lutzker, 2022, p. 77). Forrer (2014) described the importance of integrating a "topic through poems, music, and stories" in order to fully engage the students (p. 239).

Retelling, describing, and acting out stories offers students a chance to use the target language in context, within a given situation where the vocabulary and structure is in a natural setting (Busuladzic et al., 2010). Stories are almost always used to introduce topics and vocabulary, fostering imagination through mental pictures and activities (Forrer, 2014). In many ways, stories are the backbone upon which all other activities and performative exercises are based. Stories offer the students memorable context for vocabulary and dialogue. Waldorf's imaginative and original approach to stories, often with rhyme and music, brings beauty to the subjects (Forrer, 2014).

Forrer (2014) underlined the importance of teaching "students in the context of a situation" in order to achieve the desired results (p. 133). Within the context of a game, students are often following simple commands in the target language led by the teacher, where they are moving their bodies according to the instructions, and similar words and phrases are repeated. Johannes Kiersch (2014) referred to "action chains" when words are combined with actions (p. 85). These descriptions can be compared to the Total Physical Response approach to language learning (Kellerová, 2013; Sibul, 2018). By using "concrete objects such as the parts of the body or things in the classroom," the class creates understandings through personal, physical, interactive, and situational connections (Jaffke, 2023, p. 2).

Classes are typically taught without translating, but instead the language is learned through meaningful experiences and interactions. There are plenty of "non-verbal means" that "offer many clues to the listeners" that children acquire while playing games and participating in tasks (Jaffke, 2023, p. 7). When "words are accompanied by movements," direct translations are

not necessary, as the students develop a sense of the activities through context (Kellerová, 2013, p. 33). Through these "guided interactions," one can notice that "children learn through participation" in a "rich linguistic environment of classroom practices in the target language" (Rawson, 2022, pp. 10-11, 16). Experiences like these help to create meaning for the students through activity and play. These "purposeful movements" are the basis for learning in world language classes, especially in the first three years (Sibul, 2018, p. 40).

**Language Lessons Throughout the Years**

The first three years of foreign language classes at a Waldorf school are typically conducted without any writing or reading, and emphasize the oral, aural, and experiential learning processes to acquaint the students with the sounds and patterns of the living language. All of the lessons are conducted orally, and listening, speaking, and participating are the primary methods of learning (Busuladzic et al., 2010; Forrer, 2014; Forrer et al, 2000; Jaffke, 2023; Kellerová, 2013; Kiersch, 2014; Ostolaza Fernández, 2014; Rawson, 2022; Sibul, 2018; Stott, 1995). The teacher conducts classes almost exclusively in the target language, using songs, poems, stories, commands, puppetry, gestures, and games to engage the students (Ostolaza Fernández, 2014; Sibul, 2018). Children are given ample opportunities to develop "good oral skills and pronunciation, probably as a result of the first three years being dedicated entirely to the recitation of poems, singing songs and other oral work" (Sibul, 2018, p. 6).

Students begin to practice literacy in fourth grade, then undertake formal grammar studies in middle school (Forrer, 2014; Forrer et al., 2000; Jaffke, 2023; Kellerová, 2013; Ostolaza Fernández, 2014; Rawson, 2022; Sibul, 2018). In fourth grade, students write much of the songs, poems, and stories that they were exposed to in the first three years (Forrer, 2014; Forrer et al., 2000; Jaffke, 2023; Stott, 1995). Most of the reading material is what the students are writing themselves, and what the teacher writes on the board. In this way, students become familiar with the writing conventions that correspond to sounds that they already know.

Explicit grammar studies typically do not occur until sixth grade, and continue through high school (Kellerová, 2013; Rawson, 20223; Sibul, 2018). In middle school, "the learning process starts to be more conscious, texts may start to be analysed and finally translated" as the students begin "looking for and formulating a rule" (Kellerová, 2013, p. 37). In middle school, the "rules of sentence structure and tenses are systematically and explicitly introduced" to help the students make meaning and to clarify any confusing elements (Rawson, 2022, pp. 12-13).

The teacher uses guiding questions and preliminary explanations before reading a new passage with the students, as a way to prepare them for the new material without interrupting "the flow of reading the work itself" (Lutzker, 2022, pp. 83-84).

**Materials, Topics, Themes, and Subjects**

Many Waldorf foreign language classes prefer to use authentic texts for their spoken or written material, drawing from beautiful and inspiring works of literature (Forrer, 2014; Jaffke, 2023; Kiersch, 2014; Lutzker, 2022; Rawson, 2022). Many teachers desire that their students are "engaging with authentic literature" as a way of absorbing the beauty and flow of the language (Rawson, 2022, p. 16). Kiersch (2014) advised us to "use high quality language with aesthetic appeal, drawn from the finest poetry" to expose students to prime examples of the language (p. 80). According to Forrer (2014), poetry creates a "living reality" with "mental images," through the sound, tone, rhythm, and intonation of a language (p. 189). Authentic texts are used to demonstrate the language in its artistic and beautiful form, rather than using textbooks or grammar books. Textbooks are rarely used in Waldorf schools as they seem unsupported by the prevailing research about language acquisition (Kellerová, 2013; Lutzker, 2022; Sibul, 2018). Students create their main lesson books throughout the year, adding illustrations and writing samples during each lesson.

As for the specific materials, topics, themes, and subjects that one would teach in a Waldorf foreign language class, there are four books that offer plenty of information. Andando Caminos by Elena Forrer, Foreign Language Teaching in Rudolf Steiner Schools by Michael Stott, Language Teaching in Steiner-Waldorf schools by Johannes Kiersch, and Senderos by Forrer et al. provide plenty of information about the general and the specific guidelines for language classes. The bulk of the literature review is designed to understand and explain the *why* and *how* of the language classes, and the subsequent project encompasses the *what* of the lessons.

**Assessments in Waldorf World Language Classes**

Assessments in Waldorf schools generally consist of constant feedback throughout the year, as well as the reports at the end of the year, semester, and quarter in which the teacher includes comments on the students' attitudes, strengths, challenges, and participation. The ongoing feedback allows teachers to help their students perform at their best (Busuladzic et al., 2010; Dvořáková, 2018; Kellerová, 2013; Lutzker, 2022). The language teacher should offer

"constructive and non-judgmental" corrections and suggestions for their students (Dvořáková, 2018, p. 36). Common mistakes are often addressed to the entire class as a way of helping multiple students at once, clear up misconceptions, and prevent incorrect habits from forming (Busuladzic et al., 2010). Formal grading systems are not often used in many Waldorf schools, with an emphasis on frequent checks for understanding to encourage growth and improvement.

Since grades are often not given in any subjects or classes at most Waldorf schools, the teachers instead create written reports at the end of each semester. These reports document the students' achievements, attitudes, behaviors, participation, strengths, and challenges (Busuladzic et al., 2010; Dvořáková, 2018; Sibul, 2018). Students are not compared to others in their class, but rather to their past performances and assessments (Dvořáková, 2018). One can make a connection to the etymology of the word *assess*, from "the Latin *assidere/adsidere*, which literally means *sit beside*," and to the style of supportive and positive feedback advocated in Waldorf foreign language classes (Dvořáková, 2018, p. 35).

**Statement of Bias**

I have been a parent of Waldorf children for over twelve years, and my wife has been teaching Waldorf in various settings for just as long. I currently teach at a Waldorf-inspired public charter school as a music and Spanish language teacher. I have been interested in foreign language acquisition and Waldorf education for many years, and I have recently become excited about my new career as a Waldorf Spanish teacher. I have witnessed so many great examples of how Waldorf students and alumni seem to have the capacity to infuse any project with artistry, and how they have fond memories of the stories and activities that they experienced in school. My connections to Waldorf education grow deeper every year, and it can be difficult to separate my experiences and feelings from the academic approach that is required to properly analyze and evaluate the research and evidence in this field. Since I have some experience with Waldorf educational principles and practices, it may be somewhat easier for me to understand and incorporate some of the information gathered in this document. I will attempt to create and organize the project such that any Spanish language teacher could utilize the information in a productive way, and that a world language teacher could alter and modify aspects of this project to suit the needs of any world language.

## Methods

This project synthesizes many of the common methods and best practices for teaching a world language in grades one through eight, primarily in Waldorf schools, creating a number of useful documents that can be used in the classroom. The project includes an overview of the material that is typically incorporated into the lessons, along with templates for lesson plans in each of the eight grades that one could use for teaching Spanish (or potentially any world language) in a Waldorf or Waldorf-inspired school. This project offers samples of Spanish lessons for each grade, including an outline of the structure, content, and implementation of the lessons, and the standards that they address. This document can be a valuable resource for any world language teacher who is teaching these grades. The lessons in this document are structured around forty to forty-five minute class times, and Waldorf world language classes typically meet two or three times weekly.

This project includes many of the important and necessary components of world language classes in the Waldorf Spanish language classroom. There is a general consensus on almost all of the major elements of world language lessons as taught in Waldorf schools. In the few spots where there are possible ambiguities or differences between the sources, various possibilities are presented side by side, and the most common path is often highlighted.

Specific examples are given or referred to for Spanish songs, poetry, stories, verses, biographies, tongue twisters, rhymes, and other supplementary material. Two available resources for teaching Spanish are Senderos (Forrer et al., 2000) and Andando Caminos (Forrer, 2014), which include authentic Spanish sources and ways of adapting Waldorf themes to Spanish-speaking cultures. These two books are written by Waldorf teachers with the explicit purpose of providing material and ideas for teaching Spanish in a Waldorf school. These books are indispensable resources for the Waldorf Spanish language teacher.

The final product includes a yearly overview for each grade, including major topics, themes, and methods that work best for each class. Templates for grade-specific lessons assist teachers in planning out the year and creating a daily rhythm in their lessons. Within the lesson outlines there is plenty of information that can be used directly, or that can be altered throughout the year, sticking to a similar format. There are options for substituting, adding, or removing portions to fit the needs of a particular class or language. In addition, supplemental materials are

included that can be used as quick references for the teacher, including songs, games, thematic vocabulary, verses, poems, and more.

## How This Project Will Be Shared

I want this document to be shared with anyone who is interested, as it can help them achieve their own teaching goals and connect them to a wonderful pedagogical approach that serves the children in many ways. Some of the supplementary materials, like song lyrics, can be shared with students and families who wish to continue learning outside of the classroom. Students and parents can use this project, or portions of the project, as a way to expand and reinforce their studies at home. I would eventually like this project to be available online so that people from schools around the world can access this information, possibly adding to it and using elements that they need. This project can be shared with current colleagues and with substitute teachers, as well as with Waldorf communities online and on social media platforms, where Spanish and world language teachers may be interested.

## Challenges and Limitations

I am currently working through my first year of teaching Spanish, and it has been my second year teaching at Boreal Sun Charter School, a Waldorf-inspired school in Fairbanks, Alaska. I had some experience substitute teaching with different ages and classes at Boreal Sun, including Spanish classes. I obtained an emergency teaching certificate to teach seventh grade at Boreal Sun, and completed my student teaching internship year in the sixth grade class at Watershed Charter School, a place-based school in Fairbanks. I have spent this year teaching Spanish and music at Boreal Sun, so my teaching career is still fairly fresh and young. Most of my teaching experience before the past three years has been through music, teaching individual private lessons and group classes for various folk instruments. I have been able to bring singing, guitars, ukuleles, and percussion instruments into the Spanish classrooms quite often this year, although I want to continue building my repertoire of authentic music in the Spanish language and the many cultures connected with Spanish.

Another challenge for me is that I am not a native speaker of Spanish, which is not ideal according to the research in Waldorf foreign language teaching. It is difficult to teach a language effortlessly and with artistry when one is not completely fluent. I often reflect on this, and I am working toward becoming more fluent every day by listening, reading, speaking, and writing. I would be much more well suited to teaching English as a second language because of the native

fluency that I have with English. Teaching English in a Spanish speaking community could be an interesting possibility, as I could continue to utilize both languages, but with a different emphasis.

The methods indicated in this document are much different than the way that I learned Spanish in school. Although I am very much in agreement about the Waldorf method, it is quite a departure from my educational experiences as a student, so I will need to adjust my expectations and the approach to match that of the Waldorf curriculum. I am able, however, to utilize some of the teaching methods that I experienced as a student, including a lot of writing, translating, and analyzing, especially in the middle school classes. Fortunately, my final two years of university Spanish classes were conducted in Spanish, with an emphasis in conversations and writing assignments in Spanish. I earned a minor in Linguistics, which helps me understand the structure of language and some common hurdles to language acquisition. Hopefully these experiences will help me overcome some of the challenges that I encounter.

**Teaching Spanish as a World Language in Waldorf Schools**

**For Grades One to Eight**

Chapter 1: Las lecciones (Lesson Outlines)

1. Grade 1 Lesson Outline World Languages
2. Grade 2 Lesson Outline World Languages
3. Grade 3 Lesson Outline World Languages
4. Grade 4 Lesson Outline World Languages
5. Grade 5 Lesson Outline World Languages
6. Grade 6 Lesson Outline World Languages
7. Grade 7-8 Lesson Outline World Languages

Chapter 2: La rutina (Routine)

1. Canciones (Songs)
2. Diálogos y saludos (Dialogues and Greetings)
3. Fecha (The Date)
4. Frases útiles (Useful Phrases)
5. Juegos (Games)
6. Juegos de mano (Hand Games)
7. Mandatos (Commands)
8. Números (Numbers)
9. Poesía (Poetry)
    a. El molino
    b. Los enanitos
10. Recitación de verbos (Reciting Verbs)
11. Versos (Verses)

Chapter 3: Los temas (Topics)

1. Animales y plantas (Animals and Plants)
2. Clima y naturaleza (Weather and Nature)

3. Colores (Colors)
4. Comida y cocina (Food and Kitchen)
5. Cuerpo (Body)
6. Familia, personas, pronombres (Family, People, and Pronouns)
7. Intereses (Interests)
8. Reloj (Clock)

Chapter 4: El material para actividades (Material for Activities)

1. Preguntas (Questions)
2. Mezclar y combinar (Mix and Match)
3. Países que hablan español (Spanish-Speaking Countries)

# Key to Reading Spanish Lesson Outlines

## 1. Heading (this is a main section of the outline)

- Bullet points include information relevant to this heading.
- Dialogue is often given in italics in Spanish and English, as in *"Gracias por leer este poema." (Thank you for reading this poem.)*

Subject (this subject is related to the topic of the heading)

- Bullet points about this subject include information relevant to this specific grade.
    - Indented clear bullets provide information carried over from previous years.

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**Appendix**

## Standards for Learning and Teaching World Languages

- National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project (NSFLEP)
  - World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages
- National Board for Professional Teaching Standards
  - World Languages Standards