



The ISA Program: **A dual language immersion program model for high performing schools**





Excellence in Educational Leadership in Dual Language Immersion Programs

After almost two decades, the International Spanish Academies (ISA) program has come of age and is a consolidated program, which we can all be proud of. The experimental phase dates back to the beginning of this century, when this initiative was launched in Alberta (Canada), Illinois, Indiana and Florida. Today, years of accrued accounts and experiences allow us to better envision what the now fully perfected program consists of and what characteristics it should have in order to be a model of excellence in dual language programs.

The 2019-2020 academic year will mark a turning point in the success of the program's objectives. As a result of the comprehensive review and analysis carried out, we are pleased to offer our partners, members of the ISA program - schools and school districts, administrators, teachers, students, families, and educational communities- a new Handbook for Admission and Membership, which will serve as a reference for the admission of new schools into the program and for the continuity of those which are already a part of the network.

The handbook provides:

- A more precise and adapted definition of the quality standards of the program - its characteristics, objectives, benefits, requirements and measures of progress.
- A common foundation for all ISA schools, so as to ensure quality.
- A flexible model for schools to progress according to their needs, interests and strengths.
- An improved definition of outcomes and conditions for success.
- An improved and strengthened partnership network for ISA schools.
- A framework for recommendation and management.

The answers to the questions below are a summary of the information found in the full version of [The International Spanish Academy Network: A Handbook for Admission and Membership](#). 

1. What is an ISA?

The International Spanish Academy (ISA) program is an educational outreach initiative of the Ministry of Education of Spain where high performing schools in the United States and Canada implement a Spanish-English dual language immersion curriculum with the support and recognition of the Ministry. The ISA program is a K-12 educational program fostered within a framework of cooperation and partnership initiated by the Education Office of the Embassy of Spain in the United States and

Canada and aimed toward school districts, as well as individual schools which have previously signed an agreement of collaboration with the Ministry.

Along with the curricular specifications required by each state, district, province or school, a content-based instruction curriculum is applied, highlighting the content areas of Spanish Language and Culture and the History of Spain, as well as the History of Spanish-speaking countries.

An ISA program can be offered throughout an entire school, where all its student body can follow dual language immersion curriculum courses, or if preferable, it can be established in only a section of the school. In the same manner, different schools (elementary, middle, or high) can be linked together into an *ISA group*, guaranteeing students the possibility of a continued participation in the dual language immersion program, throughout their K-12 program.

All American and Canadian schools that belong to the ISA program, including their educational communities, administrators and agencies, constitute the *ISA network*, an educational collaborative network sponsored by the Education Office of Spain.

2. What are the objectives?

The main goal of the ISA program is to prepare bilingual, biliterate and multicultural students so that they can achieve proficiency in reading, writing, listening and speaking in Spanish, according to their age and level of education.

ISA schools offer high-quality dual language immersion education with the following features:

- a comprehensive education that will develop skills and abilities through a total immersion in the Spanish language and culture, and also through the use of an instructional model that integrates content, communication, knowledge and culture.
- a high-quality dual language immersion education that will prepare them to be responsible citizens in a globalized world. They will become individuals who value multiculturalism and respect its differences, who can communicate effectively in English and in Spanish, and who can pursue higher education in any of the two languages.

3.-What are the advantages of belonging to the ISA network?

Membership in the ISA network provides schools with a gold standard seal and brings a heightened value to their educational and dual language immersion programs, along with the prestige granted by the official recognition of Spain.

In addition, the Spanish Ministry of Education collaborates with the ISAs by providing them with consultancy and resources, and offers special opportunities and activities to those who excel, such as:

ISA identity

- Corporate identity: plaque, diploma, trademark logo and the flag of Spain.
- Diplomas to students who fulfill the objectives of the ISA program.

Consultancy and resources

- Consultancy on educational, linguistic and cultural issues.
- Curricular models of reference.
- Support in advancing educational and sister school partnership projects with schools in Spain.
- Access to instructional materials, the short film online platform Aula Corto and the digital library *ELEO*.

Professional Development and Language Proficiency

- Professional Development activities.
- Priority access to summer courses for educators offered at universities in Spain.

Student linguistic and cultural competence level.

- Priority hiring of visiting teachers from Spain.
- Targeted cultural activities.

Preferential conditions for DELE Exams

- Significant discounts on the DELE (Spanish as a foreign language certification) exam fees, offered by the Instituto Cervantes.
- Free training courses to become certified DELE examiners.

4. What requirements must a school meet to be an ISA?

For admission to or continuity in the ISA network, all schools must meet and document certain requirements that ensure the expected quality. More information in the appendix below.

5. What happens if a school in the ISA network does not meet any of the requirements?

If an ISA member school fails to meet any of the requirements, it will receive an invitation from the Education Office of Spain to design a *Joint Accompanying Plan* with measures to meet the program goals. In turn, if a school determines that it is no longer interested in continuing as a member, they will receive an invitation to terminate their ISA membership.

6. How can an ISA continue to progress and offer even greater quality?

The ISA program provides two instrumental tools for contributing to the educational progress of its schools: quality standards and *Educational Growth Programs*.

The standards are quality objectives, strategies for monitoring progress that schools commit to explore and follow according to their needs, realities and capacities. They are not, therefore, mandatory requirements for admission to the network, but rather goals that measure and monitor progress, as a commitment to quality.

ISA schools define their progress goals and include them in an Educational Growth Program aligned to quality standards. Towards this endeavor, they have the support and consultancy of the Education Office of Spain that encourages their progress and supports them in all possible educational undertakings.

