



EMBAJADA
DE ESPAÑA

CONSEJERÍA DE EDUCACIÓN
EN ESTADOS UNIDOS
Y CANADÁ

THE INTERNATIONAL SPANISH ACADEMY NETWORK:

A HANDBOOK FOR ADMISSION
AND MEMBERSHIP





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1.- Characteristics

The International Spanish Academy (ISA) program is an educational outreach initiative of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training 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 as a strand within the school. In the same manner, different schools (elementary, middle/intermediate/junior high, 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.

The ISA program aims to be a flexible framework, which allows for adjustments to different educational realities in both the United States and Canada.

2. Objectives

The goal of the ISA program is to offer students a high-quality dual language immersion instruction that will prepare them to be responsible citizens in a globalized world. They will become individuals who value multiculturalism and respect its differences, who are capable of facing a changing world in the digital age, who can communicate effectively in English and in Spanish, and who can pursue higher education in any of the two languages upon the completion of high school.

An *ISA school* focuses on preparing 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.



The ISA program offers students 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.

The ISA schools and when applicable, the school districts, should try to provide students with the opportunity of receiving a dual language immersion education throughout the K-12 program. Elementary, middle/intermediate/junior high and high school ISA schools who are part of the same school district should be interdependent, in order for students to be readily able to transition between each education level (as in a feeder pattern) and consequently, establish an ISA group. They will work together with the ultimate mission of better attaining the established goals of a dual language immersion education.

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, and the prestige granted by the recognition of the Ministry of Education of Spain.

In addition to granting this recognition, the Ministry also collaborates with these schools through the contribution of educational resources and targeted actions specified in the sections below. Along these lines, the Ministry offers specific opportunities and specialized activities to ISA schools who excel in their effort and hard work to continually succeed with the aim of highlighting continued educational growth.

3.1 ISA identity

3.1.1 An International Spanish Academy membership plaque and certificates.

3.1.2 The trademark logo of the Ministry and of the Education Office of Spain to be used on school websites, facilities, and documents.

3.1.3 The flag of Spain, presented to all member ISA schools during the signing ceremony, to be put on display in the school, as a symbol of international cooperation.



3.1.4 Diplomas issued by the Education Office of the Embassy of Spain to students who fulfill the educational requirements of the ISA program.

3.1.5 Registration in the Spanish National Registry of Schools granting access to various resources available only to registered schools.

3.2 Educational consultancy and resources

3.2.1 The organization of routine ISA school leader meetings with representatives from the Education Office of Spain to discuss initiatives and to share experiences or examples of best practices, subsequently reinforcing a sense of community within the network while learning from each other.

3.2.2 Consultancy regarding the opportunity of attending college in Spain and towards the standardizing of diplomas granted by ISA schools to their Spanish educational system equivalents.

3.2.3 Curricular models applied successfully in ISA schools with a consolidated trajectory.

3.2.4 Pinpointing schools in Spain with dual language immersion programs who would like to become sister schools with ISA schools and interested in carrying out school exchange initiatives. These may include both online projects and those that involve travel.

3.2.5 The possibility of participating in the European Union e-Twinning Projects, which foster the exchange of instructional material and/or participation in international student projects with Spanish and European schools.

3.2.6 Access to *Aula Exterior*, an online platform designed by the Ministry of Education of Spain, that holds an archive of online teaching resources and lesson plans in Spanish.

3.2.7 Priority access to the local Spanish Resource Centers which offer reading material and audiovisual aids in Spanish, as well as cultural and professional development activities, sponsored by the Ministry of Education. In addition, ISA schools are granted digital access to the Ministry's *Aula Corto*, an online platform that hosts short films with accompanying lesson plans and *ELEO*, a digital library.

3.2.8 Access to *redELE*, a website dedicated to the teaching of Spanish as a foreign/world language. This website offers educators who teach Spanish specialized instructional information, contributing towards their professional development.



3.3 Educators: Professional Development and Language Proficiency

3.3.1 Professional Development activities organized by the Education Office of the Embassy of Spain.

3.3.2 Online PD activities available through the National Institute of Educational Technologies and Professional Development, provided by the Ministry of Education of Spain.

3.3.3 ISA administrators and teachers will have priority access to summer courses offered at universities in Spain. Other courses, specifically designed for ISA schools at the request of the districts, may also be offered subject to availability of government funding.

3.3.4 Information on on-site courses or activities organized by the Instituto Cervantes in the United States and Canada or by universities in Spain.

3.3.5 Information on online courses designed by the Instituto Cervantes.

3.4 Students: Language and cultural competence levels

3.4.1 Priority hiring of visiting teachers from Spain.

3.4.2 Priority allocation of language assistants from Spain.

3.4.3 Targeted cultural activities for the ISA network schools.

3.5 Preferential conditions for DELE Exams

3.5.1 ISA membership will provide students with significant discounts on the DELE (Spanish as a foreign language certification) exam fees, offered by the Instituto Cervantes, when the ISA schools administer the tests with their own certified examiners.

3.5.2 With this in mind, the Instituto Cervantes will provide training for educators to become certified DELE examiners free of charge and will encourage test taking at the very schools.

4 – Requirements for Admission into the ISA network

For admission to the ISA membership, schools must meet the following *requirements* which guarantee the high quality of the program.

If an ISA member school fails to meet any of these requirements, it will receive an invitation from the Education Office of Spain to design a *joint accompanying plan* with measure 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.

4.1 Project endorsement and support

4.1.1 Schools that are currently members or those who are applying to the program must present a written endorsement from the corresponding educational agency (at the district or state level), in order to guarantee the continuity of the project, regardless of any staff changes that may occur in the future.

4.1.2 This written endorsement must include a commitment to support the fulfillment of the goal of implementing an ISA group within their K-12 program that grants students the opportunity of continuing their dual language immersion instruction throughout their K-12 education.

4.1.3 Member schools and their school districts or those applying must be invested in:

a. The quality of the dual language immersion program that they provide. Towards this goal, an *educational growth program* must be designed in order to monitor progress. In addition, a dual language immersion coordinator must be designated who, among other capacities, will act as a liaison between the school and the Education Office of Spain.

b. Pinpointing different K-12 schools in the area who would be interested in becoming possible candidates for the ISA network. The final goal is for these schools, if admitted, to become a part of an ISA group within the same K-12 system.

c. Collaborating with the other schools in their ISA group, in order to better reach their dual language immersion program goals.

d. The active participation in activities designed and organized by the Education Office of Spain collaborating with them in the attainment of the goals of the ISA program as specified above in section 2. This commitment includes:

1. Allowing and facilitating the Education Office of Spain to support, monitor and provide consultancy towards the quality and best interest of the program through the education advisors, by granting them access to the ISA schools and to the team members accountable to the program.
2. Maintaining routine and effective communication with the Education Office of Spain and providing updated information of any and all changes that may occur to the program structure and management.
3. Disseminating and promoting their ISA network membership across other ISA schools, within their communities, on their websites and social networks, as well as on any other pertinent documents.

These commitments will be specified in the *Document of Collaboration* that will include the nature of the cooperation and will be signed by the Education Office of Spain, the schools and where suitable, the educational agency.

4.2 High performing school standards

Schools must provide documentation to ratify the following aspects:

4.2.1 The public recognition as a high performing school. This can be demonstrated through excellent academic performance, achievements that have strengthened student skills and abilities, or in an exemplary achievement gap narrowing.

4.2.2 Their experience in a previously implemented and consolidated Spanish-English dual language immersion program in which at least one cohort has graduated after having completed the entire program

4.3 Program definition

Schools guarantee the following features:

4.3.1 Learning standards that are designed for students to secure a high quality education and achieve proficiency in both English and Spanish.

4.3.2 The curriculum allows for an active and integrative teaching methodology, which offers students continuous opportunities in speaking and writing.

4.3.3 The ISA curriculum provides a reinforcement of Spanish language teaching, especially in elementary school.

4.3.4 By the end of each educational level, students will have a Spanish language competence in the four skills equivalent to the following levels:

- a. *Elementary*: level A2 in the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), *Intermediate Mid* in ACTFL, or level 4 in the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB).
- b. *Middle School*: level B1 in CEFR, *Intermediate High* in ACTFL, or level 6 in CLB.
- c. *High School*: level B2 in CEFR, *Advanced Mid* in ACTFL, or level 8 in CLB.

4.3.5 By the completion of high school, students have been trained to successfully pursue further studies in either of the two languages.

4.3.6 If the ISA program is only implemented in one strand of the entire school, said school should clearly identify the students who are part of the program, so that they can follow the dual language immersion curriculum each school year.

4.3.7 The school must state in writing the criteria that will allow for the granting of the ISA diploma at the end of each educational level (elementary, middle and high). Every ISA school must make their educational community and the Education Office of Spain aware of the criteria that have been established.



4.4 The Presence of the Spanish Language throughout K-12

Schools that are ISA members must provide, as a minimum, the following percentages of Spanish language instruction at the different educational levels:

4.4.1 *Elementary school*: 50%.

4.4.2 *Middle / intermediate / junior high school*: 35%.

4.4.3 *High school*: 25%.

4.5 Educators

All educators who teach Spanish classes in Spanish must comply with their state or provincial regulations to teach in a dual language immersion program.

4.6 Instructional strategies and cultural and extracurricular activities

4.6.1 A student-centered instructional approach is preferred. This model encourages creativity and the use of technology, and also integrates both of the languages and their respective cultures.

4.6.2 Schools need to promote and foster a cultural and extracurricular activities program that advocates for Spanish and Hispanic cultures.

4.7 Academic performance and learning outcomes.

Member schools commit to administering external standardized assessments on a regular basis that equitably certify the Spanish language competence of their students in both listening and speaking skills.

4.8 School facilities and resources

Member schools must provide facilities, resources, and instructional materials for the teaching of both English and Spanish. Among others, this includes a Spanish library media center with appropriate and ample resources.



5 - Quality Standards

ISA member schools aspire towards excellence and strive in its pursuit. This endeavor is measured by the fulfillment of the requirements outlined in the previous section, but above all by a continued drive towards growth, which is reflected by the before mentioned educational growth programs, and by the quality standards described below.

These quality standards do not constitute mandatory requirements for admission in the network. They are guidelines for the advancement that schools commit to explore and support according to their needs and capabilities and within the time frames agreed upon with the Education Office of Spain. The quality standards therefore represent objectives in advancement, as an indication of the school's commitment to quality and continuity in the network.

The path towards the achievement of these goals offers the ISA schools a flexible framework in which to foster their projects, as well as benchmarks to measure their progress. With the requirements as a basic standard, quality standards provide flexibility to adapt to different educational models. Schools receive support and assistance from the Education Office of Spain to assess their progress and determine possible actions that need to be engaged.

Schools that obtain significant results in reference to the standards of this section will receive an honorable mention.

5.1 Project endorsement and support

5.1.1 Educational agencies provide clear support for the continuation, consolidation, and development of the ISA program. They also promote the essential cooperation needed among the different schools in an ISA group.

5.1.2 Educational agencies take dual language immersion educational experience and training into account when appointing their administrators, and provide them with the appropriate mentoring to ensure a successful transition.

5.1.3 The dual language immersion coordinator has a high level of spoken and written proficiency in Spanish and English and a broad knowledge of Hispanic cultures and content-based instruction.



5.1.4 The school community recognizes and values the school membership in the ISA network and the importance that this membership entails.

5.1.5 Teachers and administrators regularly participate in professional development activities organized by the Education Office of Spain.

5.1.6 Schools participate in other programs and activities offered by the Education Office of Spain. As part of their staff, they have Spanish visiting teachers. The school also welcomes participants in the Language and Culture Assistants Program when they are assigned to them. In addition, they participate in the School of the Year contest and in the discussion forums and activities found on the Aula Exterior online platform.

5.1.7 The school encourages students to test for language proficiency assessments.

5.2 High performing school standards

As part of the effort to recognize and consolidate the standards of a high performing school, the schools and its ISA program:

5.2.1 Are recognized and acknowledged by their communities.

5.2.2 Have a structured plan of action that provides students with equitable and high-quality academic and intercultural experiences, as well as remedial plans that require specific support to help them learn any one of the languages.

5.2.3 Stand out in accredited educational ranking assessments.

5.2.4 Receive awards, distinctions or nominations that recognize their high performing status.

5.3 Program definition

5.3.1 The ISA program runs through an entire K-12 program, thus offering students the possibility of continuing their dual language immersion education uninterrupted, prior to college. Along these lines, an ISA group is to be established within the same K-12 district program.

5.3.2 The ISA program can be offered in K-8/9 or 6/7-12, elementary and middle/junior high or middle/junior high and high school on a temporary basis with an ISA group running throughout the K-12 structure as the ultimate educational goal.

5.3.3 The school takes into account established language proficiency standards for student admission after the first grade.

5.3.4 The school has an established curriculum for the learning of both English and Spanish languages.

5.3.5 The curriculum encourages reading and writing skills in both languages with its fundamental goal being to develop the four skills in both languages.

5.3.6 Regarding Spanish, the curriculum establishes, not only linguistic, but also cultural, geographical, historical, and artistic learning objectives in reference to Spain and Latin America.

5.3.7 The school promotes the use of both languages and in all areas, including their facilities, resources, curriculum, methodology, and the use of technology.

5.4 The Presence of the Spanish Language in a K-12 program

Due to the importance of an early and comprehensive immersion, the following parameters of quality can be taken into account at each level and be adapted to the needs and ability levels of the student.

5.4.1 *Kindergarten and elementary school.*

- a. Students take more than 50% of their school subjects in Spanish. This applies to all the grades at this level.
- b. Spanish is used in more than 50% of class time.

5.4.2 *Middle school / intermediate / junior high school.*

- a. Spanish is used in more than 35% of class time.
- b. Students take three or more content subjects in Spanish.

5.4.3 *High School*

- a. Spanish is used in more than 25% of class time.
- b. Students take two or more content subjects in Spanish in the 9th and 10th grades in the US, or in the 10th grade in Canada. At least one of them is a core subject.
- c. Students take at least one core subject in Spanish in the 11th and 12th grades.



5.5 Educators

5.5.1 All Spanish teachers are proficient in all four skills with a college or master's degree from a Spanish-speaking college/university or have a Spanish proficiency certification in all four skills. This certification must be equivalent to at least level C1 of the CEFR, Advanced high in ACTFL, or level 10 of the CLB.

5.5.2 The rest of the teachers at the school have some knowledge of Spanish and demonstrate an appreciation of Spanish, the Spanish-speaking cultures, and intercultural education.

5.6 Instructional strategies, cultural and extracurricular activities

5.6.1 Instructional models used in ISA classrooms encourage the use of an active methodology that provides students with continuous opportunities for speaking and writing.

5.6.2 The school has a professional development plan that, among others, includes training in Spanish language and Hispanic culture, and training in content-based learning.

5.6.3 The school promotes an extracurricular and cultural activities project plan geared towards the promotion of the Spanish language and Hispanic cultures and the development of intercultural awareness.

5.6.4 These extracurricular and cultural activities in Spanish include activities in which the entire school community participates.

5.6.5 The school participates in a sister school partnership with a school in Spain under an initiative with the Education Office of Spain.

5.6.6 The school participates in exchanges with other schools in the ISA network, and with schools in Spain or other schools in Spanish-speaking countries.

5.6.7 Students take part in a community service program where they apply their knowledge of Spanish

5.6.8 The school organizes cultural trips to and participates in online projects with Spanish-speaking countries.



5.7 Academic performance and learning outcomes.

5.7.1 At least 60% of all students continue studying within the ISA program at the next educational level (elementary, middle and high).

5.7.2 Students in the last grade of each level participate annually in external standardized assessments to measure their level of language proficiency in Spanish.

5.7.3 At least 75% of all elementary students demonstrate a level of Spanish knowledge in the four skills, equivalent to A2 of the CEFR, Intermediate Mid for ACTFL or Level 4 of the CLB standards.

5.7.4 At least 75% of all middle school students demonstrate a level of Spanish knowledge in all four skills, equivalent to B1 of the CEFR, Intermediate High by the ACTFL standards or level 6 of the CLB.

5.7.5 At least 60% of all high school students demonstrate a level of Spanish knowledge in the four skills, equivalent to B2 of the CEFR, Advanced Mid by the ACTFL standards or level 8 of the CLB.

5.7.6 At least 60% of all high school students acquire a grade equal to or greater than 3 on the Advanced Placement (AP) tests.

5.8 School facilities and resources

5.8.1 The school and its facilities, instructional materials and resources display visible and recognizable symbols (for example, the trademark logo) that the Spanish language and Hispanic cultures are a prominent part of its educational program.

5.8.2 The facilities and decoration of the school display an inclusive environment to both languages and manifest Spanish and Latin-American diversity.

5.8.3 The school provides technological means to engage in international projects and with other schools within the network.

5.8.4 The school provides opportunities and access to Spanish and Hispanic cultures through its resources, facilities, and access to digital and online instructional materials.

6. Procedure for Admission to the ISA network

Schools interested in joining the ISA network can access more information [on our website](#). 

For all issues relating to the submission of your application, you may contact your education advisor at the nearest local Education Office of Spain by sending the complete [information request form](#).  Once the request is received, the education advisor will contact the schools to guide them during the process.

6.1 Admission process timeline

6.1.1 Application submission: any time of the year.

The following application materials must be submitted for acceptance:

- Application form

Supporting documents with proof of requirements. [See the Checklist of Documentation and Requirements](#). 

Applications may be submitted at any time of the year. All applications submitted by August 31st will be processed beginning September 1st.

Once the application is received, the Education Office of Spain will acknowledge receipt and begin the review of the documents. If further documents are needed, the school will be contacted.

6.1.2 Admission Decision: March – April

After the completion of the review of the documents and a visit to the applicant school, the Education Office of Spain will come to a decision for admission during the months of March and April. Schools whose applications have been approved will become part of the ISA network at the beginning of the following school year.

6.1.3 The Signing Ceremony: From March on

The signing ceremony of the memorandum of understanding will be held at a place and time to be agreed on, sometime between March and June. At said ceremony, a certificate of admission into the ISA network will be granted to the accepted school.

7. Glossary

This glossary provides the definitions of certain terms used in the *Handbook for Admission and Membership* that give a specific value and meaning to the ISA program.

ISA program

An educational outreach initiative endorsed by the Education Office of the Embassy of Spain in the United States and Canada. The program grants recognition from the Ministry of Education of Spain to specific American and Canadian schools that implement a high-quality dual language immersion program in English and Spanish.

'ISA program' can also refer to an individual school plan implemented at a specific ISA school.

ISA Network

A network made up of American and Canadian schools that are members of the ISA program. The network spans the entire educational community, including administrators and educational agencies.

ISA or ISA School

Each of the schools that are members of the ISA program, considered individually, whatever their educational level may be - elementary, middle, intermediate, junior high or high school.

ISA Group

A group of ISA schools – made up of different educational levels (elementary, middle, intermediate, junior high or high school), and generally in the same school district or State, that provides students with the opportunity of continuing their dual language immersion instruction all throughout their K-12 program. This is accomplished through a feeder program and by the schools' partnership within the ISA program, working together towards attaining the goals of the dual language immersion program. An ideal ISA group offers its students the opportunity of continuity in the ISA program within a K – 12 program or Pre-K-12 program.

Requirements

Benchmarks that must be met and documented by the schools wishing to join the ISA network. Schools must continue to meet these benchmarks to continue in the network.

Joint Accompanying Plan

When an ISA member school does not meet any one of the requirements, a plan of action must be designed by the school with specific measures to meet the ISA program goals. Together with this plan, the Education Office of Spain will design accompanying measures and support the school in the implementation of said actions. The set of both documents - the plan of action and the accompanying measures - comprise the *Joint Accompanying Plan*.

Quality Standards

Quality standards are guidelines for growth and advancement that ISA schools commit to explore and follow according to their needs and capabilities and within the time frames agreed upon with the Education Office of Spain. In short, they exemplify goals in growth and advancement, the commitment to quality and continuity in the network.

Educational Growth Program

This plan is designed by each ISA school to direct its educational progress over a given period of time, according to the guidelines for growth and advancement established by the quality standards. ISA schools will have the support and consultancy of the Education Office of Spain to study their progress and determine priority actions.

