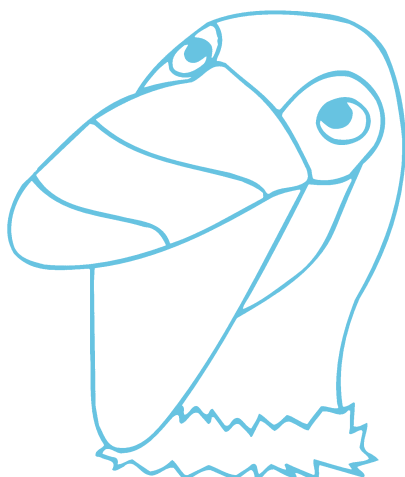


## Kentucky District Committed to Increased Achievement

**D**aviess County is located in the western portion of Kentucky along the southern banks of the Ohio River, about 30 miles southeast of Evansville, Indiana. The major city in the county is Owensboro, the third largest city in the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

While supporting a small industrial base, the bulk of the Daviess County economy is rural and agriculturally based. Daviess County ranks first in Kentucky counties in total crop production. More than 84% of all land area in Daviess County is devoted to agricultural uses, and more than 62% is considered to be prime cropland.

Daviess County Public Schools operates 12 elementary schools, 3 middle schools and 2 high schools, as well as alternative and special education services. The district serves over 10,000



*Children don't hesitate to speak Spanish with Español para ti's friendly puppet characters.*

students in grades PK-12. Ten of the district's schools are school-wide Title I buildings, and 32% of district students qualify for the federally funded free or reduced-price meal program.

### Commitment to Students

In 1997, the Daviess County Public Schools launched a bold and innovative project to enhance student learning and achievement. The name of the program is Graduation 2010 and refers the high school graduation date of the Daviess County Kindergarten class that started in fall 1997. Graduation 2010 maps out a 13-year program of studies for all students in the district, with particular emphasis on entering Kindergartners and children in the primary grades. A team of professors from Western Kentucky University is assessing this project over the next 13 years.

Marilyn Mills, Educational Programming Coordinator for Graduation 2010, explains, "Brain research has proven that all children can excel in the learning process when cognitive development is enhanced at an early age. The purpose of the Graduation 2010 program is to address this issue. We believe that by enhancing the development of the brain, student achievement will soar."

The Graduation 2010 program in Daviess County includes eight components: the arts, music, foreign language, reading and literacy, critical thinking, health and emotional health, parental involvement and community involvement.

Graduation 2010 is an ambitious project. Every student entering the Daviess County Public Schools is learning to play the piano. Every student is learning a foreign language in the primary grades. All primary students will experience dance, theatre and the visual arts taught by professional artists. Community support will be provided for every child to ensure his or her success. Every child will learn critical thinking skills, by means such as teaching children to play chess.

## Implementing Foreign Language

"There is a window of opportunity up to 12 years of age when the brain is receptive to language development," states Mills. "In addition to it being much easier to learn a foreign language at a younger age, new pathways in the brain are also developed when a student learns a foreign language."

"The district chose to emphasize Spanish as the foreign language component of Graduation 2010 because there is a large Spanish-speaking migrant population that arrives in the county on a seasonal basis," explains Mills. "In planning, we believed it was very important for the students to hear conversational Spanish spoken by a native speaker. We couldn't have a teacher speaking Spanish with a Southern drawl, because the children would be learning those accented pronunciations."

Daviess County Public Schools turned to a professor at Brescia University in Owensboro to write an elementary Spanish curriculum and to produce videotaped lessons that could be used by classroom teachers. "The kids were learning faster than we could make videos!" recalls Mills. "Our classroom teachers might not know Spanish, but they do know how to teach. Therefore, they needed materials like work sheets and flash cards to support Spanish instruction in their classrooms."

"At about this time, Dr. Pat Ashley, former principal at Deer Park Elementary, came across

*Español para ti* at a conference. We piloted the program and found it met our needs. In addition, the *Español para ti* videos were so participatory and animated, and the program includes the supporting materials our teachers were looking for. We have now expanded *Español para ti* to all 12 elementary schools in the district."

Due to the much-enhanced curriculum in the district, Daviess County schools use each level of *Español para ti* over two grades. For example, Kindergarten uses the first 30 lessons in Level 1, while the first grade uses the remaining 36 lessons in Level 1. Teachers typically use the videotaped lessons two days a week, and then use the follow-up activities for an additional two or three days per week. "In addition, Spanish has been transitioned into the classroom curriculum with a variety of daily activities, such as the calendar, weather, and morning PA messages," reports Mills. "These activities serve to reinforce what the children are learning on the videotapes."

When *Español para ti* was implemented in the Daviess County Public Schools, all students in grades K-5 began in the first 30 lessons in Level 1 of the program. The next year, students in grades 1-5 moved on to the second half of Level 1, while the new Kindergarten group started at the beginning of Level 1. The implementation continued in this fashion until Levels 1, 2, and 3 of *Español para ti* were used in grades K-5.



Level 5 of *Español para ti* is also used as a component in the middle school Spanish language program, as the children are accustomed to the videotapes. Because students entering middle school now know so much Spanish, the middle school Spanish curriculum has been strengthened.

"Spanish language instruction using *Español para ti* is working in Daviess County Public Schools, and making a difference in student achievement," concludes Mills. "Learning a second language enhances the skills in the native language."

For additional information on SRA/McGraw-Hill's *Español para ti* program, please contact us toll-free at **1-888-SRA-4543** and visit our Web site at **[www.sra4kids.com](http://www.sra4kids.com)**.