

## Garland ISD Committed to Elementary Spanish Instruction

The Garland Independent School District is located northeast of Dallas, and serves the communities of Garland, Sachse, and Rowlett. These formerly agrarian communities are being transformed with new housing developments, and the area is one of the fastest growing in Dallas County. The student population in the Garland ISD is diverse with 30% Hispanic students, 17% African-American students and 7% Asian students.

With an enrollment of over 52,500 students in grades K-12, Garland ISD is the 11th largest school district in the state of Texas. The district operates 42 elementary schools, 13 middle schools, and 8 high schools, as well as alternative and special education services. The Texas Education Agency commended the Garland ISD by naming it as a Recognized District beginning in 1999-2000.

### Beginnings

Year after year, elementary foreign language instruction was the number one request of parents in the Garland ISD on the annual curriculum survey. Interest in foreign language instruction was growing in the district,



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

with foreign language credits added to high school graduation requirements. In addition, the student population in the district was becoming increasingly Hispanic.

In 1994, the district committed to the goal of offering Spanish to all elementary students (now over 25,000.) This represented an ambitious goal, and one that would take several years to accomplish.

During the 1994-1995 school year, Garland began Spanish instruction in the first grade in six elementary schools. The next year, second grade Spanish was added to those schools that had offered first grade Spanish, and additional schools began first grade Spanish. This pattern continued as additional grades, and more schools added the program. In 2001-2002, all 42 elementary schools were offering Spanish to over 13,000

students. (The program will also be in all five grades of a new elementary school in 2002-2003.) All of this is accomplished with just 22 Spanish teachers who each support one to three schools

at five grade levels.

Originally, the curriculum was delivered via cable television, imported from Richardson, a neighboring school district. One facilitator visited classes once a week. Delivery via cable television, however, became

increasingly problematic, with old school buildings not being adequately wired for cable, and difficulties with the dependability of cable delivery.

### Enter *Español para ti*

In fall 1998, the district purchased *Español para ti* videotapes for grades 1 and 2 in twenty-seven schools, grade 3 in 25 schools, grade 4 in 21 schools, and grade 5 in the original 6 schools. *Español para ti* is a video-based program that

"I believe it is very important that students enter a foreign language at the appropriate entry levels. While this leads to a long phase-in process, this strategy will lead to more success."

*Fran Maples, Foreign Languages Coordinator*

corresponds to *¡Viva el Español!* which Texas had adopted for elementary instruction in Spanish as a Second Language. The plan in Garland calls for the regular classroom teacher to use a 15-minute video lesson during four days of the week. These lessons often occur when native Spanish-speakers leave the classroom for ESL instruction. On the fifth day, a visiting Spanish teacher leads 30 minutes of instruction and active participation. All students, both Spanish language-learners and native speakers, experience activities together during the week, providing a positive experience for both groups.

Planning is essential for the implementation and coordination of

### ***Español para ti***

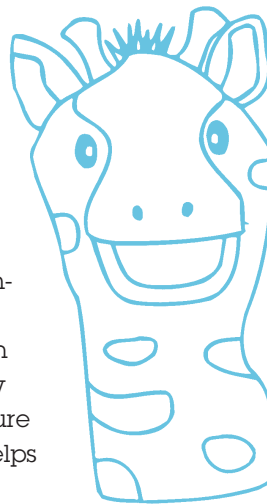
in Garland, explains Fran Maples, the district's Foreign Languages Coordinator. "The Spanish team provides all of the planning and guides implementation for the classroom teacher. All of

our Spanish teachers spend a half-day at our Spanish headquarters coordinating lesson plans and materials, such as handouts, flash cards, and visual aids."

In Garland, every grade-level classroom in every school is on the same schedule in Spanish. "This is helpful with an open-enrollment policy as we have here. When students enter a new school, they are secure in Spanish, which helps with their transition," notes Maples.

### **Children's Reactions**

"The children adore Spanish. They think it's a fun game," comments Maples. And it's more than just a game — student learning of Spanish is growing. Each student takes an end of



Spanish I, the traditional first-year secondary course, with a head start. Because students in Garland have a firm foundation in foreign languages, Garland is realigning the entire foreign language curriculum from grades 1 to 12.

The goal of every elementary student in

the Garland ISD learning Spanish will be complete in the fall of 2005, when all students in all grade levels in all elementary schools will be receiving Spanish lessons, a total of over 25,000 children. The goal will be achieved due to an educational model that allows the classroom teacher to lead Spanish-language instruction confidently, and to the planning and dedication of the Spanish team in Garland ISD.

"Our students are better foreign language learners by the time they enter high school. Therefore, German, French and Latin teachers in the high schools can expect improved learning from the students."

semester exam in Spanish, and the trend shows increasing scores on these exams. "It's amazing how much the children are learning," states Maples. "As a result, our curriculum is becoming more complex."

Spanish instruction

continues through the middle school grades in Garland. Sixth-graders can choose an intensive one-semester Spanish language course. This prepares seventh and eighth graders to begin

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)**.