

Spanish Language and Culture Assistants Program

**Guidelines for Schools and Universities
hosting Spanish Resource Centers
Sponsored by the Ministry of Education and Science
in the United States and Canada**

**2008-2009
School Year**



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1. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Ministry of Education and Science of Spain and the Education and Science Office of the Embassy of Spain in Washington, D.C., sponsor a Spanish Language and Culture Assistants program for elementary, middle, high schools and for universities with Spanish Resource Centers sponsored by the Ministry of Education and Science (hereafter universities with SRC) in the United States and Canada.

This program gives **students** in American/Canadian schools and universities the opportunity to learn Spanish language and culture from native speakers. Similarly, the **Spanish assistants** have the opportunity to learn about American/Canadian culture, improve their command of English and use their knowledge upon their return to Spain, thus helping to develop cultural understanding between both countries.

As a prerequisite for acceptance in the program, the candidates must have completed a Bachelor of Arts degree. Many Spanish assistants have also completed their teacher training.

The assistants' salaries and medical insurance are paid by the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science from **October to June**. Schools/school districts/universities with SRCs should **provide financial assistance to help the Spanish culture and language assistants pay for their accommodation and transportation** or provide **free lodging** for them such as a room in a furnished apartment, dorm, etc. and free **transportation**. If none of these two options are possible, accommodation with a host family might be acceptable and other types of transportation arrangements can be made. **Under no circumstance** will the assistants perform au pair duties.

If a school or university with SRC would like the assistant to **come before October** (provided that the assistant already has his/her visa), the school/university is responsible for providing the assistant with medical insurance coverage and paying him/her until the Ministry's scholarship comes into effect.

Schools/districts/universities with SRC that **can sponsor J-1 visa** (or another type of non-immigrant visa) for the assistants are encouraged to do so. If this is not possible, the Education and Science Office sponsors **Q-1 visas**. More information about J-1 visas at http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1267.html for Q-visas, <http://www.immigration.com/faq/qvisa.html>

The Ministry of Education and Science of Spain will assign each candidate individually to a school or a Spanish Resource Center and will organize an orientation seminar in Madrid prior to the assistants' arrival in the U.S/Canada.

The schools/universities must keep the **Education Advisor in their area informed** of all the arrangements and details concerning the Spanish assistant.

2. THE ROLE OF THE ASSISTANTS

- Assistants may help teachers in **Spanish language and culture** (or other subject-matter) classes as native speakers and experts on their home country in order to stimulate the students' interest in Spain. Their role is **different from** a regular teaching assistant hired by the schools to aid teachers in the classroom and other duties such as making photocopies, contacting parents, etc.
- Assistants may work with **small groups** of students in order to develop speaking, listening, reading, writing skills and cultural understanding. However, assistants should **never** be left alone with the students.
- Assistants may provide brochures, maps, books, newspapers, magazines, illustrations, postage stamps, and other materials to help during lessons. Materials about the assistants' own schools or home town in Spain may be of interest to the students.
- Assistants should **observe classes** conducted by other teachers and learn what will be required of them before they undertake their own duties. Assistants should have **information on teaching** methods used in the school/university, the language proficiency levels, overall characteristics of the students, and the kind of activities and degree of initiative assistants will be expected to carry out when working with teachers and students.
- Assistants **are not allowed to undertake formal class teaching, substitute absent teachers or be responsible for the discipline or supervision of students.**
- There should be **a school/SRC representative or mentor** to guide the assistants. The mentor and assistant should both agree on the activities they will be involved in, including, for example, attending faculty meetings, making presentations in classes and participating in extra-curricular events.

- Assistants are to be considered **members of the staff** and allowed staff-room privileges. The mentor should inform the assistant of the resources that they are entitled to use at school such as photocopiers, telephone, email accounts, the daily procedures the school/university follows, where to obtain information or the materials they may need, etc.
- Assistants should be given every opportunity to learn about and participate fully in the **social life** of the school/university and surrounding community. They should be encouraged to take part in clubs and be invited to go on field trips. However, they will not be responsible for the safety or behavior of students on field trips.
- Assistants in a SRC may be responsible for ordering, cataloging and lending materials, organizing speaking clubs, film festivals, training and courses for teachers, etc.
- The **total Spanish assistant work-time at school/SRC** should be between **16 to 20 hours maximum** per week. Since the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science scholarship only covers 20 hours of work per week, **under no circumstances** will the assistants work more than 20 hours a week at school/SRC unless special arrangements are made directly with the assistant.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SCHOOLS/UNIVERSITIES AND MENTORS

- The schools/districts/universities should **comply with the conditions** expressed in this document and on the online application. They **should inform the Education Advisor** in their area of all the arrangements made concerning the assistants' work, lodging and transportation.
- A **mentor or school representative** should be assigned to work with the assistant and be the liaison between the school/SRC and the Education Advisor of the Spanish Education and Science Office that services their state. Should any of the **conditions expressed on the agreement** signed by the schools/universities change, the Education Advisor must be notified immediately.
- All the **details concerning the assistants' duties at school/SRC, accommodation and transportation arrangements should be specified when the online application is submitted**. Failure to provide this information will mean that no Spanish culture and language assistant will be assigned to the school/university. The transportation and lodging arrangements should be adequate, in consideration to the age and personal profile of the assistant.

- If the school/university is **providing the assistant with a stipend** to help with accommodation and/or transportation expenses, the amount must be entered on the application. They should also help the assistant to find a place to stay.
- The school/university is responsible for picking the assistant up at the airport when they first arrive and the Education Advisor should be notified of all the arrangements made.
- The schools and mentors should plan the work schedule for the assistant, in consultation with the assistants themselves and other people involved in the program.
- Cooperation and communication among teachers, administrators and the assistant should be ensured.
- The mentor should advise and guide the assistant's work, organize orientation and evaluation sessions when necessary and prepare a final report of the assistant's activities.
- Assistants should have the same **holidays and scheduled days off** as students. Special arrangements for the winter break or to take other days off can be negotiated with the assistant.
- Mentors should meet with the assistants to agree upon the days off throughout the year. The assistant's work may be scheduled so that he/she has **Mondays or Fridays off**, thus allowing long weekends for study or travel.
- School/university officials should provide the assistant, upon completion of their assignments and, if warranted, with a **letter of recommendation stating the specific dates s/he has worked at the institution.**

4. ACCOMMODATION ARRANGEMENTS

The school/university must ensure that the **assistants' lodging is adequate**, bearing in mind their age, personal profile and transportation options. The type of accommodation offered will be one of the **determining factors** for assigning an assistant to a school or SRC.

The best option is to provide assistants with a monthly stipend to help them cover the accommodation/transportation expenses. Schools/universities are expected to help assistants find their own housing.

Offering the assistant free accommodation **in a room in a furnished apartment or a dorm** is another option. **The address** where the assistants will stay must be entered at the time the online application is submitted.

As a last resort, providing the assistant with accommodation with a host family may also be acceptable. The assistant should have a bedroom on his/her own and not be expected to do housework beyond what is reasonably expected from a member of the family. **In no case** should the assistant carry out au pair duties. In this case, **the address** where the assistants will stay and a **contact name** of a member of the host family must be entered at the time the application online is submitted.

The mentor should provide the Education Advisor of the Spanish Education and Science Office with as much information as possible about the lodging arrangements **prior to the appointment of an assistant** for their institution.

Assistants living in apartments may arrange to install telephones, cable TV or Internet at their own expense. Since the assistants do not have credit history or may not have a Social Security Number, they may need the help of their mentor to make these arrangements.

School districts may allow assistants to make in-state calls related to work assignments and a 30-minute international call per month to their families, (or equivalent in more than one call). Telephone usage may vary from school to school. Therefore, agreements should be clearly understood by the assistants and the mentor.

5. TRANSPORTATION ARRANGEMENTS

Schools/universities are also responsible for providing the assistant with transportation. This can be done in different ways:

- Providing the use of a car. If this option is chosen, insurance and repair costs should be taken into account.
- Paying a monthly or annual transportation allowance, etc.

All the specifications concerning the transportation provided **must also be stated** when the application online is submitted.

6. STEPS TO TAKE BEFORE THE ASSISTANTS' ARRIVAL IN THE US/CANADA

The more information the school and community have about the Language and Culture Assistants program, the better prepared they will be for the assistant's arrival. It is **recommended** that the school district officials describe the program in the school/school district/university newsletter or Webpage.

Assistants may be traveling to the United States for the first time and, therefore, be concerned about the experience that lies ahead of them. Providing written information prior to their arrival may help ease their worries. **Please send the assistant** as much information as possible. Be sure to include:

- A letter of invitation addressed to the assistant, which they might need to present to the Immigration Authorities at the port of entry into the country.
- Details about the accommodation arrangements made for them. If it is with a family, please let the assistant know that there is a host family expecting him/her and make sure they have previous contact before the assistants' arrival.
- Information on the school/ school district/university with SRC.
- Information on the instructional program where the assistant will work and the tasks the assistant will carry out.
- Information on opportunities for studying or attending courses at universities or other institutions, if any.
- Information on the community and community services, transportation, banking, etc.
- Information on climate and appropriate clothing, etc.

7. SAMPLE ACTIVITIES FOR THE LANGUAGE/CULTURE ASSISTANT IN A SCHOOL

A. LANGUAGE CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES FOR ASSISTANTS

- Tutoring students with individual needs.

- Small group practice.
- Developing materials for lessons.
- Presentations on Spanish culture: songs, newspapers, plays, etc.
- Presenting story-telling sessions and interpreting cultural aspects.
- Participating in computer-assisted activities.

B. EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES FOR ASSISTANTS

- Coordinating Spanish Language Clubs.
- Participating in school clubs (theatre, chorus, etc.)
- Participating in sporting events, art festivals, etc.

Assistants should never:

- Be placed in situations where they are not comfortable (e.g. assigning them to inappropriate classes or class levels).
- Duplicate the same teaching and presentation as the teacher. The **assistants are supplementary resources** to strengthen instructional programs not regular teachers.
- Be used as substitute teachers or be left alone in the classroom.
- Correct all the quizzes and exams or spend entire days making photocopies.
- Work more than 20 hours per week.
- Be assigned to teachers who are unfamiliar with the program and are not prepared to work with them.

The most successful situation occurs when teachers are involved from the beginning, want the services of a Spanish Language and Culture Assistant and help plan their assignments.

8. SAMPLE ACTIVITIES FOR THE LANGUAGE/CULTURE ASSISTANT IN A RESOURCE CENTER

- Ordering, cataloging and lending the resources offered.
- Organizing speaking clubs, film festivals, etc.
- Helping the Education Advisor organize training and courses for teachers.
- Promoting the Education Office programs, etc.

9. APPLICATION/AGREEMENT PROCEDURE

Schools/universities with SRC interested in having **one or more Spanish** culture and language assistants must complete and submit an application on line by **Tuesday April 15th, 2008**. The schools/universities with SRC that have been assigned an assistant will be notified by **May 15th**.

Submit the online application/agreement:

<http://www.bethesdamultimedia.com/consejeria/07auxiliar/ficha.cfm>

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Did you find the information in these guidelines useful? Do you have any questions?

Please contact the Spanish Education Advisor in your area or send us an email at: auxiliaresp.usa@mec.es