

WSTA

WALDORF SPANISH TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

WSTA (Waldorf Spanish Teachers Association) was established in 2011 as an organization committed to developing better and stronger Spanish programs in schools based on Waldorf education and following the indications of Rudolf Steiner in the curriculum. It has won recognition from AWSNA (Association of Waldorf School in North America) as a Collaborative Association, and continues to look for ways to support teachers and schools alike in the pursuit of realizing the highest ideals of foreign language instruction.

In the past years, we have seen an exponential growth of Spanish as a subject in North America. It is becoming the predominant language taught in almost all Waldorf schools. At the same time, we have also seen how many schools have been unable to maintain continuity with their Spanish teachers and their Spanish programs. Keeping qualified teachers is a daunting task, particularly when schools have not established a permanent vision or position for teaching languages. WSTA feels that support and recognition of the full-time, part-time or hourly language teacher lays the foundation for a strong language program in schools. This benefits the community by attracting families who wish to provide their children with a well-rounded language education. It also minimizes the possibility of teacher turnover and/or burnout.

Many Waldorf schools currently offer only one foreign language. Others still offer two languages, two times per week from grades one through 8, and four times per week in the high school. This timetable, as well as the rhythm of the language lessons is frequently disrupted and compromised by activities such as festivals, field trips, high school visits, college visits and internships. WSTA acknowledges the important benefits for the human being when students are exposed to the *breadth* and *depth* of two languages, as Rudolf Steiner indicated. Also, we recognize the need in the upper grades and the high school to develop the students' intellectual capacities. Therefore, we feel that the current teaching timetable is insufficient to meet the high standards of Waldorf language education as well as the students' needs for more rigorous and consistent instruction.

The enclosed document contains WSTA's recommendations to create and support a successful language program. Please feel free to contact us if you would like more information.

Recommendations for Spanish Programs and Language Teachers in Waldorf Schools in USA, as recommended by WSTA

A. General recommendations regarding language programs

1. If a school offers two languages from grades 1-6, we recommend either alternating each language twice a week, or teaching each language intensively in blocks.
2. If a school only offers Spanish as a second language, we recommend teaching it three times a week or more.
3. If the school offers a block system, we recommend four times a week for each language (this does not increase the overall lessons devoted to language instruction, but simply condenses them for greater efficiency).
4. WSTA proposes at least three lessons a week per language in grades 7 and 8, and four lessons per week in grades 9 through 12.

a. Grades 1-8

1. For grades 6, 7 & 8, we recommend groups of no more than 20 students. This number will allow the students to have more individualized attention and accountability. The students will recognize their progress and their ability to better connect with the language and with the teacher.

In grade 6, if the group is larger than 20 students, and if the school offers two languages, we recommend dividing the class into two groups for each language and continuing with two lessons a week for each language.

b. Grades 9-12

1. In the high school, WSTA recommends that students in grades 9 to 11 remain in their grade level because of their emotional, social and intellectual development. Smaller language class groups may be formed depending on skills levels.
2. In grade 12, the students are more mature. Therefore, if skills levels are different, the class may be divided. One group may be an Honors Literature or A.P. class, while the other could remain a regular level four/five class.
3. WSTA recommends that high school students complete four years in a single language. This will support in-depth learning, and ensure that the students leave high school with the necessary academic and communication skills as well as a strong cultural background, and a keen awareness of current events in Spanish speaking countries.

B. General Recommendations for hiring and supporting Spanish teachers, Grades 1-12

1. WSTA recommends that when hiring new Spanish teachers, schools consider the credentials and experience of the candidates. If possible, the candidate should have Waldorf training.

2. We strongly recommend that schools promote and support teacher professional development, particularly Waldorf pedagogy training, and attendance to both Waldorf and non-Waldorf teacher conferences.
3. A new language teacher should have an in-house mentor teacher, as well as an experienced Spanish language mentor. WSTA has created a Mentoring and Evaluation Program. You can download this information at: <http://www.waldorfspanishteachers.org/mentoring/>
4. WSTA encourages the schools to allow time during the school year for the Spanish teachers to represent the Spanish program during assemblies, festivals, parent evenings, open houses, and other community events, and that such activities be compensated appropriately.

a. Recommendations for hiring and supporting Spanish teachers, Grades 1-8

1. If the Spanish teacher carries a full-time load, i.e. teaches grades 1 to 8 at least twice, or ideally three times per week, we advocate that s/he should be hired as a full-time teacher with the same pay and benefits of the full-time class teacher.
A full-time language teacher must be paid an equal or comparable salary to the class teachers and be offered comparable benefits, according to the requirements and parameters established by the school. We strongly feel that a teacher paid on a part-time or hourly basis cannot adequately support a grade 1-8 program.
2. A full-time language teacher must have the same responsibilities as a class teacher, including:
 - a. be present on campus five days a week for the full school day;
 - b. be required to attend faculty meetings;
 - c. participate in committee work;
 - d. be allowed to meet and communicate with the parents.
3. If two part-time language teachers are hired for the language programs, we recommend the school focuses on one language only and make it into a full-time position until the school grows sufficiently to support the salary of a second language teacher.

b. Recommendations for hiring and supporting Spanish teachers, Grades 9-12

1. A full-time language teacher should be paid an equal or comparable salary to all full-time high school teachers and be offered comparable benefits, according to the number of teaching hours requirements and salary parameters established by the school.
2. A full time language teacher should have the same benefits and be afforded the same treatment as all full-time teachers.
3. A full time language teacher should have the same responsibilities as all full-time high school teachers, including:
 - a. be present on campus five days a week for the full school day;
 - b. be required to attend faculty meetings;
 - c. participate in committee work;
 - d. be allowed to meet and communicate with the parents.

4. A part-time language teacher should be paid a competitive hourly salary aligned with years of teaching experience, and Waldorf training. This supports teacher retention, a key element to the successful continuity and strength of the curriculum.

C. Recommendations for the Spanish language teacher

1. Starting in grade 1 to High School we encourage the Spanish teacher to create a syllabus for each class according to the developmental indications of Rudolf Steiner.
2. The language teachers should provide an outline delineating goals for the school year for each class.
3. The language teacher is encouraged to follow the recommendations of the assigned school and language mentors in Waldorf pedagogy.
4. The language teacher is strongly encouraged to seek professional development in pedagogy and classroom methodology. When possible, s/he should attend Waldorf pedagogy conferences and/or workshops, and request financial support from the school.