

Spanish that Works... in the Library

10 Ways to Continue the Learning

Okay, so your course is over. Everybody learned a lot and had fun, but now what? How do you keep your staff enthusiastic about continuing to develop their Spanish skills and to apply what they've learned? Here are some suggestions.

1. Create opportunities for communication. Assign Spanish-speaking staff or Latino volunteers tasks such as asking staff members to help them find specific materials or areas of the library, get a library card, or use the catalog. Give your staff lots of positive reinforcement to help them overcome their shyness of using Spanish with patrons.

2. Provide refresher classes. Not all students will be able to absorb and apply all the information in the course in such a short time. Arrange to have follow-up classes, perhaps once a month or so, to allow staff to ask questions and to practice with the flashcards, reference sheets and phrase lists. Staff members can practice speaking skills by generating sentences with the sentence builders or by doing role-play.

3. Dewey-a-day. In a place where all staff can see it, display a key word from the Dewey system in Spanish, complete with pronunciation guide and translation. For example, *570 Biología* (*bee-ob-lob-HEE-ah*), *Biology*. You can add a sentence which uses vocabulary from the course, such as *Quiero un libro sobre biología* and let people figure it out. If you have a very advanced group, you can add related words to the list, such as *animales* or *plantas*, to keep everyone motivated to learn new things.

4. Brown-bag it. Organize a brown-bag lunch *en español*, facilitated by a Spanish-speaking staff member or community volunteer. At first, staff may just want to practice what they've learned. Later, you can bring in enrichment materials, such as the *Oxford Picture Dictionary* (bilingual version). When your staff gets really good, they can just talk to one another in Spanish!

5. Have fun in Spanish. Organize a Bingo game in Spanish to practice numbers. Or to build vocabulary, bring in Spanish music, such as Gloria Estefan's *Mi Tierra*, and have participants read the Spanish lyrics and their English translations as they listen. Encourage staff to watch movies or television in Spanish and report back. Bring in Spanish children's books and have fun reading to each other. Invite Spanish-speaking Latino volunteers to come and participate!

6. Pick a practice day. Pick a day of the week to be the Official Practice-Your-Spanish Day. Encourage staff to greet each other and ask each other questions *en español* on this day, and even to send each other bilingual emails. If possible, have Spanish-speaking staff members or volunteers available to help. Make a game of it.

7. Be approachable. Make buttons or name tag stickers that say "Hablo español" (I speak Spanish) or "Estoy aprendiendo español" (I'm learning Spanish), "¿Pregúnteme algo?" (Ask me something!) Chances are, they will!

8. Make full use of your study materials. Encourage staff to keep reference sheets and other Spanish study materials out where they can use them. Leave sets of flashcards in the break room or other places where staff can practice. Make little signs for things, such as *computadora*, *mesa*, *teléfono*, to reinforce vocabulary or to teach new words. Customize the library phrase lists to your own use and give laminated copies to staff members to use at their desks when patrons approach them.

9. Make your library attractive to Spanish speakers. Organize bilingual story time, talks by bilingual authors, celebrations of Latino holidays, computer classes in Spanish, or other programming that encourages Spanish speakers to come to the library. Build up your collections of English literacy materials as well as books in Spanish, and encourage staff to become familiar with the library resources that Spanish-speakers most ask about. The word will soon get out that your library is a place where Spanish speakers are welcome, and your staff will have plenty of opportunities to practice their new skills!

10. Let the community know you care. Put a bilingual article in your newsletter, post a sign, or make flyers to let your Spanish-speaking patrons know that your staff is creating programming and learning Spanish in order to serve them better. Let the whole world know how hard you have worked to promote cultural diversity in your library by providing Spanish-speaking patrons with equal access to your library's services. You are to be commended!