
INFORMATION ON THE INTERNATIONAL SPANISH PROGRAM

1. PECULIARITIES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE US EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Although it has a Department of Education, the Federal Government's responsibilities in educational matters are limited and are restricted to collecting data, promoting general laws such as the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) or implementing financial aid programs for minorities. The system is completely decentralized and is very heterogeneous and complex, which does not prevent the basic structure from being quite consistent in all states. State and local institutions are the ones who make most of the decisions in the educational field: the organization of the system, the requirements that they demand of their students and teachers, the external evaluation tests that they must pass, etc. Thus, there are clearly defined competencies at the national, state, school district and school management teams.

Generally speaking, pre-university education is arranged in three stages that can vary in duration from one state to another. In Florida there are three stages, Elementary (grades 1 to 5), Middle (grades 6 to 8) and High (grades 9 to 12). In recent years, K-8 centers have been generalized, combining the last year of kindergarten and the Elementary and Middle stages in the same school.

2. THE SPANISH SECTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL STUDIES PROGRAM IN THE MIAMI-DADE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

The teachings of this program are implemented in eight schools, of which five are public schools and three are charter schools, all within the Miami-Dade County School District, the largest school district within the state of Florida and the fourth in the US. The district has more than 390 schools, 345,000 students and more than 40,000 employees and includes both rural and urban communities. Since 2022, Superintendent José L. Dotres has been in charge of the district.

Miami-Dade's school population ranks second in the nation in its percentage of minorities: the district's student body is estimated to have native speakers of 56 languages representing more than 160 countries. It is estimated that 62% of its student body is of Hispanic origin, 25% African American, 10% non-Hispanic white and 3% of other ethnicities.

3. ORIGIN AND LEGISLATION OF THE SECTION

The Spanish Ministry of Education signed in November 1987 a first Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the authorities of the Miami School District (Miami-Dade County Public Schools, M-DCPS) for the operation of Spanish Sections in various public schools in said District.

This Spanish Section constitutes the so-called International Studies Program (PEI in Spanish or ISP in its acronym in English) and, at present, its operation and organization is regulated by the following rules:

- Memoranda of understanding between the Spanish MEFP and Miami-Dade County Public Schools. The last MOU, signed in December 2010, has recently been implemented by an addendum (October 2020).
- Order EDU / 1720/2011, of May 31, which recognizes the studies completed in the Spanish Section of the International Studies Program of the Public School District of Miami-Dade County, United States of America. By virtue of this order, students who finish grade 12 in the section and meet the conditions expressed in article 5 obtain the title of Bachelor (Spanish High School diploma) in addition to the US High School Diploma.
- Resolution of the Secretary of State for Education and Vocational Training establishing the curriculum of the Spanish Section of the International Studies Program of June 22, 2011.

4. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SECTION

Students and schools

In the 2022-2023 academic year, the International Studies Program (ISP) has about 3,600 students, of which approximately 5.6% are Spanish. The program is developed in the Spanish sections of eight schools that cover grades 1 to 12 (from 6 to 18 years old).

- *Sunset Elementary*
- *Ada Merritt K-8 Center*
- *Coral Way Bilingual K-8 Center*
- *G. W. Carver Middle School*
- *International Studies Charter High School*
- *International Studies Preparatory Academy*

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- *Downtown Doral Charter Elementary School*
 - *Downtown Doral Charter Upper School*

The ethnic composition of the student body in the section broadly corresponds to the demographic percentages cited above. Taking into account that in global numbers 62% of the district's students are of Hispanic origin, it can be inferred that the vast majority of the section's students have that origin and Spanish is the mother tongue or commonly used in their families, although for many of them, English is their first language outside the family environment.

On the other hand, the Miami-Dade County School District, in addition to collaborating on the ISP with the Spanish Ministry of Education, also does so with other countries (France, Germany and, to a lesser extent, Italy and Brazil) that have subsequently incorporated the same schools in which there were already Spanish sections.

Curriculum

In these ISP schools, the official Florida curriculum is taught in some subjects and the official curriculum of Spain (or the respective country) in other subjects, in which teaching is carried out in the language, with the curricular program and with textbooks from that country and, in a certain number, with teachers from the country as well. That is, a mixed curriculum is taught with the following characteristics:

- a) In some subjects students receive instruction in English according to the official curriculum of the state of Florida.
- b) In other subjects they receive instruction in Spanish according to the official Florida curriculum (these subjects vary according to the schools).
- c) In Spanish Language and Literature and Humanities (Knowledge of the Environment and Geography and History), the Spanish curricular program is taught from 1st grade to 12th grade (equivalent to 2nd year of Bachillerato in Spain) and Spanish textbooks are used.

In this curricular program, adaptations to the Florida environment are introduced, which represent approximately a 15% variation over the total of the official Spanish curriculum. This curriculum is established by Resolution of the Secretary of State for Education and Vocational Training of June 22, 2011.

Teaching staff

The Ministry of Education provides and finances teaching staff (**3 Spanish tenured teachers** in the 2022-2023 academic year selected through a competitive procedure) who perform teaching tasks of the official Spanish curriculum mainly, adaptation of curricular content, selection of teaching material, training of teachers and coordination in the ISP schools of educational activities organized by the Education Office of the Embassy of Spain, such as contests, visits by writers, and the promotion of educational outreach programs and events.

Also, in this same school year, **16 Spanish exchange visiting teachers** teach at ISP schools. Visiting teachers are selected and funded by the Miami-Dade County School District. In addition, it is important to note that the school district funds another **63 teachers**, some of whom are of Spanish nationality, who teach in the Spanish section of the IS program. These teachers are hired in accordance with local legislation and without their presence the program would not be able to serve the current number of students.

Schedule

Regarding the schedule, the International Studies Program is not developed in the same way in all schools and levels. Thus, in Elementary (grades 1 to 5) all ISP students must attend 5 more hours of class per week than students in the regular program, whether they are bilingual or not. Therefore, at this level, the program takes place outside the normal school hours, in order to complete the teaching of the two curricular programs, Spanish and Florida.

In Middle School (grades 6 to 8) and High School (grades 9 to 12), the subjects of the Spanish curriculum are taught within the students' elective subjects, that is, within the regular school hours.

Student admission

In the United States, there are schools that only students from a certain area of residence can attend (called *neighborhood schools*). This is the case of Coral Way Bilingual K-8 Center: in this school, the key factor when it comes to enrollment is proximity to it.

There are other schools in which this Spanish program is called *magnet*, and which students from any area of the Miami-Dade district can attend as long as they demonstrate a high academic level and competence in the Spanish language. For this objective, they must pass some entrance exams; normally, the application submission date is from October 1 to January 15 of the previous year. If there is more demand

for applications than available places, a lottery is held to determine those students who are selected and a waiting list. With the exception of the aforementioned Coral Way Bilingual K-8 Center, the four remaining public schools in the IS program belong to this second modality. In addition, the ISP has three charter schools (two of which were incorporated in October 2020, under the 2010 MOU Addendum: Downtown Doral Charter Elementary and Upper Schools). These charter schools are part of the public free school system, so they adhere to state and federal academic standards, but are operated by private educational management entities.

Although in the past it was foreseen that students with Spanish nationality (in the case of the Spanish IS program) would have preference when accessing these schools, since 2013 this possibility does not exist since a court ruling determined that it involved discrimination in access to public education for reasons of origin and nationality, which contravenes the Constitution of the United States.

Continuity in the Spanish Section

The continuity of the International Studies Program is guaranteed in the three educational stages - Elementary, Middle and High - of the nine schools in which the section is implemented.

Diplomas and access to the Spanish university

As established by Order EDU / 1720/2011, of May 31, which recognizes the studies completed in the Spanish Section of the International Studies Program of the Miami-Dade County Public School District, United States of America, students who finish grade 10 and meet the conditions expressed in article 5, obtain the Spanish diploma of Compulsory Secondary Education. In addition, those students who finish grade 12 in the Spanish section may request the diploma of Bachiller (Spanish High School diploma), in addition to obtaining the US High School Diploma.

Students who successfully complete their 12th grade studies in the Spanish section of ISP schools can, if they so wish, take the Spanish university entrance exams (EBAU) in order to carry out university studies in Spain. They should first contact the university where they plan to pursue higher studies and then contact the UNED to obtain accreditation and, where appropriate, take the corresponding tests. Detailed information on the existing options is provided in the following link to the UNEDasiss page (the accreditation service for international students):

<https://unedasiss.uned.es/home>

Coordination and participation in extracurricular activities

The International Studies Program is coordinated both by the school district, by the Division of Bilingual Education on which these schools depend, and by the Education Office of the Consulate of Spain in Miami, with frequent meetings between the two parties. In parallel and periodically, the teachers hired through the Ministry of Education are summoned to coordination meetings. The development and delivery of the hybrid curriculum of the IS program, and the activities to promote the Spanish language and culture organized by the Office, usually in collaboration with other cultural and educational entities, are supervised and coordinated at these meetings.

For more information, visit the school websites that make up the Spanish Section of International Studies Program at the following link: [Miami-Dade County ISP Schools](#).
