

Frequently Asked Questions (continued)

What is the difference between FLES and the Immersion Program? FLES students learn Spanish as a foreign language. Students completing a K-5 FLES sequence are expected to communicate at the Novice Level of proficiency. Immersion students receive daily Spanish language arts instruction and learn content in Spanish in classes like math or science. In addition to becoming functionally proficient, Immersion students are expected to develop high levels of literacy in Spanish.

How is language proficiency assessed? Teachers utilize a variety of informal assessments to measure proficiency in Spanish on an ongoing basis. Additionally, teachers utilize district county-wide assessments or checklists each quarter to assess specifically what students “can do” with the language they have acquired.

What options are available in middle school? Students have the option of participating in the Grade 6 Transitional Spanish class in middle school. This is a semester course paired with a semester of reading in English. Introduction to language classes are available at some middle schools. Students can begin credit-bearing classes like French, Arabic, Chinese, Latin or Spanish I in Grade 7. For course descriptions and other language options, please refer to the Program of Studies.

Why start a foreign language at the elementary level?

- When children have an early start to a long sequence of language instruction that continues through high school and college, they will be able to achieve levels of fluency that have not been possible in the past due to the late start of most language programs. *(Center for Applied Linguistics)*
- Research has shown that young children learn languages more easily and more quickly than older students and that proficiency in a language and the cultures in which it is spoken can best be achieved when second language study begins as early as possible. *(AATF K-12 Position Statement)*
- “We should begin teaching foreign languages in our elementary schools...Learning a foreign language exposes young people to new cultures and new horizons and helps them understand English better.” *Richard Riley, former U.S. Secretary of Education*

The benefits (of learning a foreign language) to society are many. Americans fluent in other languages improve global communication, enhance our competitiveness abroad, and maintain our political and security interests. *(U.S. General Accounting Office, 2002)*

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**Arlington
Public
Schools**

**Spanish
Foreign Language
in the Elementary
School (FLES)
Program**

World Languages Office



What is FLES about?

- Cultivating a lifelong love for language learning.
- Initiating a long sequence of foreign language learning beginning in the early grades, thus promoting proficiency in the target language.
- Teaching a foreign language at a critical age for language acquisition.
- Developing global citizenship through the study of language and culture.
- Motivating students to develop cross-cultural awareness and understanding.
- Helping students to make connections between languages.
- Giving students 21st century skills.
- Preparing students to compete in the global economy.
- Preparing students for rigorous and challenging courses that will allow them to fulfill future graduation requirements for the Advanced Studies Diploma.

FLES Program Goals

1. To develop functional proficiency in Spanish at an early stage of language acquisition.
2. To provide a meaningful context for developing communication skills in Spanish.
3. To build an understanding and appreciation for other cultures by developing multicultural awareness and a more global perspective.
4. To strengthen the language competency of Spanish speaking students (native or heritage speakers).

FLES Program Model

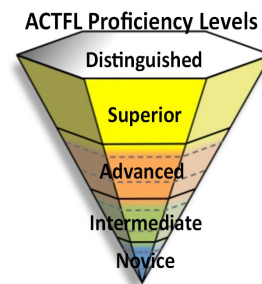
Arlington Public Schools offers a sequential, clearly-articulated FLES model that:

- Gives all students at the FLES school the opportunity to develop, maintain and enhance Spanish language skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing.
- Follows a rigorous curriculum which is aligned to state and national standards.
- Enhances opportunities for cross-curricular connections that are aligned to Virginia grade-level Standards of Learning.
- Utilizes methodology that is developmentally appropriate and engages students in a dynamic process for learning Spanish.
- Articulates into the secondary Spanish program.

FLES Proficiency Targets

After completing the K-5 sequence, students are expected to perform at the Novice-Mid level of proficiency, as established by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. Students at the Novice-Mid level:

- Understand short, simple phrases, sentences and directions.
- Engage in simple conversations about familiar topics.
- Speak and write in short sentences using memorized vocabulary and language.
- Read and understand brief texts on familiar material when supported by visual cues.



Frequently Asked Questions

Do all students in a FLES school receive Spanish instruction? All students participate in FLES, which is a school-wide program.

How much time do students spend each week learning Spanish? Instructional time is at least 90 minutes per week.

What should students be able to “do” with the language after completing the program?

In brief, memorized phrases, students will be able to describe themselves, others and objects around them; discuss daily life; express basic opinions; talk about their community; communicate aspects of Spanish-speaking cultures.

What resources does the program use? The FLES Program utilizes a variety of instructional materials, including *Descubre el Español*®, *Viva el Español*®, and *National Geographic Language and Literacy*®. The curriculum allows for articulation between content areas and Spanish, especially with science and mathematics connections that directly tie with SOLs, Standards of Learning, at each grade level.

What specialized training do FLES teachers have? FLES teachers hold a Virginia teacher’s license in Spanish as a foreign language. Arlington Public Schools strive to seek teachers that are dually certified in foreign language and elementary education.