

## **"Los Pastores " Goes To Broadway! Teaching Spanish through Plays in the Classroom**

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### **Academic Setting**

Valley High School is located in the north valley of Albuquerque in one of the older neighborhoods or barrios known as Los Griegos. The student body population is approximately 2100 teenagers in grades 9 through 12. Our students come from fairly diverse ethnic and economic backgrounds. Although Los Griegos was a redominately Hispanic community, many families from various European, Afro-American, Asian, and Native American cultures settled in this north valley area as Albuquerque boomed in size and population over the last two decades.

Valley high school is a very unique school in that it has the new Valley Academy on its campus. Back in 1990, a school within a school was designed to attract other Albuquerque students to enroll. This academy created college-bound courses and community service programs for the college-minded students. These particular students enroll in advanced courses as well as other regular classes at Valley. Their enthusiasm to learn is a welcomed addition in the classroom as they intermingle with all the other students on campus and within the classrooms. Therefore, Valley High and Valley Academy are composed of a diverse student body, both ethnically and economically.

This educational unit is specifically designed for the course entitled *Spanish for Bilinguals*. This course was created for students who are either passive bilingual or active bilingual. Passive bilinguals are students whose every day language is English; they come from homes where they have heard Spanish spoken by their parent(s) grandparents or other relatives. Their ability to converse and comprehend in Spanish can range widely from speaking very little to being able to speak and understand in a limited conversation. Active bilingual students are fluent in both languages. The majority of these students at our high school have recently come from Mexico or other Latin American countries. They have had intense, well-instructed English courses and continue to study the English language here at our high school for further improvement in writing, reading comprehension, and in public speaking. The academic areas in which these active bilinguals are usually in need of improvement are writing skills and reading comprehension. The ability to appreciate and understand one's cultural and historical background is, many times, a common ground that both sets of bilingual students' share and where they need formal instruction.

The Albuquerque Public Schools district carefully constructed the district course description and objectives for *Spanish for Bilinguals* in order to meet the educational and cultural needs of these bilingual students. In the description of this

bilingual course, a teacher can see that the fundamental difference between *Spanish for Bilinguals* and a regular Spanish class is that the first class does not teach about Spanish. Rather, students learn to speak, read, and write in Spanish by studying a wide variety of topics that are taught mostly in Spanish. In this particular curriculum unit, students will study the historical background of "Los Pastores," read about the main characters and theme as well as create and perform their own contemporary version of this play. Students will be involved in a variety of oral, written, reading, even art activities throughout this unit. These activities are designed to meet the following learning objectives: foster Spanish conversation, write in sentences and paragraphs, read short stories and be able to answer questions, and investigate Hispanic cultures with emphasis on New Mexico.

### **Rationale for the Curriculum Unit**

Like many Spanish teachers, I am always eager to try new and creative ways of teaching Spanish in high school. In my limited teaching experience one common request I get from teenagers is that they want less bookwork and more Spanish conversation! The first rationale for this unit is that it gives the students an opportunity to watch an antique Spanish play come alive as they perform it. Also, students respond well when their teacher eagerly brings something original, new and innovative into the classroom. Studying about the traditional "Los Pastores," then creating a modern version of this same play offer plenty of innovation to the students while they learn Spanish. For example, some activities will include students practicing their Spanish reading by using the script from the play. As a method to improve their speaking skills and help students feel more confident in speaking the language, I have incorporated several drama exercises. For example, students will choose a particular character from the play, then act-out this character in Spanish. Although "Los Pastores" was originally created as a way to celebrate Christmas and is traditionally performed in a religious setting, this unit focuses primarily on the rich cultural facets of this play. This unit does not indoctrinate the learner with a set of religious beliefs. Neither will students be assessed by how well they have memorized any religious dogmas. The challenging aspect about this unit is that teachers and students will study the historical background of "Los Pastores." When studying the history and culture of a particular topic such as this play, it is unavoidable to see the unique characteristics religion left on "Los Pastores." Those characteristics will be observed from a secular, humanist viewpoint rather than a religious one.

The second rationale is linked closely to the first one. Students not only perform better in a subject that has their interest but they are able to learn certain objectives when they are taught to them in ways that fit their particular learning style. As teachers, we are aware of the hundreds of educational studies that argue that students have different styles in which they learn (Morris, Sather and Scully 3). This same research shows us that it is so vital and important for teachers to reach out to students of various learning styles and adjust their teaching techniques. This unit was carefully designed, keeping in mind the three learning styles that Morris,

Sather and Scully summarized from Benjamin Bloom's taxonomy: the cognitive, affective and psychomotor learners (3-4). For the cognitive learners, some activities include reading a particular scene from the play and responding to questions in Spanish. Rehearsing script lines, developing a whole new version of this ancient play are two examples of lessons that have the affective learners in mind. Through my teaching experiences with Hispanic students, I can confirm that most Hispanic teens "...learn fastest the affective or psychomotor way" (Morris, Sather and Scully 4). In this unit, there are plenty of hands-on and small group activities to meet their learning styles. Such activities include artwork where the students will design and create costumes and stage props for the final performance of their version of "Los Pastores."

This curriculum unit is well-rounded in that it does not focus on only one particular Spanish learning skill. Teachers can appreciate this unit as they discover how well Spanish plays can foster all the major learning skills of speaking, listening, writing, and reading in Spanish. The rehearsals and actual performance of the student's version of "Los Pastores" give students the opportunity to improve their speaking skills. This play also provides students with tools they need to improve their literary skills that are so often neglected. This unit places much emphasis on reading comprehension and writing. For example, students will be assigned to read from certain scenes of the play. There will be Spanish questions for them to answer in Spanish, either orally or in writing. There will also be classroom reading assignments along with reading and questions to be done at home then discussed in class. These few examples I hope will show how the learning skills of speaking reading and writing are so interwoven with each other. I also hope that by the student's reading and writing about "Los Pastores" in the classroom I will tear down the false notion that spoken Spanish is real and alive while written Spanish is artificial and dead (Fishman and Keller 357). Writing in Spanish can be very fun and creative for students. What is particularly exciting about the writing activities in this unit is that Spanish writing "facilitates not only the maintenance of Hispanic language and culture, but higher standards of academic achievement" (Fishman and Keller 358). Another aspect of literacy that this unit contains is the use of writing portfolios where students will collect samples of their written work. Teachers can be very creative in implementing portfolios. I have learned that portfolios are a creative way for students to take on more responsibility, self-monitor their writing, and see what they've learned and need to learn (Glazer 96).

The final rationale for this unit is that the learning objectives of this unit meet the Albuquerque Public Schools performance standards for the course *Spanish for Bilinguals* (APS District High School Course Outline). The reading and cultural activities of this unit not only meet the district standards but go above and beyond what is required (APS District High School Course Outline). Students will be reading not just simple Spanish words but an actual play. Also, students will be doing more than investigating Hispanic cultures. They will be participating in an

actual Hispanic tradition while learning to explain its history and purpose in simple conversational Spanish. As mentioned earlier in the unit's rationale, the rich cultural-religious aspects of "Los Pastores" will be studied from a secular, humanist point of view.

### **Historical Background of "Los Pastores"**

The performances of theatrical plays as a way of teaching have been widely used for centuries. For example, Spanish plays were performed for both the education and the entertainment of audiences since medieval times. These instructional plays were also performed in the New World, beginning in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when Spain conquered and colonized her new lands. Spanish plays not only captured the audience's attention through dramatic performances but they also taught a particular theme or moral or biblical event.

One of the most prominent plays that came to New Mexico from Spain was "Los Pastores," the famous theatrical performance about the birth of Jesus. Its historical roots can be traced all the way back to the medieval centuries of Spain. During that particular period of time, the world of theatre saw a rebirth of biblical themes in drama performances. These performances focused on "the personification of the Seven Deadly Sins and the Seven Cardinal Virtues" (Torres, xiii). Playwrights also personified themes on the human struggle between good and evil, stories about the life of Jesus of Nazareth and miracle stories about the heroes of Christianity; the saints! The development of "Los Pastores", as well as other nativity plays, continued to evolve and take shape during this time period. These religious plays began to take on a unique form and style in the way that they were written. Playwrights called this particular form and style "auto sacramentales". These plays were specifically "...based on religious-biblical themes in allegoric, poetic form" (Torres, xiii). In other words, the central theme of the early nativity plays was the story of the birth of Jesus. The characters and scenes of these plays were allegorical, which means that they were not always historical. Most of these characters were fictional, and they were carefully created so that the audience could relate to or identify themselves with one of these performers. Also, the playwrights were talented in the way they created a poetic, rhythmical tone in the music and manuscripts. The educational purpose of the earliest versions of "Los Pastores" was to teach the significance of the birth of the newborn king and to highlight the variety of human struggles between good and evil. One common theme that these drama plays had was that the devil would tempt the poor, humble shepherds into ignoring the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. This devilish character would try to tempt the humble shepherds in various ways with lies and tricks.

The next important historical period in the creation of "Los Pastores" takes place during Spain's Golden Age or Siglo de Oro of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. During this grand period, the early nativity plays and other auto sacramentales flourished and were widely performed. Several outstanding Spanish authors contributed to the development of "Los Pastores." Felix Lope de Vega,

(1562-1635), created the Spanish National Theatre and was the author of "Los Pastores de Belen" (*Encyclopedia Americana*, 438). This particular play by Vega became one of the model examples of a well-written nativity play. Vega created the traditional main characters that are now in the modern manuscripts. He also further developed the main underlying theme of the play: deceiving temptations in life often challenge human dreams and achievements. This theme is beautifully acted-out in "Los Pastores de Belén". In this play, the humble shepherds follow a strange, extraordinarily bright star towards Bethlehem (Belén, in Spanish). On their journey they meet the devil in disguise as another person. Each of the main characters is tempted in various ways to ignore this star and not believe that a newborn king is in Bethlehem.

Pedro Calderón de la Barca, (1600-1681), was highly regarded for his writing of auto sacramentales (*Encyclopedia Americana* 438). In this brief historical sketch of Spanish drama, one must include the mention of the great Miguel de Cervantes y Saavedra, (1547-1616), who wrote the novel masterpiece "The Adventures of Don Quijote" (*Encyclopedia Americana*, 438). In this Golden Age of Spanish literature and drama, the earliest versions of "Los Pastores" were performed in corrals not inside buildings. Also, women participated as actresses whereas in other European stages such acting was reserved for men (Torres, xv).

The Spanish Franciscan friars who accompanied the conquistadores during the late sixteenth century carried "Los Pastores" into the New World. As part of their zealous mission to evangelize and transform the native peoples from their ancient tribal religions to Catholicism, the friars utilized two categories or cycles of religious folk drama. The plays in cycle one were based on biblical stories of the Old Testament (e.g. "Adan y Eva" and "Cain y Abel"). Cycle two were plays that taught about important people and events from the New Testament: auto sacramental of "San Jose," "Las Posadas," "Los Reyes y Los Magos," "El Nino Perdido," "La Pasion," and "Los Pastores" (Garza 8-9). Traditionally, "Los Pastores" was performed on Christmas Eve throughout the vast Spanish settlements in Mexico and in the American Southwest. The main audience for these theatrical performances were the native tribes. The friars believed that while they could effectively indoctrinate the local people as they watched certain religious themes being performed. This play became enormously popular since it was both religious yet comical. There are certain lines, for example, where the devil pokes fun at members of the audience. So this play served as both an educational tool and as a means of entertainment.

To conclude the historical background of "Los Pastores," it is important to mention that the original manuscripts of this play have gone through several alterations and modifications while being preserved from one generation to another (Vigil 139). Often times roles and characters of this play "...were passed down within families" (Vigil 10). Today in several New Mexican communities "Los Pastores" is still being passed down from family members of one generation to the next. Preserving such ancient Hispanic traditions has become an important mission among many

Hispanic leaders and organizations. Today "Los Pastores" is performed on the traditional Christmas Eve by organizations that value this Hispanic tradition. This play is also performed throughout the entire year in schools, community centers, churches, in television studios and in theatres.

## **Implementation of the Unit**

Preliminary information about my course before teaching the unit

Before a theatrical production is performed, the stage lights must be operational, props must be in place, costumes, and performers must be ready. Before this unit is implemented into the classroom, it is necessary that several items about my class be addressed. First, I teach this unit during the entire second nine weeks of an eighteen-week semester. So my students have already been taught some basic Spanish grammar functions for writing and speaking. Second, it is important that I have contacted the director of our high school theatre and have made the proper arrangements for our class to rehearse and perform the play. Lastly, I need to deal with the issue of religion and religious holidays in the public high school classroom. On the first day of this unit I will introduce to the students "Los Pastores." One feature about this play that I will strongly emphasize is that students will be learning more Spanish as we study and perform this play. We will look at this play, not as a tool to teach religion in the classroom, but from a cultural point of view. I will emphasize the cultural values and themes that "Los Pastores" contains. I will also send home with these students a parental letter that explains the nature and purpose of this play in the classroom. If any particular student and/or parent, however, feels uncomfortable with this unit I will have an alternative plan for the student.

## **General Outline of Unit**

This unit is divided into two main parts. In part one, the focus is on the traditional version of "Los Pastores." The general topics in part one are about the historical background of this play, learning about the play's characters and its main theme. Part two will focus on the student's production and performance of their own contemporary version of the play. This part of the unit is the more creative side. Students will be applying their vocabulary and grammar skills as they become the playwrights and performers in Spanish.

## **Unit's Lesson Plans**

*Observing "Los Pastores"; using a field trip or a videocassette of the traditional play*

This is the opening lesson of this unit. The primary learning objective in this lesson plan is that students will become more familiar with this play by observing it live or on videocassette. District objectives require that bilingual students investigate cultures of the Hispanic world with emphasis on New Mexico. This lesson plan is a wonderful opportunity for the teacher and students to observe "Los Pastores" with

all its traditional characters in costume, Spanish drama, and music. This experience will, hopefully, leave a positive and motivational spirit within the students as they prepare for this unit.

Arrangements need to be made, in advance with a director of a group that performs "Los Pastores." Teacher should arrange for transportation if needed. Or, if the use of the videocassette of "Los Pastores" is preferred, plenty of advance preparation is needed to contact the school library, Modern Language or Literature departments for access to a videocassette that has the traditional version of the play. The documentation page of this unit contains several distributors to contact for this video. Students will also receive three sets of handouts. The first set is the copy of the play written in its poetic form (Torres 78-109). The handouts are written in both Spanish and English. The second sets of handouts are copies of "Los Pastores" written in script form and on the reading level of Spanish high school students (Vigil 88-130). The third handout is a worksheet. This worksheet is what students will fill out while observing the play, either live or on video. This worksheet has simple Spanish questions about the play and students are to answer these questions in written Spanish. Students may respond to these questions during the play or after.

On the day following the field trip or video all students are to have their worksheets in class. In order to get a sense of how the students feel about and understand the play, open the classroom up to discussion. Ask volunteers to share their thoughts, feelings, opinions, and observations about what they saw and heard. Be ready to comfort any students who felt overwhelmed in not understanding every word of the play. Next, have students refer to their handouts. Go over each question with them: ask the question in Spanish, then call on several individual students to answer the same question in Spanish. Allow an extra class day for the class to have a thorough review of the play and the questions on their handout.

This opening lesson plan sets the stage for this unit. Based on the discussion and the question and answer session, students should have a general outline of what the play is about, its main theme and main traditional characters. They also should be thinking of their own version of "Los Pastores" and the type of character they wish to create.

Students will be assessed on how well they paid attention to the play and by their Spanish written responses of the handout. The handouts with Spanish questions about "Los Pastores" will give a clear picture of the progress of the student's writing skills. Call up various students to read their answers and focus on the basic grammar functions of their writing. Teachers, while asking Spanish questions from the handout, can get an accurate evaluation of how well the students understand these Spanish questions.

### *Historical Research of "Los Pastores"*

This particular lesson plan will follow directly after the first. Students will have

two school days to go to the library or computer lab to answer the following questions about the background of this play:

From what country did "Los Pastores" come?

Who were the important authors who contributed to the development of this play? (be sure to include dates);

When and by whom did "Los Pastores" come into the United States?

What was the main purpose of this play?

The Internet and the various sets of high school encyclopedias are ideal sources for this assignment.

After this section of the lesson has been completed, spend one day with the students reviewing their research findings. Correct any errors and fill-in any gaps of missing dates, places, important people, etc. Students should now have an accurate historical outline of the play. The last part of this lesson is that students will be applying their Spanish grammar and writing as they translate their English facts into Spanish. The key Spanish grammar function, in this part of the lesson, is the use of the Spanish verb tense *pretérito* or the past tense. If necessary, review with the class the models of verb conjugation in this tense for both regular and irregular verbs. Students are to write short, simple sentences not long essays. This lesson will prepare them to broaden their vocabulary base, improve their Spanish writing skills and learn about the historical background and purpose of the play. After the writing section has been completed, the focus will shift to the students conversing in Spanish about the history and purpose of the play. A sample of a Spanish oral exercise will follow this lesson plan.

The learning objectives in this lesson plan are that students will continue to learn and understand Spanish in the past tense, learn the history and purpose of "Los Pastores" in Spanish, and improve their writing skills. The district wants bilingual Spanish students to write in Spanish and learn about their Hispanic background. This lesson combines both of the district's objectives. Students are learning about a particular Hispanic tradition while they improve on their Spanish writing skills.

The evaluation here focuses on how well students have grasped the use of the Spanish verb tense *preterito* or past tense. Pay special attention to the irregular verbs of this past tense that students may use. Observe their writing and highlight any pattern of mistakes that you have noticed in the individual's writing skills.

### *Spanish Oral Exercise on the History-Purpose of "Los Pastores"*

The two main objectives in this lesson plan are that students will continue to improve their Spanish speaking skills while they continue to internalize the facts about the play's history and purpose. These objectives correspond to the district's performance standards of this bilingual class that challenge bilingual students to converse in Spanish and to investigate their Hispanic culture. In this lesson plan, the two goals are interwoven. This Spanish oral lesson plan is a sample of the oral exercises that students will be doing for about a week. By the end of the week,

students should be very familiar with writing and speaking about the important facts about the history of this play. They will then be ready to start reading, writing, and talking in Spanish about the actual play and its characters.

This lesson plan is designed for students to try and discuss among themselves the history of "Los Pastores." Students will be divided into groups of four. Each group has approximately ten minutes to review their Spanish outline about the historical background of "Los Pastores." Emphasize that dates and important names are not to be ignored. During this ten-minute reviewing time, students may ask the teacher for a confirmation of correct facts, pronunciation of a hard word/name and they may test each other about the historical facts. After the review time is over, explain that each group is in a mini competition with each other to see which group can give the best presentation in Spanish about the background of the play. Each group will have its turn to speak, in Spanish of course, about the historical facts. Members in each group are allowed to help each other but may not use their notes. Each group that presents has a time limit of four minutes. After the time limit is over, all other groups must ask the presenting group one or two questions in Spanish regarding the topic of this lesson. Once the round of questioning the presenting group is complete, then another group has four minutes to present and the cycle repeats itself until all groups have had the chance to present and answer questions.

As an informal method of evaluating the students, teachers can be the scorekeepers in this exercise/game. One way to keep score is that all teams start with twenty points each. For every inaccurate or missing historical fact, subtract one point. Subtract one point for any team that has to use notes in their presentation. Subtract two more points for each time the presenting team fails to respond to the questions that the other teams ask. At the end, teachers can decide how to reward the teams with the points that they earned.

### *Reading Exercise: Using "Los Pastores" as the Main Text*

The main learning objectives in this plan are that students will improve in their Spanish reading and writing skills as well as become more familiar with the scenes and characters of the play. These objectives meet the district's performance standards for this bilingual Spanish Class. They focus on the development and improvement of the student's abilities to read and write in Spanish while the student studies the culture of New Mexico.

Students need to have available the Spanish script of the play. The teacher is to read out loud the lines of scene one. Here, the students have a chance to hear the pronunciation of the words. Select a student to also read aloud and guide that student through any mispronunciations. After the student has read several lines, choose another one to read in class. Continue on to the next scene of the play to allow all students the chance to read aloud. On the main chalkboard, there will be several basic Spanish questions for all to answer in Spanish. These simple questions are based only from scene one of the play. The basic questions are:

Who are the main characters;  
What is happening in scene one?

On the following day, review with the students these questions. Assess the students by paying close attention to the grammar, pronunciation, and main ideas that they have in their answers. This reading exercise will be repeatedly used so that the students may become more familiar with the characters and scenes throughout the play. This written material is to be saved in their writing portfolios for future use.

*Mini Project Activity: Describing the Traditional Characters of the Play*

This mini project within the unit is to get students more acquainted with the characters of "Los Pastores" by engaging them with more reading and speaking in Spanish. Therefore, the main learning objectives are that students will continue their improvement in Spanish reading, conversation, writing and their knowledge of the play. These objectives correspond well with the district's requirements for Spanish speaking and reading in the classroom. The district also requires that bilingual studies study the Hispanic culture of New Mexico, which is clearly being covered in this mini project.

This is a long lesson plan that takes about five to seven days to complete. Students are required to write a Spanish paragraph that describes the personality of each of the play's characters. Students will be given several sheets of art paper so that they can draw or sketch each character. They are to place the character's name under the proper drawing then write a simple Spanish sentence that describes that particular character.

Finally, each student will do a five-minute Spanish oral presentation describing each of the play's characters. Students may also have the option of bringing in the costumes that match the main characters rather than drawing or sketching. During class time, the students may either work individually or in small groups, provided that each student doesn't copy from someone else. Encourage them to use their imaginations as they try to describe the different personalities. Also encourage them to be less afraid of presenting in class. If it is helpful, ask students to do a practice Spanish presentation with only the teacher.

Evaluate the students by how well they can describe the characters in Spanish. Encourage students to respond in short, simple Spanish sentences. This should ease the challenge of incorporating the various Spanish grammatical functions that they have studied. Correct any mispronunciations or poor grammar use after each sentence.

*Students create their own version of "Los Pastores"*

This is another long lesson plan, but one where students will work together and tap into their pools of creativity and imagination. By now, the class is well acquainted with the traditional version of "Los Pastores." They have done numerous oral, reading and writing activities in Spanish that have taught them the theme and

characters of the play.

Now, they are challenged to create their own version! The entire class will spend one class period viewing *La Pastorela: The Shepherd's Play* by Luis Valdez. This video is a modern version of "Los Pastores" and an excellent source for students to see how they can maintain the traditional theme and major characters of "Los Pastores" while adding new characters and designing the play in a modern setting. On day two of this lesson, students will be seated in a large circle in the classroom. Lead this discussion group with this main question for them to discuss "now that we saw *La Pastorela*, what will your drama production look like"? The only limitation that this version of the play has is in regards to the theme. Remind the students that the central theme to "Los Pastores" is that people will always face challenges and temptations while they strive to achieve an important goal. Encourage students to put this theme in a modern situation that teenagers can easily identify. Motivate the students with questions like:

What are common goals or achievements that teens try to reach?

What are the most challenging, deceiving temptations that many students have to face today?

Has anyone in this class ever had an experience similar to the one that the shepherds faced in the original play of "Los Pastores"?

Are there any tempters around? Who are they? How do they try to trick you?

On day three of this long lesson, invite several students to the front of the class to give a summary of what the entire class discussed yesterday regarding their version of Los Pastores. Using the chalkboard, instruct these students at the front to write down the setting of the play, the sub plots of each of the acts within the play, and the conclusion of their play. Once the students have had the opportunity to add, omit or rearrange the ideas placed on the board, use the remaining class time for students to begin thinking about the character they want to create and perform in their production of "Los Pastores." The only characters from the original "Los Pastores" that must be incorporated into their own version are Bartolo, Gilita, Bato, and Luzbel. Allow the first four volunteer students to perform these characters. These particular characters may keep their original names or can be given new ones by the students.

Students are now to begin designing and writing in Spanish the characters that they are going to become in their production of "Los Pastores." This writing assignment must be at least eight to ten sentences long. Students must include the Spanish name of their character and a detailed description of the character's personality.

This lesson plan mainly focuses on the Spanish writing skills of the students; therefore, this lesson plan fits well with the district's performance standards. The student's writings of their profiles are a part of their own writing portfolio. Evaluating the student's written work in this long lesson can be an on-going process from the moment the class begins to write their Spanish drama lines. Since the students will be working in groups visit and observe the progress in each

student's writing. Point out the spelling and grammatical errors; even ask the individuals if they can recognize their mistakes. Students will go through several drafts writing their Spanish scripts before they produce one that is satisfactory.

### *Students Create Costumes and Stage Props*

This artistic lesson plan is a creative way for students to learn new Spanish words and phrases. The performance standards of this district want students to be learning common words, phrases and commands in Spanish. They also require that students write in Spanish and be able to converse. All these standards from the district will be interwoven in this lesson. For example, students will describe their costume in Spanish, both orally and in writing. The group of students that are creating the stage props will also give a short Spanish presentation. They will describe the scene that they have created.

At this junction of the curriculum unit, the students have already created their own personal character and have developed the scenes and lines for their version of the play. This lesson plan has basically three main steps to complete. The first is for students to get the necessary resources to produce both their costumes and the stage props. Step two is for students to write, in Spanish, a description of their costume. This writing exercise should be no more than two paragraphs but no less than one. Students are to name their character then describe what the character is wearing. For example, a student creates a nurse for her personal character. Her written and oral Spanish description must include that she is a nurse and a Spanish description of the various parts of her costume (e.g. shoes, nursing gown, medical equipment, nursing cap).

While evaluating the students in this lesson, focus on the improvements that they have made in communicating in Spanish since the beginning of the semester. Try to give a brief comment on their improvements in Spanish pronunciation and expressions. This same procedure can be applied to their Spanish written paragraphs that describe their costumes.

### *Auditioning in Spanish for "Los Pastores"*

In this lesson plan, students will be reading lines from the Spanish script of "Los Pastores." This creative lesson focuses on both Spanish reading and speaking by the students and will cover a time span of about three or four days to complete. To prepare for this lesson, the teacher needs to select from the Spanish script of "Los Pastores" three monologues from three different characters. I would recommend selecting the characters Bartolo, Gilita and Luzbel from Torres' text (106, 88,79). Make ten copies of each monologue. Next, create a "student auditioning board" by dividing the students into groups of three. These groups, along with the teacher, will be evaluating other students as they audition in Spanish before the "board." These groups will rotate throughout the auditioning so that all groups will have the opportunity to evaluate two or three students. The final preparation step is for the teacher to display on the blackboard the grading scale that the "student auditioning

board" and teacher will be using to evaluate each student during the audition. The grading scale looks like this:

- 0 = student didn't read in Spanish;
- 1= student had many mispronunciations, choppy, no feelings with the words;
- 2= student had good pronunciation yet no expression of feeling;
- 3=student had very clear and smooth pronunciation, some words had feeling;
- 4=student had outstanding pronunciation and feeling.

Explain to the students once class has started that each student who auditions will score a 0, 1, 2, 3 or 4 multiplied by 100 points. Thus, the lowest score is 0 while the highest is 400.

Now that the students have heard and understand how they are to be evaluated, pass out the Spanish monologues to the class. Next list on the blackboard the different "student auditioning boards." Explain to the class that each "board" will listen and evaluate three different auditioning students. Each student, while listening and evaluating, will write down a score then pass it to the teacher who will average the "board's" evaluation with his/her own score.

During the remainder of the class, have all students practice reading their Spanish lines from the monologues that they have. They may either read alone or aloud with someone else. Encourage the students to practice their audition with another student so that they can assist each other in pronunciation and in putting feelings into their lines.

On the following day of auditioning, start the class with a quick review of the evaluation scale. Next, call up the first "student auditioning board" so that they may sit close to the teacher. Invite each individual student to audition before the "board" and the teacher. Encourage each auditioning student to face the entire class, have their script for reading and take several deep breaths before reading so that they may feel less nervous and more in touch with the character. Finally, smile at each student and tell him or her to simply have fun while they are auditioning.

### *Spanish Theatrical Improvisations*

First, I'd like to give a quick definition of the term improvisation before outlining this particular lesson plan. Improvisation is a term given to a unique style of acting. In this style of acting, the director or instructor invites onto the stage a group of actors or actor. Then, he or she calls out a certain word that, in turn, the actor or actors must immediately respond to by way of acting. For example, if the director shouts "sadness," then the actors immediately perform a mini drama that portrays sadness.

In this unique theatrical exercise, there are no rehearsals, no scripts, and no props. Actors are challenged to simply "improvise" with their talents in acting.

This lesson plan begins by asking the students, in Spanish, to close their eyes and relax in their seats. Next, tell them to imagine that they are about to perform before a large audience at Carnegie Hall! Tell the students to imagine their character that they have created earlier for the performance of their version of *Los Pastores*. Allow some time for students to really picture their character in their mind. Next, tell the students to imagine the tone of voice that they want their character to have as well as his or her bodily appearance. The final instruction is that you will call on each student to stand and begin to speak in Spanish in the unique way of his or her character. All students will have the opportunity to do Spanish improvisation for about one or two minutes. They may talk about anything that they are able to communicate in Spanish. The main challenge of this lesson is for teens to practice their Spanish oral skills but with the voice of their imaginary drama characters. This lesson can be really entertaining to observe students having fun and being totally crazy! This creative and fun exercise focuses on the student's ability to practice talking in Spanish. Therefore, it follows the district's learning objective that wants students to develop their skill of conversing in Spanish.

### *Student's Theatrical Performance: "Los Pastores"*

This lesson is the pinnacle of this entire unit. The student's version of the traditional play of "Los Pastores" is about to be performed before a live audience; however, several preparatory steps need to be made. Arrangements for the use of the school drama theatre need to be confirmed with the theatre director. These preliminary arrangements were mentioned at the beginning of this unit. Invitations and advertisement posters are two mini art projects this class can create. Students can design and create posters that include the title of the students' play, dates, time and place of this theatrical performance. Invitations can be created and delivered to anyone the teacher and students wish to invite. Personally, I have invited bilingual middle school kids who would be attending our high school in the near future. This gives them the opportunity to visit our campus, meet the performing actors and actresses of my class and even get a "taste" of what they will be studying and learning once they come to our high school and take the course *Spanish for Bilinguals*.

This final section of the lesson plan involves the arrangement of the stage props on the actual theatre stage, rehearsing the Spanish lines of each individual act and the actual performance. I have set aside ten school days so as to give my students sufficient time to be comfortable working and talking on stage. Days one and two will be used to gather all the student-constructed stage props from the classroom and deliver them to the Performing Arts Theatre. Students must also have, at all times, their own individual copy of the Spanish play that they earlier composed. Once the stage props have been placed at their proper location on the stage, call up all students who will be performing in act one of the play. The rest of the students must use this time to practice their lines anywhere else in the theatre. The students performing in act one need to have their Spanish scripts handy and a pen or pencil. Next, show the students where they will be positioned throughout act one and

encourage them to write notes on the side of their script pages as a reminder of where they will be located while they act. Repeat this same procedure with the other students that are performing in acts two, three, etc.

Days three through nine will be the time the teacher allows the students to rehearse in Spanish on stage. Allow them to read from their scripts for the first day or two of rehearsal, then challenge them to go from reading their lines to actually saying them. Pay close attention to proper Spanish pronunciation and model for any student that is not sure of what he or she is saying. For example, if there is a line where the devil needs to sound sly and cunning, ask the student to move aside so that the teacher can say the line with proper feeling. The last two days of stage rehearsal are for students to wear their costumes. They are usually excited about this opportunity.

Day ten is when Broadway actually has arrived in the class! All the historical research of "Los Pastores," the Spanish writing and reading exercises along with the various oral lessons are about to miraculously come together on stage. Since this final lesson is like a reward to the students for their hard, creative work in producing this version of "Los Pastores," they will not be evaluated on this final lesson of the unit. Allow at least ninety minutes to meet privately in the theatre with the entire Spanish class prior to show time. Use this time for students to ask any last questions and express their nervousness. Respond with words of confidence and encouragement! Lastly, these final moments are for the students to put on their costumes and go over their script. At last! It's now time for all you teachers to sit back in the audience and enjoy the show produced and performed by your very own students!

## **Documentation**

### District Standards

Albuquerque Public School District High School Objectives for "Spanish for Bilinguals". Objectives approved on November 1997.

These are the district objectives for this high school course:

1. students will understand and use greeting and courtesy expressions, classroom directions and commands;
2. students will converse with a partner or group within his/her range of classroom experience;
3. students will read common words and phrases aloud with reasonable accuracy and read short paragraphs, stories or dialogues and be able to

- answer questions and react to content;
4. students will write sentences and paragraphs describing people, places and events using the techniques of revision and editing;
  5. students will investigate Hispanic cultures in Spain, Mexico, Central America, and South America as well as in the United States with emphasis on New Mexico;
  6. students will recognize Hispanic contributions throughout the history and location of Spanish speaking countries in the world;
  7. students will explore career opportunities for Spanish bilinguals.

### Annotated Teacher Bibliography

Arrizón, Alicia. *Latina Performance: Traversing the Stage*. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1999.

A historical-critical look at the development of Hispanic women and their unique issues. This is an ideal guide for Hispanic female students

*La Pastorela: The Shepherd's Tale*. Writ. and Dir. By Luis Valdez. Videocassette. PBS Great Performances, 1991.

Excellent video! Gives teachers and students a wonderful view of a modern version of the traditional *Los Pastores*. This production does an outstanding job in incorporating well-known Hispanic performers as well as a good variety of Spanish music. A must to view and enjoy!

*Los Pastores: Ya Es Tiempo*. Video recording. KOB Albuquerque, 1975.

A video recording of the Nativity drama performed in Belen, New Mexico.

*Los Pastores: The Shepherd's Play*. Prod. by John D. Robb. Sound recording. Fine Arts Library, University of New Mexico, 1973.

Ceppi, Andrea K., and Yamauchi, Lois A. "A Review of Indigenous Language Programs and a Focus on Hawai'i." *Equity and Excellence in*

*Education: The University of Massachusetts School of Education Journal* 32 (1999): 11-20.

Authors give a clear and easy to understand explanation of the different levels of bilingualism that a student may be at. Although their research comes from bilingual programs in Arizona and Hawaii, they offer excellent insight for all Hispanic students.

Flores, Richard R. *Los Pastores: History and Performance in the Mexican Shepherd's Play of South Texas*. Washington and London:

Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995.

Good reading for background and the cultural understanding of the play. Author puts good attention on the musical facet of the play.

Fishman, Joshua A., and Gary D. Keller, , Eds. *Bilingual Education for Hispanic Students in the United States*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1982.

Section six is where teachers can get a thorough understanding of the learning process of a student learning two languages at the same time. This article offers several practical classroom exercises.

Garza, J. Roberto. *Contemporary Chicano Theatre*. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976.

Good resource for the teacher who wants an accurate yet brief historical background on Hispanic plays.

Glazer, Susan Mandel. *Assessment in Instruction: Reading, Writing, Spelling and Phonics for all Learners*. Norwood, Massachusetts:

Christopher-Gordon Publishers Inc., 1998.

Chapters 2 and 5 have good practical information on the use of portfolios in the classroom. Chapters 6 through 8 offer wonderful information and tips for teachers that want to improve their student's reading comprehension and writing composition.

Glore, John. "What's a Hispanic Play? That's a Tough Question." *American Theatre* 3 (1986): 39-41.

A brief overview of the various issues when writing and directing a Hispanic play.

Kanellos, Nicolás. *A History of Hispanic Theatre in the United States: Origins to 1940*. Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press, 1990.

A thorough overview of traditional Hispanic folklore and contemporary drama in the various Hispanic regions of the country.

*Los Pastores: The Shepherd's Play*. Writ. and Dir. By Judy Chaikin, Arsenio Cordova and Larry Torres. Videocassette. NLCC Educational Media Los Angeles, 1997.

A well-produced video that enables all viewers to see the rich traditional Hispanic aspects of this play.

Morris, Lee, Greg Sather, and Susan Scull eds. *Extracting Learning Styles from Social/Cultural Diversity*. Southwest Teacher Corps Network, 1978.

An excellent source of understanding the learning styles of students, especially Hispanics.

Prida, Dolores. *Beautiful Señoritas and other Plays*. Houston, Tex.: Arte Público Press, 1991.

This author focuses on contemporary Hispanic female issues such as feminism, lesbianism, and conflict between traditional and modern roles of women in society.

Rael, B. Juan. *The Folk Drama: More Light on the Origins of Los Pastores*. Albuquerque, New Mexico: New Mexico Folklore, 1956.

Although a bit out-dated, this is the perfect handout for teachers and students to use. This article gives samples of various manuscripts of the play.

Trambley-Portillo, Estela. *Sor Juana and Other Plays*. Ypsilanti, Michigan: Bilingual Press/Editorial Bilingue, 1983.

Good source for other plays to utilize in the classroom.

Torres, Larry. *Six Nuevo Mexicano Folk Dramas for the Advent Season*. Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 1999.

A treasure to have in the classroom. These six plays, including "Los Pastores" are printed in English and Spanish.

Valdez, Luis. *Actos: El Teatro Campesino*. San Juan Bautista, California: Menyah Productions, 1971.

A good source to understand the rise of modern Hispanic theatre during the time of the Chicano Movement.

Vigil, Angel. *Teatro! Hispanic Plays for Young People*. Englewood, Colorado: Teacher Ideas Press, 1996.

This book is the ideal source for scripts since there is no obligation to pay royalty fees or obtain copyright permission. Vigil has "Los Pastores" written in script-form ready for drama performers. Contact 1-800-237-6124 for more information on this source.

Weiss, Judith A. "Mainstreaming Traditional Culture: Luis Valdez's Television Adaptation of the Pastorela." *Ollantay Theatre Magazine* 2 (1994): 31-38.

A commentary on the unique way that Valdez took a traditional play and modified it into a contemporary version.

### Suggested Student Readings

Kanellos, Nicolás. *Hispanic Theatre in the United States*. Houston, Tex.: Arte Público Press, 1984.

An interesting source for students to see how contemporary Hispanic topics can be incorporated into modern plays.

Pottlitzer, Joanne. *Hispanic Theatre in the United States and Puerto Rico*. New York, N.Y.: Ford Foundation, 1988.

Another inspirational resource for students that are studying the historical background of Hispanic drama and theatre! This book also highlights the need for more Hispanic students to produce more plays.

Sandoval-Sanchez, Alberto. *José Can You See? Latinos on and off Broadway*. Madison, Wis.: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1999.

This book gives very good samples of plays written by modern Hispanic playwrights and focuses on the unique Hispanic issues that are the main themes of their plays. This is an excellent guide for students to express their issues and experiences in the world of plays.

"Spanish Literature." *Encyclopedia Americana*. International Edition. 1996.

Ideal resource for students to study the historical background of

Spanish plays like "Los Pastores".

Rael, B. Juan. *The Folk Drama: More Light on the Origin of Los Pastores*.

Albuquerque, New Mexico: New Mexico Folklore, 1956.

Perfect handout sheet for students to read.

Torres, Larry. *Six Nuevo Mexicano Folk Dramas for the Advent Season*.

Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 1999.

Students will value that the plays are printed in both languages.

Vigil, Angel. *Teatro! Hispanic Plays for Young People*. Englewood, Colorado: Teacher Ideas Press, 1996.

This text not only has "Los Pastores" in script-form, but it also has a separate chapter on theatrical tips for both the teacher and student to utilize.

#### IV. Student Handout: Spanish Questions After Viewing "Los Pastores"

¿Cómo se llaman tres personajes del drama, 'Los Pastores'?

¿Quién es Gilita? ¿Por qué es importante ella en el drama?

¿Adónde van los pastores en su jornada y por qué?

¿Quién es la persona que representa el mal espíritu?  
Escribe un ejemplo de su mal trabajo.

¿Qué es un ejemplo de una tentación de Luzbel?

¿Cómo se llama la persona que, al fin, conquistó a Luzbel en este drama?

En dos o tres frases, describe el tema mayor de 'Los Pastores.'