

STUDENT ORAL PROFICIENCY ASSESSMENT
(SOPA)

SCARSDALE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Spanish Language Programs

GRADE 5 & GRADE 8

Scarsdale, New York

2009

Beverly A. Boyson & Martie Semmer

CAL

Center for Applied Linguistics

WASHINGTON, DC

Table of Contents

I. Introduction	1
Background for the 2009 Scarsdale Assessment	1
Overview of the <i>SOPA</i>	2
Administering the <i>SOPA</i>	3
Description of the <i>SOPA</i>	3
<i>SOPA</i> Format and Tasks	3
<i>SOPA</i> Rubric	4
Sample Selection and Assessment Procedures	4
II. Results for Scarsdale Fifth Grade & Eighth Grade Students	6
<i>SOPA</i> Ratings for Fifth Graders in Four Skill Areas	6
Frequencies and Percentages	6
Average <i>SOPA</i> Ratings for Fifth Graders Overall	6
<i>SOPA</i> Ratings for Eighth Graders in Four Skill Areas	7
Frequencies and Percentages	7
Average <i>SOPA</i> Ratings for Eighth Graders Overall	8
Characteristics of <i>SOPA</i> Levels Represented in the Scarsdale Data	8
Junior Novice-Mid	8
Junior Novice-High	8
Junior Intermediate-Low	9
Junior Intermediate-Mid	9
III. Conclusions and Recommendations	11
References	14
Appendices	
Appendix A: Scarsdale Fifth Grade <i>SOPA</i> Script	
Appendix B: Scarsdale Eighth Grade <i>SOPA</i> Script	
Appendix C: <i>COPE/SOPA Rating Scale</i>	
Appendix D: ACTFL Performance Guidelines for K–12 Learners: Visual representation of anticipated performance outcomes	

Tables

Table 1: Frequencies & percentages of <i>SOPA</i> levels for Scarsdale fifth graders in 2009	6
Table 2: Average <i>SOPA</i> ratings overall for 2009 Scarsdale fifth graders	7
Table 3: Frequencies & percentages of <i>SOPA</i> levels for Scarsdale eighth graders in 2009	7
Table 4: Average <i>SOPA</i> ratings overall for 2009 Scarsdale eighth graders	8

I. Introduction

Background for 2009 Spanish Assessment for Scarsdale Public Schools

In the fall of 2009, the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) in Washington, DC, was approached by administrators of the elementary school and middle school Spanish language programs in the Scarsdale Public Schools, Scarsdale, NY, to gather Spanish oral and listening comprehension proficiency data for fifth graders and eighth graders. The elementary school Spanish language program was established for Grade 1 in 2005. Each year thereafter, one grade level was added until in 2009–10, the program was complete with the first Grade 5 group. The middle school Spanish language program, in which students currently begin Spanish language study in Grade 7 and continue through Grade 8 is a well-established, long-standing program which began operation in the 1950s or earlier. The purpose of the 2009 assessment for these two grade levels was to gather baseline assessment data on each program.

For this assessment, the *Student Oral Proficiency Assessment (SOPA)* was administered in October 2009 to the fifth graders after 4 years of Spanish instruction and to the eighth graders after 1 year of Spanish instruction. A random sampling of fifth graders in five elementary schools, Greenacres, Edgewood, Fox Meadow, Heathcote, and Quaker Ridge, and a random sampling of eighth graders at Scarsdale Middle School participated in the *SOPA*.

In the elementary schools, all students now received Spanish instruction with the addition of Grade 5 Spanish classes in 2009–10. The fifth graders in the fall 2009 *SOPA* assessment had received 2 x 30 minutes per week for 33 weeks (1980 minutes or 33 hours per year) of instruction each year in Grades 1–4 for a total of 132 hours over the 4 years prior to the assessment. In Grade 5 the students currently receive Spanish instruction 2 x 40 minutes over a 6-day cycle, which will total 2160 minutes or 36 hours by the end of the 2009–10 school year. The Spanish curriculum was designed over a 5-year period by the Scarsdale district coordinator, the elementary school Spanish teachers, and a consultant.

The Spanish lessons at the elementary school level are thematically based and make interdisciplinary connections whenever possible. A communicative approach to language learning focuses the students on listening and speaking activities that use real life situations. Cultural themes are also considered an integral part of the language instruction. The teachers have extensive experience living and/or studying in Spanish-speaking countries, and all are required to have an undergraduate major in Spanish, permanent certification, and prior teaching experience. One of the six Spanish teachers in the elementary school program is a native Spanish speaker.

Currently, at the middle school level, there is no sixth grade World Language Program. Sixth graders attend a brief presentation about their language choices for Grade 7, French or

Introduction

Spanish, and are asked to select one language to study during Grades 7 and 8. The instruction begins in Grade 7 and the course is sequential through Grade 8, at which time the students receive one unit of high school credit upon successful completion of the course. Those who choose Spanish receive instruction 5 days/week (190 minutes or roughly 3 hours per week) for 33 weeks for a total of 6270 minutes or 104.5 hours per school year. The Spanish language program is articulated between middle school and high school with a curriculum developed by the middle school language department in collaboration with the high school language department. Each year, the program is reviewed and revised as needed to add activities that are of interest to the students and that further reinforce using the Spanish language. The unit of high school credit that students receive at the end of eighth grade carries great import for them.

The middle school Spanish instruction is based on the *National Standards for Foreign Language Learning* (2006) by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). This instruction reinforces the 4 basic skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), includes cultural themes, and is coordinated with school-wide initiatives (e.g. human rights, greening, and empathy). Using a communicative approach, the teachers speak Spanish almost exclusively during the instruction. The teachers have extensive experience living and/or studying in Spanish-speaking countries, and all are required to have an undergraduate major in Spanish, 7–12 permanent certification, prior teaching experience, and an MA degree. One of the six Spanish teachers in the middle school program is a native Spanish speaker.

In preparation for administering the *SOPA* in 2009, CAL staff worked with Sarah Whittington, Department Chair and Coordinator of World Language K–8, to adapt the *SOPA* scripts so that they would reflect topics that the Scarsdale fifth and eighth graders had covered in their respective curricula. (See Appendices A and B for the Scarsdale *SOPA* scripts.) The 2009 assessment included the following procedures:

- Customizing the tasks on the *SOPA* scripts,
- Conducting *SOPA* interviews with fifth graders and eighth graders,
- Assigning *SOPA* ratings,
- Analyzing and interpreting the data, and
- Reporting on the assessment results.

This report first provides an overview of the *SOPA* instrument as outlined in the *Student Oral Proficiency Assessment Administrator's Manual* (Thompson, Boyson, & Rhodes 2006). Second, it describes the Scarsdale assessment process and presents the results for the fifth and eighth grade students overall. Finally, it summarizes the results and offers observations on the Scarsdale students' performance.

Overview of the SOPA

The *SOPA* measures listening comprehension and speaking proficiency, including oral fluency, grammar, and vocabulary. CAL staff developed the *SOPA* in 1991 as an interactive listening and speaking assessment for children learning an additional language in a school setting. Since 1991, the *SOPA* has been used widely to assess students in a variety of world language programs in both elementary and middle schools (e.g., foreign language in the elementary school (FLES), partial immersion, and two-way immersion). The *SOPA* follows an interview format, allowing students to demonstrate their highest level of performance in oral fluency, grammar, vocabulary, and listening comprehension. The *COPE (CAL Oral Proficiency Exam)/SOPA Rating Scale (COPE/SOPA-RS)* is based on the ACTFL *Speaking and Listening Proficiency Guidelines* (ACTFL 1986, 1999) and is used to assign ratings in the four skill areas mentioned above.

Administering the SOPA

The *SOPA* is administered by two assessors who have been trained on the instrument. One primarily interviews the students and the other primarily assigns ratings. The assessment takes place in a quiet location free from distractions. This arrangement provides a relaxed setting where the students can enjoy the activities and have ample opportunities to demonstrate their proficiency levels. Two students are assessed at a time and are paired according to their social compatibility and similar speaking levels. Although they interact mainly with the interviewer during the assessment activities, they may also interact with each other and with the rater at times.

The *SOPA* interview consists of a series of tasks that follow the natural development of language skills, focusing on what the students can do in the language they are learning. The interview begins with a listening comprehension activity, taking into consideration that receptive skills are less demanding than productive skills. This order helps to put the students at ease and allows them immediate success, thus building their confidence before they are asked to speak in the target language. The students are encouraged to say as much as they can during the interview, which takes 15–20 minutes to complete. Ideally, during a short break between interviews (approximately 5 minutes), the interviewer and rater discuss the students' speech samples and assign preliminary ratings on their proficiency levels. The complete interviews are video recorded for post-assessment rating verification.

Introduction

Description of the SOPA

SOPA Format and Tasks

The SOPA script may be composed of up to five tasks representing various levels of difficulty. Depending on the students' proficiency level, the interviewer uses three or four of the tasks for the interview. They are the following:

- ♦ identifying objects following Total Physical Response (TPR) instructions and naming the objects,
- ♦ answering informal questions,
- ♦ describing a science sequence (e.g., life cycle of a plant) or other scene,
- ♦ retelling a story, and
- ♦ supporting an opinion (e.g., opinion about new school rules).

The SOPA interviewer and rater create a friendly setting for the interview activities. Throughout the assessment, they use only the language being assessed, asking informal questions, making comments, and giving instructions in a natural, conversational manner. To begin, the interviewer and rater greet the students, introduce themselves, and request that the students be seated. The interviewer asks the children their names and reminds them to say as much as they can and speak only in the language being assessed.

When it is evident that the interviewer has probed beyond the students' highest level of proficiency, s/he begins the wind down by asking a few questions or giving some commands at the students' comfort level. The goal of the wind down is to give students an opportunity to respond successfully and leave the interview with a positive feeling about it. After the interview, the students receive a small reward for their participation.

SOPA Rubric

The nine-level *COPE/SOPA Rating Scale* is used to determine ratings in oral fluency, grammar (speaking), vocabulary (speaking), and listening comprehension. The proficiency levels of the *COPE/SOPA-RS* are Junior Novice-Low (JNL), Junior Novice-Mid (JNM), Junior Novice-High (JNH), Junior Intermediate-Low (JIL), Junior Intermediate-Mid (JIM), Junior Intermediate-High (JIH), Junior Advanced-Low (JAL), Junior Advanced-Mid (JAM), and Junior Advanced-High (JAH). See Appendix C for a complete description of the SOPA levels.

Student Selection and Assessment Procedures

Prior to the 2009 assessment, Sarah Whittington provided curricula for both the elementary and middle school programs to assist CAL assessment specialists in developing the 2009 SOPA scripts. Adapting the assessment language to topics, vocabulary, and speaking registers that students are accustomed to hearing in the classroom is an acceptable practice in this type of assessment. For example, if the teacher uses the informal *you (tú)* when addressing the children rather than the formal *you (usted)*, the term *tú* would be used in the script. In

Introduction

addition, a variety of terms may have the same meaning (e.g., “brown” may be *café* or *marrón*), and a variety of structures may be used for asking questions, depending on the background of the teacher and the emphasis of the program.

In preparation for the *SOPA* interviews, the Spanish teachers first paired the students according to their social compatibility and their perceived speaking levels in Spanish. A sampling of pairs in each school was selected for the 2009 assessment through the randomizing instrument at (www.randomizer.org/form.htm). No Spanish heritage or native speakers were included in the assessment. Alternate pairs of students were selected to be interviewed if some of the scheduled students were absent.

The *SOPA* interviews took place at the elementary schools on October 26–28 and at the middle school October 29 and 30. Two CAL consultants, Beverly A. Boyson and Martie Semmer, who are both *SOPA* specialists, administered the assessment. Martie conducted the Spanish interviews with the students while Beverly took notes on the students’ speech, recorded the interviews, and assigned the *SOPA* ratings. Ratings for 60 fifth graders and 42 eighth graders were included in the results for this report.

II. Results for Scarsdale Fifth Grade & Eighth Grade Students

This section presents the frequencies and overall averages for the 60 Scarsdale fifth graders and the 42 Scarsdale eighth graders included in the 2009 assessment. Following these results are the characteristics of the levels represented in the data and corresponding speech samples.

SOPA Ratings for Scarsdale Fifth Grade Students in Four Skill Areas

The 60 fifth grade students were assigned *SOPA* ratings in four skill areas: oral fluency, grammar (speaking), vocabulary (speaking), and listening comprehension. The results are reported first as percentages by level for each skill area and second in terms of the average ratings overall for the four skill areas.

Frequencies and Percentages of SOPA Levels

Table 1, below, shows that the majority of the fifth graders (over 75%) received *SOPA* ratings of Junior Novice-Mid for oral fluency, grammar, and vocabulary. Listening comprehension ratings were highest, with 65% of the students receiving a rating of Junior Novice-High or higher. The Scarsdale students' levels, according to the *COPE/SOPA Rating Scale* (see Appendix C), are described briefly on pages 8–10 of this report.

Table 1: Frequencies and Percentages of SOPA Levels for Scarsdale Fifth Graders, 2009

	JNL	JNM	JNH	JIL	JIM	JIH
Oral Fluency						
Percentage		76.7%	21.7%	1.7%		
N		46	13	1		
Grammar (speaking)						
Percentage		76.7%	21.7%	1.7%		
N		46	13	1		
Vocabulary (speaking)						
Percentage		76.7%	21.7%	1.7%		
N		46	13	1		
Listening Comprehension						
Percentage		35.0%	51.7%	11.7%	1.7%	
N		21	31	7	1	

Note: JNL = Junior Novice-Low, JNM = Junior Novice-Mid, JNH = Junior Novice-High, JIL = Junior Intermediate-Low, JIM = Junior Intermediate-Mid, JIH = Junior Intermediate-High

Average SOPA Ratings for Fifth Graders Overall

Table 2, below, shows the average *SOPA* ratings for the Scarsdale fifth graders in oral fluency, grammar (speaking), vocabulary (speaking), and listening comprehension. For the speaking categories, the students, overall, are between Junior Novice-Mid and Junior Novice-High. For listening comprehension the average is 2.80, just under Junior Novice-High.

Results for Scarsdale Fifth Grade and Eighth Grade Students

Table 2: Average SOPA ratings for Scarsdale fifth graders overall

		Oral Fluency	Grammar (Speaking)	Vocabulary (Speaking)	Listening Comprehension
Fifth Grade, 2009					
	Mean (Average)	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.80
	Standard Deviation	.474	.474	.474	.708
	N	60	60	60	60

Note: In order to calculate average ratings on the SOPA, the nine sublevels of the COPE/SOPA Rating Scale were converted to numeric values: Junior Novice-Low = 1, Junior Novice-Mid = 2, Junior Novice-High = 3, Junior Intermediate-Low = 4, Junior Intermediate-Mid = 5, Junior Intermediate-High = 6, Junior Advanced-Low = 7, Junior Advanced-Mid = 8, and Junior Advanced-High = 9.

SOPA Ratings for Scarsdale Eighth Grade Students in Four Skill Areas

The 42 eighth grade students were assigned SOPA ratings in four skill areas: oral fluency, grammar (speaking), vocabulary (speaking), and listening comprehension. The results are reported first as percentages by level for each skill area and second in terms of the average ratings overall for the four skill areas.

Frequencies and Percentages of SOPA Levels

Table 3, below, shows that the majority of the eighth graders (over 75%) received SOPA ratings of Junior Intermediate-Low for oral fluency, grammar, and vocabulary. For listening comprehension the majority of the students (just over 70%) receiving a rating of Junior Intermediate-Low and over 20% received a rating of Junior Intermediate-Mid. The Scarsdale students' levels, according to the COPE/SOPA Rating Scale (see Appendix C), are described briefly on pages 8–10 of this report.

Table 3: Frequencies and Percentages of SOPA Levels for Scarsdale Eighth Graders, 2009

	JNL	JNM	JNH	JIL	JIM	JIH
Oral Fluency						
Percentage			14.3%	78.6%	7.1%	
N			6	33	3	
Grammar (speaking)						
Percentage			14.3%	76.2%	9.5%	
N			6	32	4	
Vocabulary (speaking)						
Percentage			14.3%	81.0%	4.8%	
N			6	34	2	
Listening Comprehension						
Percentage			7.1%	71.4%	21.4%	
N			3	30	9	

Note: JNL = Junior Novice-Low, JNM = Junior Novice-Mid, JNH = Junior Novice-High, JIL = Junior Intermediate-Low, JIM = Junior Intermediate-Mid, JIH = Junior Intermediate-High

Average SOPA Ratings for Eighth Graders Overall

Table 4, below, shows the average SOPA ratings for the Scarsdale eighth graders in oral fluency, grammar (speaking), vocabulary (speaking), and listening comprehension. For the speaking categories, the students, overall, are just under Junior Intermediate-Low. The average for listening comprehension is 4.14, just above Junior Intermediate-Low. The overall averages for both speaking and listening comprehension are very close for these students.

Table 4: Average SOPA ratings for Scarsdale eighth graders overall

		Oral Fluency	Grammar (Speaking)	Vocabulary (Speaking)	Listening Comprehension
Eighth Grade, 2009					
	Mean (Average)	3.93	3.95	3.90	4.14
	Standard Deviation	.463	.492	.431	.521
	N	42	42	42	42

Note: In order to calculate average ratings on the SOPA, the nine sublevels of the COPE/SOPA Rating Scale were converted to numeric values: Junior Novice-Low = 1, Junior Novice-Mid = 2, Junior Novice-High = 3, Junior Intermediate-Low = 4, Junior Intermediate-Mid = 5, Junior Intermediate-High = 6, Junior Advanced-Low = 7, Junior Advanced-Mid = 8, and Junior Advanced-High = 9.

Characteristics of SOPA Levels Represented in the Scarsdale Data

Junior Novice-Mid

In addition to isolated words, greetings, and polite expressions produced by Junior Novice-Low speakers, language learners at the Junior Novice-Mid level can use other memorized sentences such as, *¿Cómo se dice, “run” en español? (How do you say, “run” in Spanish?)* and *Mi clase favorita es ciencias. (My favorite class is science.)*. The memorized sentences may or may not be grammatically accurate. Junior Novice-Mid speakers can also create two- or three-word phrases (or longer) that are incomplete sentences (e.g., *dos hermanos—two brothers, blanco y negro—black and white, zapatos rojos—red shoes*), using vocabulary in specific topic areas. Junior Novice-Mid speakers often use their native language to complete a sentence that they attempt in the target language (e.g., *La madre is flying—The mother is flying. He’s saving the gato—cat.*)

At the Junior Novice-Mid level of listening comprehension, students understand predictable questions, statements, and commands in familiar topic areas, but require strong contextual support (e.g., visuals) and a slower rate of speech. The communication strategies used at this level rely heavily on visuals and other contextual clues and the use of native language to expand meaning, change topic, or interpret for clarification.

Junior Novice-High

In addition to speech patterns produced by Junior Novice-Mid speakers, language learners at the Junior Novice-High level use conjugated verbs (often the verb, *to be*) creatively

Results for Scarsdale Fifth Grade and Eighth Grade Students

to speak in sentences on a number of topics, for example, *Porque yo **juegas** fútbol (inaccurate form of verb - 2rd person instead of 1st)—because I **play** football; Es muy divertido.—It's a lot of fun.; Es difícil—It's difficult.* However, they cannot sustain sentence-level speech. Often verbs are used in the infinitive form (e.g., *El persona **leer** el libro—The person to read the book.*). Junior Novice-High speakers can usually use memorized sentences and expressions easily (e.g., *Tengo hambre.—I'm hungry. Yo no sé.—I don't know.*).

Students who comprehend at the Junior Novice-High level understand new sentence-level speech with strong contextual support. Repetitions and a slower rate of speech are often necessary. Students at this level draw on background experiences that assist in comprehension and ask questions or interpret phrases in the native language as strategies for communication. They rely heavily on visuals to provide contextual clues for new topics but less for familiar ones.

Junior Intermediate-Low

Junior Intermediate-Low speakers create simple sentences with a variety of verbs to converse about a limited number of everyday and academic topics, although in a restrictive manner and often with many inaccuracies (e.g., *Me gusta practica las deportea, meaning Me gusta practicar los deportes—I like to play sports. Ella escribe—She writes.*) Spanish learners at the JIL level frequently make mistakes in subject/verb agreement and verb choice (e.g., *Yo corre mucho, meaning Yo corro mucho—I run a lot. La persona es jugando, meaning La persona está jugando—The person is playing.* Due to a great deal of grammatical inaccuracy, they are generally understood only by native speakers of the target language who are accustomed to conversing with learners of their language.

The vocabulary of JIL speakers is generally adequate for basic social and academic needs but not for explaining or adding detail. They often resort to their native language or memorized chunks in the target language when they lack the vocabulary and structures to speak on topics that are unfamiliar to them in the target language (e.g., *Es muy difícil y me gusta a challenge.—It's difficult and I like a challenge.*). Students at the Junior Intermediate-Low level of listening comprehension follow simple conversations in a limited number of content areas at a fairly normal rate of speech. Students at this level may paraphrase, question, and use other communication strategies to avoid breakdown. They may attempt to self-correct for meaning when communication breaks down.

Junior Intermediate-Mid

Language learners at the Junior Intermediate-Mid level speak at sentence level with greater ease and accuracy than JIL speakers. They maintain simple conversations in the present tense and give simple descriptions at sentence level, (e.g., *La persona es una chica y tiene los ojos café y tiene pelo café y no es alta. The person is a girl and she has brown eyes*

Results for Scarsdale Fifth Grade and Eighth Grade Students

and she has brown hair and she isn't tall. Hay una guitarra cerca de la puerta. There's a guitar near the door. Ella debe estar en la clase de música. She should be in music class.)

Grammatical inaccuracies are present in their speech, especially when they attempt sentences with more complexity (e.g., *Me gusta el baloncesto porque yo muy bien en baloncesto. I like basketball because I-**verb lacking**-very good in basketball.*). At the Junior Intermediate-Mid level of listening comprehension, students understand sentence-level speech at a normal rate and can grasp the meaning of information presented in new contexts, although they may require a slower rate of speech for unfamiliar topics.

III. Conclusions and Recommendations

The goal of the 2009 *Student Oral Proficiency Assessment* in Scarsdale Public Schools was to gather baseline data for students in both the elementary school and middle school Spanish programs. The results demonstrated that the average *SOPA* ratings, overall, for the Scarsdale fifth graders are just above Junior Novice-Mid for their Spanish speaking proficiency, including oral fluency, grammar, and vocabulary. For listening comprehension, they average, overall, just below Jr. Novice-High. The average *SOPA* ratings, overall, for the Scarsdale eighth graders demonstrated that they are just below Jr. Intermediate-Low for their Spanish speaking proficiency and just above Jr. Intermediate-Low for listening comprehension.

These results reveal that the students in both Scarsdale programs have attained levels of speaking proficiency that are within the range of anticipated performance outcomes for students who are in similar programs, according to the *ACTFL Performance Guidelines for K–12 Learners* (ACTFL, 1998) chart (see Appendix D). These benchmarks and chart were based on feedback from “hundreds of American foreign language educators who reviewed and responded to the guidelines during their development and have verified that the descriptions represent the reality of what students should be able to do with a foreign language after set amounts of time, provided that their instruction is both **standards-based** and **performance-based**.” (p. 2)

The fifth graders’ speaking proficiency level of 2.25 after being in the Scarsdale Spanish program in Grades 1–4 is at about the same level as the chart shows for students who have been in a language program in K–4. Even though the Scarsdale fifth graders had 1 year less of instruction than those in the guidelines, their ratings are comparable to students who have had the additional year of instruction. The Scarsdale eighth graders speaking skills are also strong according to these benchmarks. The ACTFL chart shows that the anticipated level for students in language programs for Grades 7–12 is between Jr. Intermediate-Low and Jr. Intermediate-Mid by the end of Grade 12. *SOPA* results show that over 75% of the Scarsdale eighth graders are at Jr. Intermediate-Low after 1 year of language study, and overall, they are at 3.90+. These are very positive results for the eighth graders.

The descriptors set forth in the ACTFL guidelines assume a “sustained sequence of standards-based, performance-outcome, language instruction” (p. 7). This means, according to ACTFL, that students are enrolled in “elementary programs that meet from 3–5 days per week for no less than 30–40 minutes per class” and “middle school programs that meet daily for no less than 40–50 minutes” (p. 6) per class. The amount of daily instruction that the Scarsdale middle school students receive is about the same amount of time as noted by ACTFL. However, the Scarsdale elementary school students were in Spanish classes for less time (2 x 30 minutes per week for 33 weeks in Grades 1–4) than that outlined above. It must be concluded that

Conclusions and Recommendations

despite the limited amount of time that they had received Spanish instruction, other factors contributed to the students' stronger-than-would-be-expected Spanish speaking proficiency. Some of the Scarsdale students in both groups have attained commendable proficiency beyond the anticipated outcomes. These results demonstrate that the students in both programs are receiving high quality instruction.

For listening comprehension, it is noteworthy that the Scarsdale fifth graders' average, overall, (2.80) is more than half a sublevel higher than their averages for the speaking categories and therefore at a higher level than the benchmark illustrated on ACTFL's anticipated outcomes chart. In language acquisition, this is a natural developmental process where students learn to listen and understand before they speak. These are also favorable results, considering the limited amount of Spanish instruction that the students had received. As very young learners listen to the target language in communicative classroom environments, their comprehension, over time, precedes and often exceeds their production of the spoken language. This is a natural outcome as young children become familiar with basic vocabulary and language structures addressing a broad range of topics. These are the building blocks that lead to vertical growth as the students gradually begin to express themselves verbally.

Frequency of instruction (i.e., 5 days per week), where best practices are used, is an important factor that has been shown to increase the rate of language acquisition in the classroom setting (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004 p. 451). The eighth graders receive language instruction 5 days per week, an advantage that has given them the opportunity to steadily increase their proficiency. It is interesting to note that these students' listening comprehension level, overall, is approximately one fourth of a sublevel higher than their speaking proficiencies after 1 year of study. These results seem to indicate that as the students are presented with new content in Spanish, they are immediately using it to speak in meaningful contexts so that their listening comprehension only slightly exceeds their oral proficiency level. The students are evidently very motivated to learn Spanish. The *SOPA* administrators were impressed by the students' enthusiasm, in general, for speaking Spanish in all of the Scarsdale schools.

Since the Scarsdale elementary school Spanish program is very new compared to the middle school Spanish program, it would be informative to follow up the 2009 *SOPA* with another *SOPA* assessment of the current fifth grade students in the fall of their eighth grade year (2012) to determine their speaking and listening comprehension proficiencies after receiving Spanish instruction in Grades 1–7. Another key factor that leads to increased language proficiency over the long term is vertical articulation from each grade to the next as well as between elementary and middle school, and between middle and high school. The questions that would be asked are the following: In the Scarsdale schools, how might the proficiencies of the current eighth graders after only 1 year of instruction compare with those of

Conclusions and Recommendations

eighth graders after 7 years of instruction? Will those who have completed the Grades 1–7 sequence be stronger?

Longitudinal studies that compare early language learning programs with those that begin in the middle school or high school are rare. One such study, which took place in the Westport Public Schools, Westport, CT, compared eighth graders in 2008 from the district's Grade 5–8 Spanish language program with eighth graders in 2009 from the K–8 Spanish program. When the results of both groups were examined, they revealed that the 2009 cohort that began Spanish instruction in kindergarten outperformed the 2008 cohort. A two-tailed t-test analysis demonstrated significant differences at $p < .000$ in all four skill areas in favor of the 2009 cohort of eighth graders. Statistical significance for the t-test is set at $p < .05$, which means that there are fewer than 5 chances in 100 that the differences between two groups are by chance. Findings that are significant at $p < .000$ (i.e., not 1 in 1000 chances that the differences between the groups are by chance) are even stronger than significance at $p < .05$.

These analyses provided the most convincing statistical evidence that the 2009 eighth graders' proficiencies were significantly higher than those of the 2008 eighth graders. The overwhelming evidence in favor of the 2009 eighth graders showed the K–8 Spanish program in Westport to be more effective than the Grades 5–8 program for developing the students' Spanish language proficiency. Because there are few, if any, other studies like this, the Westport findings are worth mentioning in this report. If the Scarsdale eighth graders in the Grades 1–8 program were assessed in the fall of 2012 after 7 years of Spanish instruction and their results compared with the Scarsdale 2009 eighth graders' results, the findings would probably be similar. Such an assessment is highly recommended.

The Scarsdale Public Schools are to be commended for historically recognizing the need for students to learn other languages, which has led to the well-established programs in the middle school and high school. Also, the school community is to be commended for valuing early language learning and for establishing more recently, a program in the elementary school beginning in Grade 1. Some benefits of learning a new language at an early age and continuing language study in an articulated, long-sequenced program are the following: 1) children begin learning a new language at an optimum developmental stage within their academic career, thus allowing adequate time necessary for them to develop high-levels of proficiency; 2) children develop an awareness of other cultures and a willingness to learn additional languages at the secondary or post-secondary levels; 3) children have the possibility to communicate with people in the target language that would not be possible otherwise; 4) children's intellectual growth and

Conclusions and Recommendations

development is enhanced. (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004). A quotation from Curtain and Dahlberg's book, *Languages and Children—Making the Match*, emphasizes the fourth point:

An article in *Learning Languages*, Language Learning and the Developing Brain (1996) summarizes some of the key findings from the public radio program *Gray Matters: The Developing Brain*. According to Dr. Michael Phelps, chairman of the Department of Molecular and Medical Pharmacology of UCLA School of Medicine, the child's brain is different from the adult brain in that it is a very dynamic structure that is evolving. A two year old child has twice as many synapses (connections) in the brain as an adult. The young brain must use these connections or lose them. Thus, failure to learn a skill, such as a foreign language, during a critical or sensitive period, has important significance. The learning experiences of the child determine which connections are developed and which will no longer function. That means that what is easy and natural for a child—learning a language—can become hard work for an older learner. (p. 393)

It is recommended that the students in the Scarsdale schools continue to be offered the elementary school Spanish program with articulation to the already established middle school and high school programs. As students move from the Spanish elementary school program to the middle school, the middle school language teachers will build on the language skills that the students acquired in Grades 1–5; then, as students move from the Grade 1–8 program, the high school language teachers will build on the language skills developed over 8 years of formal language instruction. This vertical articulation not only allows students to optimize the development of their communicative ability in another language, but also enhances their cognitive growth throughout their K–12 experience.

References

- American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. (1998, Reprinted 2002). *ACTFL performance guidelines for K–12 learners*. Alexandria, VA: ACTFL, Inc.
- American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. (1986). *Proficiency guidelines: Listening*. Yonkers, NY: Author.
- American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. (1999). *Proficiency guidelines: Speaking*. Alexandria, VA: ACTFL, Inc.
- Boyson, B. A., Semmer, M., & Thompson, L. (2009). *Student Oral Proficiency Assessment Westport Public Schools World Language Program*, Washington, DC. Center for Applied Linguistics.
- Curtain, H. & Dahlberg, C. A. (2004). *Languages and Children: Making the Match. New languages for young learners, Grades K–8*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project. (2006). *Standards for foreign language learning in the 21st century, 3rd edition revised*. Alexandria, VA: ACTFL, Inc.
- Thompson, L., Boyson, B. A., & Rhodes, N. (2006). *Student oral proficiency assessment (SOPA) administrator's manual*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics and Ames, IA: Iowa State University National K–12 Foreign Language Resource Center.

Appendices



STUDENT ORAL PROFICIENCY ASSESSMENT (SOPA)
Scarsdale, New York
Elementary School Grades 1–5 Language Program
Grade 5 Spanish Script 2009

Warm up: Greet the students in Spanish and introduce yourselves. Ask the students their names and ask them to write them on nametags or cards. These tags will help you remember to address them by name during the interview. Tell them that you would like to do some activities with them in Spanish. Encourage them to say as much as they can and to speak clearly.

Introducción: Hola. Siéntense, por favor. ¿Cómo están ustedes? Me llamo _____. ¿Cómo te llamas? Es un placer conocerlos(as). Muchas gracias por venir. Su participación es muy importante y quiero que se sientan cómodos(as). Hoy vamos a hacer algunas actividades orales en español. Pues, hablen todo lo que puedan en español, y hablen solamente en español, por favor. Les voy a pedir que hablen lo más claro posible para que se pueda oír bien en el video.

Task 1: Animales (Identifying, naming, describing) [3 minutes] The objective of this task is to put the students at ease by beginning with a task they can complete easily. Task 1 gives them the opportunity to demonstrate listening comprehension first and then to respond to prompts with one-word answers, short phrases, and longer answers, if possible.

Instructions: Show the students the bag with a variety of animals. Ask one student to open it and take everything out. Check for listening comprehension first; then use the following commands/questions. Alternate between the two students so they have equal opportunities to perform the same kind of action or answer the same kind of question.

Necesito que me ayuden con la primera actividad que vamos a hacer. [Nombre], por favor, saca todo de esta bolsa.

Listening Comprehension:

Name several objects for each student to form a group of objects. If a student cannot identify an object you name, give hints.

[Nombre del estudiante A], pon en un grupo en tu lado de la mesa un gato, [wait time], un elefante [wait time], una vaca [wait time], un pez [wait time], una iguana [wait time] y una culebra (o una serpiente) [wait time]. Gracias.

[Nombre del estudiante B], haz un grupo en tu lado de la mesa. Toma el perro [wait time], una tortuga [wait time], un caballo [wait time], una rana [wait time], un delfín [wait time] y una estrella del mar [wait time]. Gracias.

Oral Fluency:

[Estudiante A], ¿puedes nombrar tus animales, por favor? ¿Cómo se llama este animal? ¿Y este?

[Estudiante B], ¿puedes nombrar tus animales también, por favor? ¿Cómo se llama este animal? ¿Y este?

[Nombre del estudiante B], mira los animales que tienes. Descríbeme uno de ellos, por favor. ¿Cómo es?

[Nombre del estudiante A], mira los animales que tienes. Descríbeme uno de tus animales, por favor. ¿Cómo es?

Students take turns putting two things at a time into the bag and saying the number that corresponds.

Ahora, van a poner todos los objetos en la bolsa y quiero que los cuenten de dos en dos, Dos, Cuatro. . . Gracias.

Transition to Task 2: After the students have put the objects in the bag, tell them that you want to ask them a few questions about themselves and about their school.

Ahora, les voy a hacer unas preguntas sobre sus gustos y sobre sus vidas personales.

Task 2: Preguntas informales (Answering questions on topics of personal interest) [5 minutes] The objective of this task is to engage the students in conversation and give them opportunity to respond to a variety of questions, using phrases and sentences.

Instructions: The questions below are possible topics of interest for the students. Note that the starting question for each topic is the easiest and the additional questions are progressively more demanding and can be used as you sense that the student is capable of handling more complex questions. Keep your manner as natural as possible and rephrase or go on to a different question if a student cannot respond. Do your best to elicit responses beyond a simple "yes" or "no" and other single-word utterances. Alternate who is asked a set of questions first to avoid having the same student always respond first.

Ask Student A these question first, then Student B.

¿Tienes una mascota (o un animal doméstico) en tu casa? ¿Qué animal es? ¿Cómo se llama? ¿Cómo es? ¿Qué te gusta hacer con ____? [si contesta, "No," pregunta,] ¿Tienes un animal favorito? ¿Qué animal es? ¿Cómo es? ¿Por qué es ese tu favorito?

Ask Student B this set of questions first, then Student A.

Hablemos sobre tu familia. ¿Tienes hermanos o hermanas? ¿Cuántos(as)? ¿Cómo se llama(n)? ¿Me puedes describir a _____, por favor? ¿Cómo es ____? [Si no tiene hermanos, el estudiante puede describir a un(a) amigo(a).] ¿Qué les gusta hacer juntos(as)?

Ask Student A this set of questions first, then Student B.

_____, ¿juegas deportes aquí en la escuela o en los fines de semana? ¿Qué deporte te gusta más? ¿Qué haces cuando juegas al ____ (deporte)? ¿Cómo lo juegas?

Transition to Task 3: Thank the students for answering your questions and introduce Task 3.

Muy bien. Muchas gracias por contestarme las preguntas. Ahora vamos a pasar a la siguiente actividad. Les voy a enseñar un dibujo de una comunidad y objetos y personas que se ven en esa comunidad.

Task 3: La Comunidad (Identifying, Naming, Following and giving commands, Describing) [Approximately 5–7 minutes] The magnetic playset by Smethport is used for this task. The objective of the task is to further assess listening comprehension and to give the students an opportunity to name, give commands, and describe, using sentence-level speech, if possible.

Instructions: Show the students the community scene with the objects and people, and explain that you are going to play some games using these things.

Listening Comprehension (identifying objects and following commands):

First name places/people for the students to identify, alternating between them and giving them equal opportunities to respond.

¿Dónde hay (está) _____ (un restaurante, un apartamento, el banco, una tienda (un mercado), la estación de policía, una chica, una bombera, un hombre, un cartero, etc.)

Next, name several objects for each student to identify and place in the scene as you indicate. If a student cannot identify an object you name, offer hints to help him guess, such as color, size, and location. You may use some complex commands, including funny ones. Give the students equal opportunities.

[Nombre del estudiante B], toca el policía. Pon el policía en el triángulo verde.

[Nombre del estudiante A], toca la madre (o Sra. o mujer). Pon la madre (o Sra. o mujer) cerca de la puerta del banco.

[Nombre del estudiante B], toca el perro. Pon el perro al lado del apartamento.

[Nombre del estudiante A], toca el taxi. Pon el taxi detrás del triángulo verde.

[Nombre del estudiante B], toca el chico con la camisa roja. Pon el chico en la calle con la pelota.

[Nombre del estudiante A], toca la chica con pantalones amarillos. Pon la chica al lado de la tienda de mascotas.

Giving commands:

Encourage interaction at the sentence level by asking the students to give each other commands. Introduce this game by saying: “Now you are going to take turns being the teacher. Who would like to be the teacher? Tell ___ where to place objects or people in the community.” Students take turns.

Ahora tú, _____, vas a ser el(la) profesor(a). Dile a ___ que ponga una cosa en la comunidad.

If the students have difficulty giving commands, skip to the **Wind down**. If, after giving commands, students seem like they could create more at the sentence level, go on to the next activity, **Describing**, and choose an option.

Describing 1:

Model this activity by putting three objects from the classroom scene in the middle of the table. Describe one object and ask the students to guess which one you described. After modeling the activity, ask them to take turns describing an object for you and their partner to guess.

Voy a describir uno de estos tres objetos y ustedes tienen que adivinar cuál es el objeto que voy a describir.

Describing 2:

Before beginning **Describing 2**, add a few more objects to the scene, including some that are improperly placed (e.g., the taxi on the toys store roof), to create funny situations. Use more challenging questions. Ask the students to describe what is going on. This helps liven the interaction and keeps them engaged.

¿Qué pasa en esta comunidad? ¿Qué hace él/ella?

¿Hay algo cómico (algo que no está bien) en esta comunidad? ¿Qué puedes hacer para solucionar (resolver) este problema?

Transition to Wind down: When the students have finished this task, tell them that you have one more question to ask and go to the **Wind down**.

Wind down: (Easy questions) [1 minute] The objective of the Wind down is to allow students to end the SOPA interview at their comfort level. Because one goal of the interview is for them to feel positive about the conversation, it is especially important for them to be able to respond successfully.

Use an easy prompt. Ask each student the questions.

¿_____, tienes un(a) mejor amigo(a)? ¿Qué me puedes decir acerca de tu amigo(a)? ¿Cómo es?

Thank the students for participating and offer a small reward.

Muy bien. Muchas gracias chicos(as). Eso es todo. Lo hicieron muy bien y tenemos un regalito para Uds.



STUDENT ORAL PROFICIENCY ASSESSMENT (SOPA)

Scarsdale, New York

Middle School World Language Program

Grade 8 Spanish Script 2009

Warm up: Greet the students in Spanish and introduce yourselves. Ask the students their names and ask them to write them on nametags or cards. These tags will help you remember to address them by name during the interview. Tell them that you would like to do some activities with them in Spanish. Encourage them to say as much as they can and to speak clearly.

Introducción: Hola. Siéntense, por favor. ¿Cómo están ustedes? Me llamo _____. ¿Cómo te llamas? Es un placer conocerlos(as). Muchas gracias por venir. Su participación es muy importante y quiero que se sientan cómodos(as). Hoy vamos a hacer algunas actividades orales en español. Pues, hablen todo lo que puedan en español, y hablen solamente en español, por favor. Les voy a pedir que hablen lo más claro posible para que se pueda oír bien en el video.

Task 1: Objetos de la Escuela (Identifying, naming, describing) [3 minutes] The objective of this task is to put the students at ease by beginning with a task they can complete easily. Task 1 gives them the opportunity to demonstrate listening comprehension first and then to respond to prompts with one-word answers, short phrases, and longer answers, if possible.

Instructions: Show the students the bag with school supplies. Ask one student to open it and take everything out. Check for listening comprehension first; then use the following commands/questions. Alternate between the two students so they have equal opportunities to perform the same kind of action or answer the same kind of question.

Necesito que me ayuden con la primera actividad que vamos a hacer. [Nombre], por favor, saca todo de esta bolsa.

[Nombre del estudiante A], pon en un grupo en tu lado de la mesa un lápiz, [wait time] un libro, [wait time], una goma (o un borrador) [wait time], la calculadora [wait time], el sacapuntas [wait time], y el pegamento. Gracias.

[Nombre del estudiante B], haz un grupo en tu lado de la mesa. Toma la regla [wait time], los marcadores [wait time], el bolígrafo (o la pluma) [wait time], una carpeta [wait time], el cuaderno [wait time], y las tijeras. Gracias.

Oral Fluency:

[Nombre del estudiante B], mira los objetos que tienes. ¿Puedes nombrar tus objetos, por favor? Gracias. Ahora, elige un objeto, descríbelo y dime para que se lo usa.

[Nombre del estudiante A], mira los objetos que tienes. ¿Puedes nombrar tus objetos, por favor? Gracias. Ahora, elige un objeto, descríbelo y dime para que se lo usa.

Imagínense que están en la clase de arte. [Nombre del estudiante A], tú necesitas unos marcadores que [nombre del estudiante B] tiene. Pregúntale si él (ella) tiene unos marcadores y si tú los puedes usar.

Ahora, imagínense que están en la clase de matemáticas. [Nombre del estudiante B], tú necesitas una calculadora y [nombre del estudiante A] tiene una. Pregúntale si él (ella) tiene una calculadora y si tú la puedes usar.

Students take turns putting two things at a time into the bag and saying the number that corresponds.
Gracias. Ahora, van a poner todos los objetos en la bolsa y van a contarlos. Muy bien.

Transition to Task 2: After the students have put the objects in the bag, tell them that you want to ask them a few questions about themselves and about their school.

Ahora, les voy a hacer unas preguntas sobre sus gustos y sobre la escuela.

Task 2: Preguntas informales (Answering questions on topics of personal interest) [5 minutes] The objective of this task is to engage the students in conversation and give them opportunity to respond to a variety of questions, using phrases and sentences.

Instructions: The questions below are possible topics of interest for the students. Note that the starting question for each topic is the easiest and the additional questions are progressively more demanding and can be used as you sense that the student is capable of handling more complex questions. Keep your manner as natural as possible and rephrase or go on to a different question if a student cannot respond. Do your best to elicit responses beyond a simple "yes" or "no" and other single-word utterances. Alternate who is asked a set of questions first to avoid having the same student always respond first.

Ask Student A this set of questions first, then Student B.

¿Qué actividad te gusta hacer en la tarde después de la escuela? ¿Cómo lo juegas? O ¿Qué haces en esa actividad? ¿Por qué te gusta esa actividad? ¿Con quién haces esa actividad?

Ask Student B this set of questions first, then Student A.

¿Cuántas personas hay en tu familia? ¿Tienes hermanos o hermanas? ¿Cómo se llama(n)? Describe uno de ellos. ¿Cómo es _____? [Si no tiene hermanos, el estudiante puede describir a otro miembro de la familia.] ¿Qué les gusta hacer juntos(as) en la familia?

Ask Student A this set of questions first, then Student B.

¿Tienes una clase favorita aquí en la escuela? ¿Qué haces en esa clase? ¿Por qué es esa tu favorita?

Transition to Task 3: Thank the students for answering your questions and introduce Task 3.

Muy bien. Muchas gracias por contestarme las preguntas. Ahora vamos a pasar a la siguiente actividad. Les voy a enseñar un dibujo de un salón de clase con objetos y personas que se ven en una clase.

Task 3: El Salón de Clase (Identifying, Naming, Following and giving commands, Describing) [Approximately 5–7 minutes] The magnetic playset by Smethport is used for this task. The objective of the task is to further assess listening comprehension and to give the students an opportunity to name, give commands, and describe, using sentence-level speech, if possible.

Instructions: Show the students the classroom scene with the objects and people, and explain that you are going to play some games using these things.

Listening Comprehension (identifying objects and following commands):

First name objects/people for the students to identify, alternating between them and giving them equal opportunities to respond.

¿Dónde hay (está) _____ (una profesora, una chica, un chico, la computadora, la mochila, el alfabeto, el globo, una mesa, el escritorio, el reloj, etc.)

Next, name several objects for each student to identify and place in the scene as you indicate. If a student cannot identify an object you name, offer hints to help him guess, such as color, size, and location. You may use some complex commands, including funny ones. Give the students equal opportunities.

[Nombre del estudiante B], toca los números. Pon los números en la pizarra verde.

[Nombre del estudiante A], toca los bloques. Pon los bloques debajo de la mesa redonda. (Es como un círculo).

[Nombre del estudiante B], toca la guitarra. Pon la guitarra en la ventana cerca del autobús.

[Nombre del estudiante A], toca el oso café. Es un animal. Pon el oso sobre el escritorio de la maestra.

[Nombre del estudiante B], toca la profesora que tiene un libro. Pon la profesora al lado de la puerta amarilla.

[Nombre del estudiante A], toca la chica con pantalones azules. Pon la chica al lado de los bloques en el suelo.

Describing 1:

Model this activity by putting three objects from the school scene in the middle of the table. Describe one object and ask the students to guess which one you described. After modeling the activity, ask them to take turns choosing objects and describing an object for you and their partner to guess.

Voy a describir uno de estos tres objetos y ustedes tienen que adivinar cuál es el objeto que voy a describir.

If the students have difficulty responding in the **Describing 1** activity, skip to the **Wind down**. If, they seem like they could create more at the sentence level, go on to the next activity, **Describing 2**.

Describing 2:

Before beginning **Describing 2**, add a few more objects to the scene, including some that are improperly placed (e.g., a student on the teacher's desk, the chair on the clock or chalkboard, etc.), to create funny situations. Use more challenging questions. Ask the students to describe what is going on. This helps liven the interaction and keeps them engaged.

¿Qué pasa en esta clase? ¿Qué hace él/ella?

¿Hay algo cómico (algo que no está bien o que no es normal) en esta clase? ¿Qué puedes hacer para solucionar (resolver) este problema?

Transition to Wind down: When the students have finished this task, tell them that you would like to ask them a couple more questions and go to the **Wind down**.

Wind down: (Easy questions) [1 minute] The objective of the Wind down is to allow students to end the SOPA interview at their comfort level. Because one goal of the interview is for them to feel positive about the conversation, it is especially important for them to be able to respond successfully.

Use an easy prompt. Ask each student the questions.

_____, tienes un(a) mejor amigo(a)?. Descríbemelo(la), por favor. ¿Cómo es tu amigo(a)?

Thank the students for participating and offer a small reward.

Muy bien. Muchas gracias chicos(as). Eso es todo. Lo hicieron muy bien y tenemos un regalito para Uds.

CAL ORAL PROFICIENCY EXAM AND STUDENT ORAL PROFICIENCY ASSESSMENT RATING SCALE (COPE/SOPA-RS)*
English Version © 2009 CAL**

JR. NOVICE-LOW	JR. NOVICE-MID	JR. NOVICE-HIGH	JR. INTERMEDIATE-LOW	JR. INTERMEDIATE-MID	JR. INTERMEDIATE-HIGH	JR. ADVANCED-LOW	JR. ADVANCED-MID	JR. ADVANCED-HIGH
Oral Fluency								
-Produces only isolated words (i.e., single-word responses) and/or greetings and polite expressions such as <i>good morning</i> and <i>thank you</i> .	-In addition to isolated words, uses phrases of two or more words, and/or memorized phrases or sentences (e.g., <i>My name is... I don't know</i>) in predictable topic areas. -May attempt to create sentences, but is not successful. -Long pauses are common.	-Uses memorized expressions with reasonable ease. -Shows emerging signs of creating with the language to communicate ideas. -Creates some sentences successfully, but cannot sustain sentence-level speech.	-Goes beyond memorized expressions to maintain simple conversations at the sentence level by creating with the language, although in a restrictive and reactive manner. -Handles a limited number of everyday social and academic interactions.	-Maintains simple sentence-level conversations. May initiate talk spontaneously without relying on questions or prompts. -Gives simple descriptions successfully. -May attempt longer, more complex sentences. Few, if any, connectors are used.	-Initiates and sustains conversations by using language creatively. -Shows emerging evidence of paragraph-like speech with some connected sentences (e.g., <i>then, so, that</i> , etc.) in descriptions and simple narratives, but has no actual paragraphs with a main idea, organization, and connection.	-Reports facts easily. Can discuss topics of personal interest and some academic topics at the paragraph level to satisfy school and everyday requirements. -Narrates and describes at the paragraph level also, although haltingly at times. -False starts are common.	-Handles with ease and confidence concrete topics of personal and general interest and a number of academic topics. -Narrates and describes smoothly in paragraphs having a main idea, organization, and a variety of sentence connectors (e.g., <i>first, next, finally; then, when, that, although, but, therefore, so</i> , etc.).	-Handles most social and academic requirements confidently, but may hesitate when responding to complex, formal tasks (Superior level). -Organizes and extends discourse (multiple paragraphs) in an emerging ability to hypothesize on abstract topics (<i>if-then</i>) and support opinions.
Grammar (Speaking)								
-May use greetings and polite expressions accurately. -Lacks an awareness of grammar and syntax.	-Memorized expressions with verbs and other short phrases may be accurate, but inaccuracies are common. -Does not successfully create at the sentence level with conjugated verbs.	-Creates some sentences with conjugated verbs, but in other attempts to create sentences, verbs may be lacking or are not conjugated. -Other grammatical inaccuracies are present.	-Uses a variety of common verbs in present tense (conjugations may be inaccurate) in sentences. -Other verb tenses/forms may appear in memorized language. -The listener may be confused by this speech due to the many grammatical inaccuracies.	-Uses an increasing number and variety of verbs. -Verbs are mostly in present tense although awareness of other verb tenses (future/past) and forms may be evident. -Many grammatical inaccuracies may be present.	-Uses a large variety of verbs well in present tense. Uses many verbs in the past tenses but lacks control of past. May use future and other verb forms. -Grammatical inaccuracies may still be present. Awareness of inaccuracies may be evident.	-Uses present, past, and future tenses. -May effectively self-correct when aware of grammatical inaccuracies. -Structures of native language may be evident (e.g., literal translation).	-Has good control of present, past, and future tenses. -Some inaccuracies may remain, but speech is readily understood by native speakers of the language. ***In some cases, may use non-standard varieties of grammar.	-Uses all verb tenses accurately and sometimes uses complex grammatical structures, (e.g., <i>if...occurred, then...might also happen</i>). -Some patterns of error may persist, but they do not interfere with communication.
Vocabulary (Speaking)								
-Uses single words in very specific topic areas in predictable contexts. -May use greetings and polite expressions.	-Uses single words, short phrases, greetings, polite expressions, and other memorized expressions on a limited number of topics. -Frequent searches for words are common. May use native language or gestures when attempting to create with language.	-Uses vocabulary centering on basic objects, places, and common kinship terms, adequate for minimally elaborating utterances in predictable topic areas. -Use of native language and gestures is common to expand topics.	-Has basic vocabulary for making statements and asking questions to satisfy basic social and academic needs, but not for explaining or elaborating on them. -Use of some native language is common when vocabulary is lacking.	-Has basic vocabulary, permitting discussions of a personal nature and limited academic topics. Serious gaps exist for discussing topics of general interest. -If precise word is lacking, may use circumlocution ineffectively. May resort to native language.	-Has a broad enough vocabulary for discussing simple social and academic topics in generalities, but lacks detail. -Sometimes achieves successful circumlocution when precise word is lacking. May use native language occasionally.	-Vocabulary is primarily generic but is adequate for discussing concrete or factual topics of a personal nature, topics of general interest, and academic subjects. -May use circumlocution successfully when specific terms are lacking.	-Has adequate vocabulary for including detail when talking about concrete or factual topics of a personal nature, topics of general interest, and academic subjects. -Uses circumlocution effectively. Rarely uses native language.	-Uses precise vocabulary for discussing a wide variety of topics related to everyday social and academic situations. -Lack of vocabulary rarely interrupts the flow of speech.
Listening Comprehension								
-Recognizes single, isolated words, greetings and polite expressions.	-Understands predictable questions, statements, and commands in familiar topic areas (with strong contextual support), though at slower than normal rate of speech and/or with repetitions.	-Understands simple questions, statements, and commands in familiar topic areas, and some new sentences with strong contextual support. -May require repetition, slower speech, or rephrasing.	-Understands familiar and new sentence-level questions and commands in a limited number of content areas with strong contextual support for unfamiliar topics. -Follows conversation at a fairly normal rate.	-Understands sentence-level speech in new contexts at a normal rate of speech although slow-downs may be necessary for unfamiliar topics. -Carries out commands without prompting.	-Understands longer stretches of connected speech on a number of topics at a normal rate of speech. -Seldom has problems comprehending everyday topics. -Carries out commands verbally.)	-Understands main ideas and many details in connected speech on some academic topics and on topics of personal interest.	-Understands main ideas and most details in connected speech on a variety of topics, but may be unable to follow complicated speech. -May have difficulty with highly idiomatic speech.	-Understands complex academic discourse and highly idiomatic speech in conversation. -Confusion may occur due to socio-cultural nuances or unfamiliar topics.

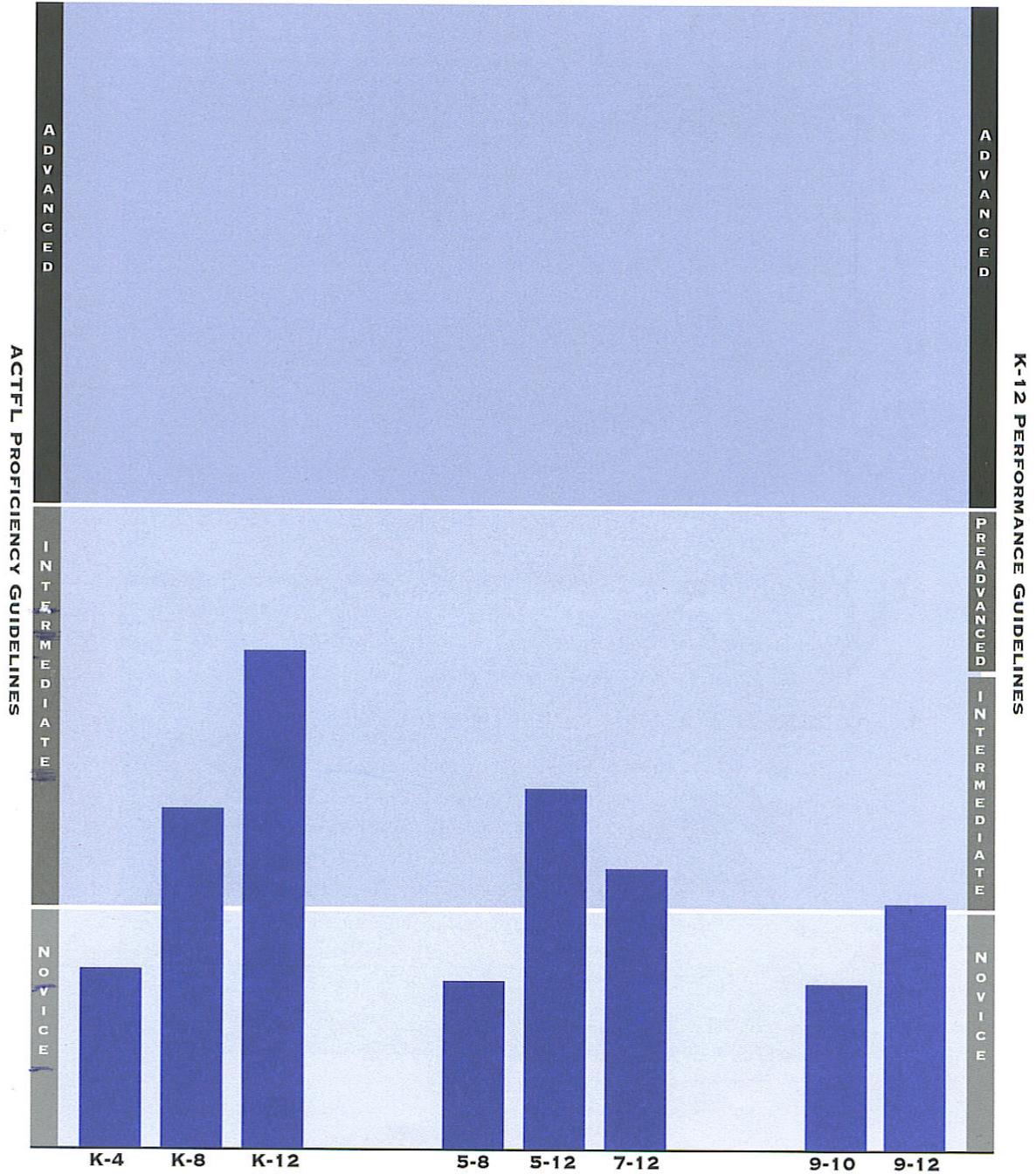
* The COPE/SOPA Rating Scale is based on the ACTFL *Listening and Speaking Proficiency Guidelines*, American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (1986, 1999).

** Please note that the 2009 version of this rubric is a revision in terminology only to make the descriptions clearer, and not a revision of the sublevels.

*** This feature may not appear, but if present in student speech, it is acceptable through the Jr. Advanced-Mid level of proficiency.

Note: This chart is used with permission from the *American Council on the teaching of Foreign Languages*.

Visual Representation of Anticipated Performance Outcomes As Described in the ACTFL Performance Guidelines for K-12 Learners¹



¹ Descriptors are based on information gathered from foreign language professionals representing a variety of program models and articulation sequences. Descriptors are appropriate for languages more commonly taught in the United States. Descriptors assume a sustained sequence of Standards-based, performance-outcome, language instruction.