

***STUDENT ORAL PROFICIENCY ASSESSMENT  
(SOPA)***

**SCARSDALE PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
World Language Program - Spanish**

**GRADE 8**

**Scarsdale, New York**

**2012**

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# Table of Contents

<b>I. Introduction</b>	1
Background for the 2012 Spanish Assessment in Scarsdale Public Schools	1
Prior Assessment in the Fall 2009	1
The Fall 2012 Assessment	1
Overview of the <i>SOPA</i>	3
Administering the <i>SOPA</i>	3
Description of the <i>SOPA</i>	4
<i>SOPA</i> Format and Tasks	4
<i>SOPA</i> Rubric	5
Sample Selection and Assessment Procedures in 2012	5
<b>II. <i>SOPA</i> Results for Scarsdale Eighth Graders, 2012</b>	6
<i>SOPA</i> Ratings for 2012 Eighth Graders in Four Skill Areas	6
Frequencies/Percentages of <i>SOPA</i> Levels	6
Average <i>SOPA</i> Ratings for 2012 Eighth Graders	6
Characteristics of the <i>SOPA</i> Proficiency Levels in the Students' 2012 Speech	7
Junior Novice-High	7
Junior Intermediate-Low	8
Junior Intermediate-Mid	8
Junior Intermediate-High	9
Junior Advanced-Low	10
Language Proficiency Data for Fifth Graders 2009 and Eighth Graders 2012	11
Comparison of Fifth Graders 2009 and Eighth Graders 2012 (random samples)	11
Comparison of Nine Students, Fifth Graders in 2009 and Eighth Graders in 2012	12
<b>III. Comparison of Scarsdale Eighth Graders, 2009 and 2012</b>	14
Frequencies/Percentages of <i>SOPA</i> Levels for Eighth Graders in 2009 and 2012	14
Averages <i>SOPA</i> Ratings for Eighth Graders, Overall, in 2009 and 2012	15
<b>IV. Conclusions and Recommendations</b>	16
<b>References</b>	18
<b>Appendices</b>	
Appendix A: Scarsdale Eighth Grade <i>SOPA</i> Script, 2012	
Appendix B: <i>COPE/SOPA Rating Scale</i>	
Appendix C: 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 Eighth Graders, 2012	6
Table 2: Average <i>SOPA</i> Ratings for Scarsdale Eighth Graders, 2012	7

Table 3: <i>SOPA</i> Averages for Scarsdale Students, Grade 5 2009 & Grade 8 2012 (random samples)	11
Table 4: Frequencies/Percentages of <i>SOPA</i> Levels, Gr 5, 2009 and Gr 8, 2012 (random samples)	12
Table 5: <i>SOPA</i> Averages for Nine Scarsdale Students, 2009 and 2012 (same students)	12
Table 6: Frequencies/Percentages of <i>SOPA</i> Levels for Nine Students, 2009 & 2012 (same students)	13
Table 7: Frequencies/Percentages of <i>SOPA</i> Levels for Gr 8, 2009 and Gr 8, 2012 (different cohorts)	14
Table 8: <i>SOPA</i> Averages for Scarsdale Eighth Graders, 2009 and 2012 (different cohorts)	15

# I. Introduction

## Background for the 2012 Spanish Assessment in Scarsdale Public Schools

### Prior Assessment in the Fall 2009

In the fall of 2009, the administrators of the elementary and middle school Spanish language programs in the Scarsdale Public Schools, Scarsdale, NY, requested that the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) gather Spanish oral and listening comprehension proficiency data for the fifth graders and eighth graders. The purpose of the 2009 Spanish language assessment for these two grade levels was to gather baseline assessment data on a random sampling of students from the elementary and middle school Spanish language programs that could be used for future comparisons when the 2009–10 fifth graders began their eighth grade year in 2012. The *Students Oral Proficiency Assessment (SOPA)* in Spanish was used for both grades.

The elementary school Spanish language program was established for Grade 1 in 2005. One grade level was added each year thereafter, through the 2009–10 school year, when the program was complete with the first group of fifth graders who had studied Spanish since first grade. The middle school Spanish language program in the 2009–10 school year was a well-established, long-standing program which had begun operation in the 1950s or earlier. Students in that program began Spanish language study in Grade 7 and continued through Grade 8. The last year of that program was in 2009–10 due to the completion of the elementary school fifth grade Spanish program from which most elementary school students would come to the middle school program already having 5 years of Spanish language instruction.

### The Fall 2012 Assessment

In the fall of 2012, the Scarsdale Public Schools language program administrators again prepared for a random sampling of eighth graders to be assessed on the *SOPA* in October 2012. This assessment took place 3 years after students had been assessed on the *SOPA* as fifth graders in 2009. The main goal of the 2012 assessment was to determine if the 2012 eighth graders, after 7 years of Spanish instruction, would outperform the 2009 eighth graders who had only 1 year of Spanish instruction prior to being assessed in October 2009.

At the elementary school level, the 2012 eighth graders had received Spanish instruction 2 x 30 minutes per week for 33 weeks (1980 minutes or 33 hours per year) each year in Grades 1–4 for a total of 132 hours. In Grade 5 the students received Spanish instruction 2 x 40 minutes over a 6-day cycle, which totaled 2160 minutes or 36 hours by the end of the 2009–10 school year. The Spanish elementary school curriculum was designed over a 5-year period by the Scarsdale district coordinator, the elementary school Spanish teachers, and a consultant. The lessons are thematically based and make interdisciplinary connections whenever possible. A communicative approach to language learning focuses the students on listening and speaking

## Introduction

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.

At the time of the 2009–10 assessment, the middle school Spanish language program did not have a sixth grade component. Sixth graders at that time attended a brief presentation about their language choices for Grade 7, either French or Spanish, and were asked to select one of these languages to study sequentially during Grades 7 and 8. Students received one unit of high school credit upon successful completion of the course in eighth grade. Those who choose Spanish received 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 middle school and high school Spanish curricula have been developed through collaboration of the middle school and high school language departments. Each year, the program has been reviewed and revised as needed to add activities that are of interest to the students and that further reinforce using the Spanish language.

The newer middle school World Language Program now includes a sixth grade component. Students may choose to continue their Spanish study at the middle school level in Grades 6–8, or they may begin their study of French in Grades 6–8. Sixth graders study language for 5 days over a 10-day cycle. Seventh and eighth graders have language instruction for 5 days per week. The emphasis of the middle school language program is communication, as in the past, but the Spanish curriculum has been revised to accommodate students who are now coming from the elementary school with 5 years of prior Spanish instruction.

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 four 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 the 2012 *SOPA*, CAL staff worked with Sarah Whittington, Department Chair and Coordinator of the World Language Program, Grades 1–8, to adapt the eighth grade *SOPA* script so that it would reflect topics the students had covered in their Spanish language

## Introduction

classes over the years. (See Appendix A for the 2012 eighth grade Spanish *SOPA* script.) The 2012 assessment included the following procedures:

- Customizing the tasks on the *SOPA* script,
- Conducting *SOPA* interviews with Scarsdale eighth graders,
- Assigning *SOPA* ratings in four skill areas,
- 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 eighth graders, 2012, overall. Third, it compares the 2009 eighth grade averages with the 2012 eighth grade averages and describes the students' performance between 2009 and 2012. Finally, it summarizes the results of the 2012 assessment and offers observations on the Scarsdale eighth graders' 2012 performance, including recommendations.

### 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.

**Note:** The 2012 revisions to the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines* did not affect the specific criteria upon which the *SOPA* rating rubric is based.

### 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

## Introduction

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.

### 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 or reporting an event, 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.

## Introduction

### 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 B for a complete description of the *SOPA* levels.

### Student Selection and Assessment Procedures in 2012

Prior to the 2012 assessment, the elementary and middle school curricula were viewed by CAL staff to assist in developing the 2012 *SOPA* script. Adapting the interview 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 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. Consequently, paraphrasing may also be used during the interview and is encouraged when necessary to aid in listening comprehension.

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. The eighth graders were paired and a random sample of pairs was selected for the 2012 assessment through the randomizing instrument at ([www.randomizer.org/form.htm](http://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 Scarsdale Middle School on October 23 and 24. Beverly A. Boyson and Igone Arteagoitia, who are both CAL *SOPA* specialists, administered the assessment. Igone 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 44 eighth graders were included in the results for this report.

## II. SOPA Results for the Scarsdale Eighth Graders, 2012

This section presents the rating frequencies, percentages, and averages for the 44 Scarsdale eighth graders who participated in the 2012 assessment. Following these results are the characteristics of the *SOPA* levels represented in the data with corresponding speech samples.

### **SOPA Ratings for Scarsdale Eighth Graders, 2012, in Four Skill Areas**

The 44 eighth graders were assigned *SOPA* ratings in four skill areas: oral fluency, grammar (speaking), vocabulary (speaking), and listening comprehension. The results are reported first as frequencies and percentages by level for each skill area, and second in terms of the average ratings, overall, in the four skill areas for the students that were assessed.

#### **Frequencies and Percentages of SOPA Levels**

Table 1, below, shows that the 93.2% of the eighth graders received *SOPA* ratings in the Junior Intermediate sublevels for oral fluency grammar, and vocabulary. For listening comprehension, 93.2% of the ratings are at the Junior Intermediate sublevels and 6.8% are at the Junior Advanced-Low sublevel. The Scarsdale students' levels, according to the *COPE/SOPA Rating Scale* (see Appendix B), are described briefly on pages 7–11 of this report.

**Table 1: Frequencies and Percentages of SOPA Levels for Scarsdale Eighth Graders, 2012**

	JNL	JNM	JNH	JIL	JIM	JIH	JAL
<b>Oral Fluency</b>							
Percentage			2.3%	20.5%	50.0%	22.7%	4.5%
N			1	9	22	10	2
<b>Grammar (speaking)</b>							
Percentage			2.3%	56.8%	38.6%	2.3%	
N			1	25	17	1	
<b>Vocabulary (speaking)</b>							
Percentage			2.3%	50.0%	43.2%	4.5%	
N			1	22	19	2	
<b>Listening Comprehension</b>							
Percentage				11.4%	43.2%	38.6%	6.8%
N				5	19	17	3

**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, JAL = Junior Advanced-Low

#### **Average SOPA Ratings for Eighth Graders, 2012**

Table 2, below, shows the 2012 average *SOPA* ratings for the 44 Scarsdale eighth graders in oral fluency, grammar (speaking), vocabulary (speaking), and listening comprehension. For oral fluency, the average rating is just above Junior Intermediate-Mid. For grammar and vocabulary, the average is between Junior Intermediate-Low and Junior

## SOPA Results for the Scarsdale Eighth Graders in 2012

Intermediate-Mid. The highest average (5.41), overall, is for listening comprehension, about half way between Junior Intermediate-Mid and Junior Intermediate-High.

**Table 2: Average SOPA Ratings for Scarsdale Eighth Graders, 2012**

	Oral Fluency	Grammar (Speaking)	Vocabulary (Speaking)	Listening Comprehension
<b>Eighth Grade, 2012</b>				
Mean (Average)	5.07	4.41	4.50	5.41
Standard Deviation	.846	.583	.629	.787
N	44	44	44	44

**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 the SOPA Proficiency Levels in the Students' 2012 Speech

Please note that the intention of the commentary on the students' speech is not to "fix" all of the errors in the samples, but rather to illustrate typical speech patterns at the different sublevels and to give an approximate translation for readers of the report who may not know Spanish.

#### Junior Novice-High

Language learners at the Junior Novice-High level for speaking use conjugated verbs (often the verb, *to be*) creatively to speak in sentences on a number of topics. Examples of JNH speech are the following: (1) *Te gusta jugar el baloncesto para mí.* (inaccurate pronoun form, **te** - 2<sup>nd</sup> person instead of **me** - 1<sup>st</sup> person)—*You like to play basketball for me*, meaning, **A mi, me gusta jugar baloncesto—I like to play basketball.**); (2) *Es muy divertido.—It's a lot of fun.; Es muy fácil.—It's easy.* However, learners at the JNH sublevel are not able to sustain sentence-level speech. Native language vocabulary may be used to complete a sentence (e.g., *Me gusta learning español.—I like learning Spanish.*). Also, the infinitive form of the verb may be used inappropriately instead of the conjugated form (e.g., *El persona leer el libro—The person to read the book.*). JNH 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 sublevel 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. Examples: (1) *Es negro y **es** colores diferentes—It is black and it is different colors*, meaning *Es negro y **son** colores diferentes.—[This] is black and [these] are different colors* (comparing two things). (2) *Yo necesito **un** calculadora* (article **un** should be **una**)—I need a calculator.

Spanish learners at the JIL sublevel frequently have errors in subject/verb agreement. Examples: (1) *¿Puedes tener el bolígrafo? Can you have the pen?* meaning *¿Puedo tener the pen?—Can I have the pen?*. (2) *Un baila tiene chicos y chicas; Viejas tienes muchos bailes tradicionales—One dance has boys and girls; old ladies you have many traditional dances*, meaning, *Un baile tiene chicos y chicas; **los viejos tienen** muchos bailes tradicionales—One dance has boys and girls; old people have many traditional dances*. Due to a great deal of grammatical inaccuracy, JIL speakers 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., *Me gusta ciencias sociales porque me gusta la profesora. **Hacen miro** mucho películas de **history of United States**—I like social studies because I like the teacher. They make I look at many movies of the history of the United States*). 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 sublevel 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 sublevel speak at sentence level with greater ease and accuracy than JIL speakers. They maintain simple conversations in the present tense and give simple, sentence-level descriptions. Examples: (1) *Me gusta la clase de matemáticas. Es interesante y difícil pero divertido. Aprendemos los números y usamos la calculadora.—I like mathematics class. It is interesting and difficult but fun. We learn numbers and use the calculator*. (2) *Yo necesito practicar el piano y me gusta pasar el rato con mis amigos. Vamos al cine.—I need to practice piano and I like to spend time with my friends. We go to the movies*. Grammatical inaccuracies are present in their speech, especially when they attempt sentences with more complexity. Self-corrections may occur. Native language and false

## SOPA Results for the Scarsdale Eighth Graders in 2012

cognates (similar words in both languages but with different meanings) are sometimes used when a specific term is lacking. Examples: (1) *Me gusta **aprendo** la historia de los EEUU. Estudio **the West** y **Reconstruction**.*—*I like I learn United States History. I study the West and Reconstruction.* (2) *Ellos piensan **para** los abuelos y los **relativos**, meaning, *Ellos piensan **en** los abuelos y los **parientes**.*—*They think about the grandparents and the relatives.* (3) *Yo visito Costa Rica para la vacación de **Christmas**. Nosotros **hacer ir, vamos a ir los** (attempt at self-correction); ¿cómo se dice “waterfalls”?; y los **jungles**. Y nosotros vamos **al** playa y es muy bonita.*—*I visit Costa Rica for the Christmas vacation. We **to make to go, we are going to go the; how do you say “waterfalls”?** and the jungles. And we are going to the beach and it is very pretty.* 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.*

### Junior Intermediate-High

At the JIH sublevel, speakers can maintain conversation with increasing fluency at the sentence level but they lack vocabulary that would allow them to use details. They use some past tense verbs but do not have control over the use of the preterite and imperfect tenses when narrating in past time, and they often switch between past and present tense verbs. In addition, they show emerging evidence of paragraph-like speech with some connected sentences, but they do not have actual paragraphs. The following are examples of JIH oral fluency and vocabulary with paragraph-like speech. These are not real paragraphs as they lack some of the characteristics of a paragraph.

Example (1) *Voy a la escuela en el autobus. Escuela **empeza** a las 8:10. Primero, tengo matemáticas y después tengo la clase de ciencias y después la clase de inglés y después arte. A las 2:30, voy a mi casa y **hago mi tarea y si yo tengo**. Yo miro TV si hago mi tarea después. Después, yo como **supper** y después yo hago más tarea si tengo más tarea y después yo voy a descansar.*—*I go to school by bus. School begins at 8:10. First, I have mathematics and afterward I have science class and afterward English class and afterward art. At 2:30, I go home and I do my homework and if I have. I watch TV if I do my homework afterward. Afterward, I eat supper and afterward I do my homework if I have more homework, and afterward I go to rest.*

This sample is basically a list that lacks an introduction and specific details. Although some sentence connection is used (e.g., *después, primero*) the information becomes a little confused at times due to a lack of sentence structures that could be used to make it clearer.

Example (2) *Yo hago un proyecto sobre Paraguay y en Paraguay es una cultura muy fuerte y **le** gusta muchos diferentes comidas allí. Pero muchas personas son muy pobres porque pocas personas son muy ricas. Sí, **So**, es muy **diferencia** que las personas, mucha son **agriculturas**, y sí, pero **el**, la cultura es muy fuerte porque, **like**, los artes están muy fuerte allá*

## SOPA Results for the Scarsdale Eighth Graders in 2012

*y la comida es muy similar de la comida de Uruguay y Argentina porque tiene mucho carne de res.—I do a project about Paraguay, and in Paraguay is a strong culture and he likes many different kinds of food there. But many people are very poor because few people are very rich. Yes. So it is very difference than the people, many are agricultures, and yes, but the culture is very strong because, like, the arts are very strong there.* Even though this is a paragraph-like speech sample with a central theme, it lacks organization and is sometimes confusing due to a lack of vocabulary and structures needed to describe more completely.

An example of JIH grammar is found in the following narration of trips to Puerto Rico and Colorado: *Fuí a Puerto Rico con mi familia cuando **estuve** menor. No **estaba** cuando yo **estuve** hablando mucho español, y me **gusta**. Estuve empezando. Fuimos a las playas y ¿cómo se dice **jungle, again?** Y **comemos** la comida de Puerto Rico. En Colorado, fuimos a **esquiando**, que hicimos casi siempre en febrero y también fuimos a Canada porque mi familia es de allá.—We went to Puerto Rico with my family when I was younger. It was not when I was speaking much Spanish and I like it. I was beginning. We went to the beaches and; How do you say **jungle, again?** And we **eat** the food from Puerto Rico. In Colorado, we went skiing, that we did nearly always in February, and also, we went to Canada because my family is from there.* This student used enough past tense verbs in this sample and in other speech during the interview to receive a JIH rating for grammar. Some verbs are used accurately but others inaccurately. The distinction between preterite and imperfect lacks control, typical of JIH grammar. Also the speaker did not use past tense consistently where it was appropriate.

Students at the JIH sublevel of listening comprehension understand longer stretches of connected speech on a number of topics at a normal rate. They seldom have problems understanding discussions on everyday topics and can request clarification verbally if needed.

### Junior Advanced-Low

At the JAL sublevel of listening comprehension, students understand main ideas and many details in connected speech on some academic topics and topics of personal interest. For JAL oral fluency, students can speak minimally in paragraphs, using all time frames. Paragraphs are organized with a central topic, details, and connected sentences, but hesitation and self-correction are characteristic when students at the JAL sublevel narrate. The following example shows the JAL sublevel for oral fluency although the grammar and vocabulary are lower than JAL.

*Yo levantar, levanto a las 6:30 de la mañana y primero yo **vesture, vestio**, y después como, yo desayuno con mi familia y después yo voy a la escuela en el autobus. Primero, yo tengo arte y después las ciencias sociales, la educación física, español, y después almuerzo. Y yo tengo la clase de inglés y matemática y **yo todavía en** la escuela porque tengo el volibol en gimnasio, y volibol termina a las 4:30 y voy a mi casa y hago mi tarea por una hora y yo como*

## SOPA Results for the Scarsdale Eighth Graders in 2012

*la cena, pero mi papá no está en la casa porque el tiene trabajo. Yo hago mi tarea otra vez y yo miro la TV y lavo mis dientes y yo voy a dormir a las 11:30.—I to get up, I get up at 6:30 in the morning and first I dress and afterward I eat, I eat breakfast with my family and afterward I go to school on the bus. First I have art and afterward social studies, physical education, Spanish, and afterward I eat lunch. And I have English class and mathematics and I still in the school because I have volleyball in the gym, and volleyball ends at 4:30 and I go to my house and do my homework for an hour and I eat supper but my father is not at home because he has to work. I do homework again and I watch TV and clean my teeth and I go to sleep at 11:30.* This speech sample has the characteristics of JAL oral fluency, minimally, at the paragraph level. It has a central theme and is organized with sentence connection and some details about the student's day. The false starts and self-corrections are typical of JAL speech and the inaccuracies would likely not prevent comprehension for a native speaker of Spanish unaccustomed to speaking with learners of the language.

### Language Proficiency Data for Fifth Graders 2009 and Eighth Graders 2012

A review of the average SOPA ratings for the 60 fifth graders in 2009 and the 44 eighth graders in 2012 revealed higher averages for the eighth graders. Nine of the fifth graders in the 2009 SOPA were also part of the 2012 SOPA as eighth graders. While the sample is too small for statistical analyses, the students' 3-year growth is described below.

### Comparison of the Fifth Graders 2009 and Eighth Graders 2012 (random samples)

As shown in Table 3 below, overall the eighth graders' proficiency averages in 2012 were between two and three sublevels higher than those of the fifth graders in 2009. The corresponding frequencies and percentages for each sublevel in 2009 and 2012 are shown in Table 4 below. While the oral proficiency levels of the majority of the fifth graders in the 2009 SOPA were in the Jr. Novice sublevels, the eighth graders in the 2012 SOPA exhibited Jr. Intermediate sublevels or higher. Listening comprehension levels were higher than speaking levels both years with 13.4% of the fifth graders at Jr. Intermediate sublevels.

**Table 3: SOPA Averages for Scarsdale Students, Grade 5, 2009 & Grade 8, 2012**

<b>Random samples in 2009 &amp; 2012</b>	Oral Fluency	Grammar (Speaking)	Vocabulary (Speaking)	Listening Comprehension
<b>Fifth Graders, Fall 2009</b>				
Mean (Average)	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.80
Standard Deviation	.474	.474	.474	.708
N	60	60	60	60
<b>Eighth Graders, Fall 2012</b>				
Mean (Average)	5.07	4.41	4.50	5.41
Standard Deviation	.846	.583	.629	.787
N	44	44	44	44

**Note:** In order to calculate average ratings, the nine sublevels of the COPE/SOPA Rating Scale were converted to numeric values: JNL = 1, JNM = 2, JNH = 3, JIL = 4, JIM = 5, JIH = 6, JAL = 7, JAM = 8, JAH = 9.

*SOPA Results for the Scarsdale Eighth Graders in 2012*

**Table 4: Frequencies/Percentages of SOPA Levels, Grade 5, 2009 & Grade 8, 2012**

Random samples in 2009 & 2012	JNL	JNM	JNH	JIL	JIM	JIH	JAL	JAM
<b>Oral Fluency</b>								
<b>Grade 5, Fall 2009</b>								
Percentage		76.7%	21.7%	1.7%				
N 60		46	13	1				
<b>Grade 8, Fall 2012</b>								
Percentage			2.3%	20.5%	50.0%	22.7%	4.5%	
N 44			1	9	22	10	2	
<b>Grammar (speaking)</b>								
<b>Grade 5, Fall 2009</b>								
Percentage		76.7%	21.7%	1.7%				
N 60		46	13	1				
<b>Grade 8, Fall 2012</b>								
Percentage			2.3%	56.8%	38.6%	2.3%		
N 44			1	25	17	1		
<b>Vocabulary (speaking)</b>								
<b>Grade 5, Fall 2009</b>								
Percentage		76.7%	21.7%	1.7%				
N 60		46	13	1				
<b>Grade 8, Fall 2012</b>								
Percentage			2.3%	50.0%	43.2%	4.5%		
N 44			1	22	19	2		
<b>Listening Comprehension</b>								
<b>Grade 5, Fall 2009</b>								
Percentage		35.0%	51.7%	11.7%	1.7%			
N 60		21	31	7	1			
<b>Grade 8, Fall 2012</b>								
Percentage				11.4%	43.2%	38.6%	6.8%	
N 44				5	19	17	3	

**Note:** JNL = Jr Novice-Low, JNM = Jr Novice-Mid, JNH = Jr Novice-High, JIL = Jr Intermediate-Low, JIM = Jr Intermediate-Mid, JIH = Jr Intermediate-High, JAL = Jr Advanced-Low, JAM = Jr Advanced-Mid

**Comparison of Nine Students, Fifth Graders in 2009 and Eighth Graders in 2012**

Upon close examination of the data for both 2009 and 2012, it was evident that a subset of nine students in the 2012 eighth grade assessment had been a part of the random sampling of students assessed on the SOPA in 2009 as well. The SOPA averages shown in Table 5, below, reveal the students' progress over the 3-year period.

**Table 5: SOPA Averages for Nine Scarsdale Students, 2009 and 2012**

Same Students 2009 & 2012	Oral Fluency	Grammar (Speaking)	Vocabulary (Speaking)	Listening Comprehension
<b>Fifth Graders, Fall 2009</b>				
Mean (Average)	2.33	2.33	2.33	3.00
Standard Deviation	.500	.500	.500	.707
N	9	9	9	9
<b>Eighth Graders, Fall 2012</b>				
Mean (Average)	5.22	4.56	4.67	5.89
Standard Deviation	.667	.527	.707	.601
N	9	9	9	9

**Note:** In order to calculate average ratings, the nine sublevels of the COPE/SOPA Rating Scale were converted to numeric values: JNL = 1, JNM = 2, JNH = 3, JIL = 4, JIM = 5, JIH = 6, JAL = 7, JAM = 8, JAH = 9.

## SOPA Results for the Scarsdale Eighth Graders in 2012

Table 6 below shows the frequencies and percentages for the nine students. Comparing the frequencies and percentages in Table 4 (page 12) and in Table 6, it can be seen that on average these students' proficiency levels increased about three sublevels in oral fluency and listening comprehension and a little more than two sublevels in grammar and vocabulary. Although t-test analyses for groups smaller than 20 are considered unreliable and thus are not reported here for the nine students, the gains these students made are remarkable.

**Table 6: Frequencies/Percentages of SOPA Levels for Nine Scarsdale Students, 2009 and 2012**

<u>Same Students</u> 2009 & 2012	JNL	JNM	JNH	JIL	JIM	JIH	JAL	JAM
<b>Oral Fluency</b>								
<b>Grade 5, Fall 2009</b>								
Percentage		66.7%	33.3%					
N 9		6	3					
<b>Grade 8, Fall 2012</b>								
Percentage				11.1%	55.6%	33.3%		
N 9				1	5	3		
<b>Grammar (speaking)</b>								
<b>Grade 5, Fall 2009</b>								
Percentage		66.7%	33.3%					
N 9		6	3					
<b>Grade 8, Fall 2012</b>								
Percentage				44.4%	55.6%			
N 9				4	5			
<b>Vocabulary (speaking)</b>								
<b>Grade 5, Fall 2009</b>								
Percentage		66.7%	33.3%					
N 9		6	3					
<b>Grade 8, Fall 2012</b>								
Percentage				44.4%	44.4%	11.1%		
N 9				4	4	1		
<b>Listening Comprehension</b>								
<b>Grade 5, Fall 2009</b>								
Percentage		22.2%	55.6%	22.2%				
N 9		2	5	2				
<b>Grade 8, Fall 2012</b>								
Percentage					22.2%	66.7%	11.1%	
N 44					2	6	1	

**Note:** JNL = Jr Novice-Low, JNM = Jr Novice-Mid, JNH = Jr Novice-High, JIL = Jr Intermediate-Low, JIM = Jr Intermediate-Mid, JIH = Jr Intermediate-High, JAL = Jr Advanced-Low, JAM = Jr Advanced-Mid

### III. Comparison of Scarsdale Eighth Graders, 2009 and 2012

The 42 eighth graders who were assessed on the *SOPA* in 2009 after only 1 year of instructions were compared with the 44 eighth graders who were assessed on the *SOPA* in 2012 after 7 years of instruction. The students in these two different cohorts were assigned *SOPA* ratings in four skill areas: oral fluency, grammar (speaking), vocabulary (speaking), and listening comprehension. The results are compared first as frequencies/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 for Eighth Graders in 2009 and 2012

Table 7, below, shows that the distribution of sublevels for the 2009 eighth graders is between Junior Novice-High and Junior Intermediate-Mid for all four skills. The distribution of sublevels for the 2012 eighth graders is between Junior Novice-High and Junior Advanced-Low for oral fluency and listening comprehension and between Junior Novice-High and Junior Intermediate-High for grammar and vocabulary.

**Table 7: Frequencies/Percentages of *SOPA* Levels, Grade 8, 2009 and 2012 (different cohorts)**

<u>Eighth Graders</u> in 2009 & 2012	JNL	JNM	JNH	JIL	JIM	JIH	JAL	JAM
<b>Oral Fluency</b>								
<b>Grade 8, Fall 2009</b>								
Percentage			14.3%	78.6%	7.1%			
N 42			6	33	3			
<b>Grade 8, Fall 2012</b>								
Percentage			2.3%	20.5%	50.5%	22.7%	4.5%	
N 44			1	9	22	10	2	
<b>Grammar (speaking)</b>								
<b>Grade 8, Fall 2009</b>								
Percentage			14.3%	76.2%	9.5%			
N 42			6	32	4			
<b>Grade 8, Fall 2012</b>								
Percentage			2.3%	56.8%	38.6%	2.3%		
N 44			1	25	17	1		
<b>Vocabulary (speaking)</b>								
<b>Grade 8, Fall 2009</b>								
Percentage			14.3%	81.0%	4.8%			
N 42			6	34	2			
<b>Grade 8, Fall 2012</b>								
Percentage			2.3%	50.0%	43.2%	4.5%		
N 44			1	22	19	2		
<b>Listening Comprehension</b>								
<b>Grade 8, Fall 2009</b>								
Percentage			7.1%	71.4%	21.4%			
N 42			3	30	9			
<b>Grade 8, Fall 2012</b>								
Percentage				11.4%	43.2%	38.6%	6.8%	
N 44				5	19	17	3	

**Note:** JNL = Jr Novice-Low, JNM = Jr Novice-Mid, JNH = Jr Novice-High, JIL = Jr Intermediate-Low, JIM = Jr Intermediate-Mid, JIH = Jr Intermediate-High, JAL = Jr Advanced-Low, JAM = Jr Advanced-Mid

## Comparison of Scarsdale Eighth Graders, 2009 and 2012

The difference between the two cohorts is most dramatic in the areas of listening comprehension and oral fluency with most of the eighth graders in 2012 exhibiting JIM proficiency or higher and most of the eighth graders in 2009 showing JIL proficiency.

### Average SOPA Ratings for Eighth Graders, Overall, in 2009 and 2012

Table 8, below, shows the average SOPA ratings for the Scarsdale eighth graders in 2009 and in 2012 in the four skill areas: oral fluency, grammar (speaking), vocabulary (speaking), and listening comprehension. Results of the two-tailed t-test analyses indicated significant differences in all four skill areas at  $p < .000$  in favor of the 2012 eighth graders. Significance for the two-tailed t-test is set at  $p < .05$ . Probability at  $p < .000$  provides the strongest statistical evidence that the differences between the eighth graders' averages in the fall of 2009 and the eighth graders averages in the fall of 2012 were not due to chance.

**Table 8: SOPA Averages for Scarsdale Eighth Graders, 2009 and 2012 (different cohorts)**

<b><u>Eighth Graders</u> in 2009 &amp; 2012</b>	Oral Fluency	Grammar (Speaking)	Vocabulary (Speaking)	Listening Comprehension
<b>Eighth Graders, Fall 2009</b>				
Mean (Average)	3.93	3.95	3.90	4.14
Standard Deviation	.463	.492	.431	.521
N	42	42	42	42
<b>Eighth Graders, Fall 2012</b>				
Mean (Average)	5.07	4.41	4.50	5.41
Standard Deviation	.846	.583	.629	.787
N	44	44	44	44
<b>Significance (two-tailed t-test <math>p &lt; .05</math>)</b>				
	<b>.000</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>.000</b>

**Note:** In order to calculate average ratings, the nine sublevels of the *COPE/SOPA Rating Scale* were converted to numeric values: JNL = 1, JNM = 2, JNH = 3, JIL = 4, JIM = 5, JIH = 6, JAL = 7, JAM = 8, JAH = 9.

## IV. Conclusions and Recommendations

The main goal of the Fall 2012 *Student Oral Proficiency Assessment* in the Scarsdale Public Schools was to compare the oral proficiency and listening comprehension performance of the 2012 eighth graders who had 7 years of Spanish instruction prior to the assessment with the performance of the 2009 eighth graders who had only 1 year of Spanish instruction prior to being assessed on the *SOPA* in the Fall 2009. The purpose of this comparison was to determine if beginning Spanish language instruction in Grade 1 in the newly established program would make a significant difference in the students' language acquisition when compared with students who began Spanish language instruction in Grade 7 at a more mature age in the former program. The results comparing these two programs overwhelmingly support the longer-sequenced Spanish program for Grades 1–8.

Results from the two-tailed t-test used to compare the *SOPA* averages for the 2012 eighth graders with the *SOPA* averages for the 2009 eighth graders revealed significant differences at  $p < .000$  for each of the four skills in favor of the 2012 eighth graders. (See Tables 7 and 8 on pages 14 and 15 of this report.) The two-tailed t-test is a recognized statistical approach that determines differences between groups with *probability* set at  $p < .05$  (or less) for significance. Probability at  $p < .000$  leaves no possibility that the differences in language proficiency between the 2009 eighth graders' averages and 2012 eighth graders' averages is by chance. These comparisons demonstrate that students, overall, who have completed the Grades 1–7 sequence, show much stronger language skills than those who began in Grade 7.

Table 7 shows that the oral fluency and listening comprehension skills are particularly stronger for the 2012 eighth graders. While 88.6% of the 2012 students were rated at the Junior Intermediate-Mid sublevel or higher for listening comprehension, only 21.4% of the 2009 eighth grade students were at Junior Intermediate-Mid with the remaining students at the Junior Intermediate-Low or Junior Novice High sublevels. For oral fluency, 77.2% of the 2012 eighth grade students were rated at the Junior Intermediate-Mid sublevel or higher, whereas only 7.1% of the 2009 eighth graders were rated at Junior Intermediate-Mid sublevel with the remaining students at the Junior Intermediate-Low or Novice–High sublevels.

The *SOPA* results for the 2012 assessment also reveal that the eighth graders, overall, have made outstanding progress since they began the Spanish language program in Grade 1. The ratings for the 44 randomly selected students show a range of proficiency sublevels from Junior Novice-High to Junior Advanced-Low as illustrated in Table 1 on page 6 of this report. The averages for each skill area in Table 2 on page 7 show that these students, overall, are between Junior Intermediate-Mid and Junior Intermediate-High for oral fluency and listening comprehension, and between Junior Intermediate-Low and Junior Intermediate-Mid in the areas

## *Conclusions and Recommendations*

of grammar and vocabulary. Examples of the kind of language that learners produce at these sublevels were taken from the eighth graders' 2012 speech samples on the *SOPA* and are provided on pages 7–11 of this report.

In addition, a comparison of the proficiency levels for the 2009 fifth graders and the 2012 eighth graders (two different random samplings) revealed that the range of proficiency levels for the 2012 eighth graders was broader than for the fifth graders in 2009. Also, a comparison of average *SOPA* ratings showed that the eighth grade averages were higher than the fifth grade averages in all four skills. (See Tables 3 and 4 on pages 11 and 12 of this report.) A close examination of nine students who participated in both random samplings, as fifth graders in 2009 and as eighth graders in 2012, reveals dramatic gains in proficiency levels and averages during the 3-year period. (See Tables 5 and 6 on pages 12 and 13 of this report.)

The 2009 results revealed that the Scarsdale students in both the elementary and middle school programs had attained levels of oral proficiency that were within the range of anticipated performance outcomes for students in similar programs, according to the *ACTFL Performance Guidelines for K–12 Learners* (ACTFL, 1998) chart (see Appendix C). On the other hand, the 2012 results demonstrate that the eighth grade Scarsdale Spanish learners are far exceeding the anticipated outcomes for students in similar programs by more than one sublevel. These are excellent findings in strong support of the Scarsdale Grades 1–8 Spanish language program.

The Scarsdale Public Schools are to be commended for 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 the current program in the elementary school beginning in Grade 1 with emphasis on communication and articulation to the middle school program beginning in Grade 6. Extensive research into the language development of children in a variety of program types has been conducted by Helena Curtain and Carol Pesola Dahlberg (2010). They point out that learning an additional language is beneficial to a student's overall language learning. It can enhance the language development for native speakers of any language. Students acquire a deeper understanding of language structure through noticing similarities and differences between the two languages. Vocabulary learning may also be enhanced through the recognition of cognates, words that are similar between two languages.

As students communicate in the new language on a daily basis, they are naturally making complex comparisons between the target language and their native language. Learning another language also contributes to overall improvement of critical thinking skills as well as overall academic achievement. 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)

## Conclusions and Recommendations

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 development is enhanced (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2010).

It is recommended that 1) the students in the Scarsdale schools continue to be offered the elementary school Spanish program which transitions to the already revised middle school program, and 2) that the middle school and high school departments continue their joint efforts in the vertical articulation to advance the curriculum as the cohort moves into the ninth grade next year. 3) In order for students to exhibit as strong skills in grammar and vocabulary as in oral fluency and listening comprehension, it is recommended that they be taught a variety of grammatical verb tenses, in particular the past tenses, and a wider range of vocabulary terms earlier in the curriculum, and 4) that they be offered ample opportunities to use these structures in extended discourse. This will enable students to attain higher levels of proficiency in all four domains.

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# Appendices





## **STUDENT ORAL PROFICIENCY ASSESSMENT (SOPA)**

**Scarsdale, New York**

**6–8 Spanish World Language Program**

**Grade 8 Script 2012**

**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], imagínate que tú necesitas una cosa que [nombre del Estudiante A] tiene. Pregúntale si él (ella) tiene ese objeto y pídele permiso para usarlo.

[Nombre del Estudiante A], tú necesitas una cosa que [nombre del Estudiante B] tiene. Pregúntale si él (ella) tiene ese objeto y pídele permiso para usarlo.

[Nombre del estudiante A], mira los objetos que tienes. Elige dos objetos y compáralos, por favor. If needed add: ¿En qué se parecen? ¿En qué se diferencian?

[Nombre del estudiante B], mira los objetos que tienes. Elige dos objetos compáralos, por favor. If needed add: ¿En qué se parecen? ¿En qué se diferencian?

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 personales 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.

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

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

¿Qué actividad te gusta hacer en la tarde después de la escuela o en los fines de semana? ¿Con quién haces esa actividad? ¿Por qué te gusta esa actividad? ¿Puedes contarme lo que haces en esa actividad?

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

En la clase de español han estudiado sobre países hispanohablantes como España, Ecuador, y México, ¿verdad? Piensen un poquito sobre lo que han estudiado acerca de las comidas en esos países. [Nombre del estudiante], cuéntame algo sobre las comidas en un país que has estudiado. ¿Cómo son diferentes o semejantes a nuestras comidas aquí en los EEUU?

**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 mapa del mundo para que me cuenten más sobre los países de habla hispana que han estudiado.

**Task 3: Un proyecto sobre un país de habla hispana** [Alternate task – **Un día típico de escuela**] (Describing) [5–7 minutes] The objective of this task is to further assess sentence-level speech and probe for emerging paragraph-level speech.

**Instructions:** Show the students a map of the world and ask them to identify the place they are going to describe.

Aquí tengo el mapa del mundo. Quiero que elijan un país donde se habla español. Piensen en lo que han estudiado sobre ese país para prepararse y explícame eso. Por ejemplo: ¿Cómo es el clima? ¿Cómo son las familias? ¿Cómo son las casas? ¿Qué hace la gente en ese lugar? ¿Qué comen? ¿Qué transporte usan? ¿Qué animales viven en ese lugar? ¿Cómo son las plantas? ¿Qué deportes juegan? ¿Cuáles son las costumbres o las tradiciones allí? Cualquier cosa que tú quieras contar sobre ese lugar está bien.

\_\_\_\_\_, (Al Estudiante B primero y después al Estudiante A), muéstrame el lugar que vas a describir. ¿Qué me puedes decir sobre ese lugar?

**Transition to Task 4:** Thank the students for their descriptions and introduce Task 4 if students have described very easily at paragraph level. **OR** If students struggled with Task 3, go to the Wind down. **Muchas gracias por ayudarme con la información sobre [nombre del país]. Ahora, vamos a pasar a la siguiente actividad.**

**Task 4: Una vacación o una fiesta** (Narrating in past time) [Approximately 5 minutes] The objective of the task is to give the students an opportunity to tell about a past event with paragraph-level speech, if possible.

**Instructions:** Ask the students to tell you what they did during a past vacation or at a weekend party (bar/bat mitzvahs) and why it was important or fun. Be sure to ask the question in past tense to encourage the use of past tense.

Ahora, quiero que piensen un poco sobre alguna vacación o una fiesta que les hayan gustado recientemente y que me digan lo que pasó en esa vacación o en esa fiesta. Pueden decirme dónde fueron, por qué era importante o interesante, y qué hicieron para divertirse.

\_\_\_\_\_, (Al Estudiante A primero y después al Estudiante B), ¿has pensado en alguna vacación o en una fiesta? Qué me puedes decir? ¿Qué pasó?

**Transition to Wind down:** When the students have finished Task 4, go to the **Wind down**. **Muy bien. Muchas gracias por contarme cosas tan interesantes. Ya vamos a terminar estas actividades, pero tengo una pregunta más para Uds.**

**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 question.

\_\_\_\_\_, ¿qué es lo que más te gusta de la clase de español? o ¿cómo vas a usar el español en el futuro?

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)\***  
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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
<b>Oral Fluency</b>								
-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, etc.</i> ).	-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.
<b>Grammar (Speaking)</b>								
-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.
<b>Vocabulary (Speaking)</b>								
-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.
<b>Listening Comprehension</b>								
-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 without prompting. (Can request clarification 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).

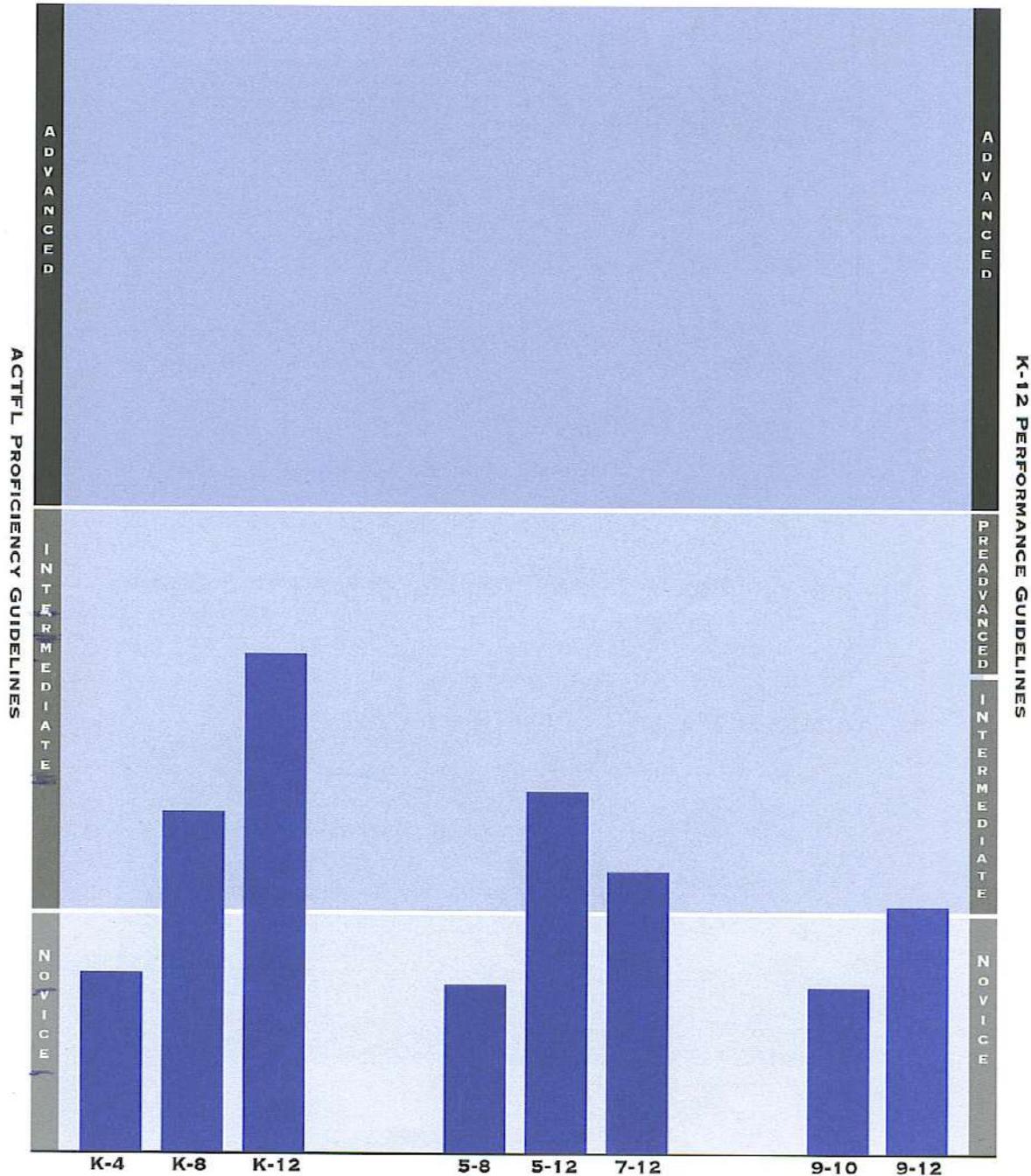
\*\* Please note that the 2009 version of this rubric is a revision in terminology only to make the descriptions clearer, and not a revision of the sublevels. Revisions to the ACTFL *Proficiency Guidelines* in 2012 do not affect this rating scale.

\*\*\* 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 Learners<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> 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.