Presentation

In the agreements on educational cooperation that Departments of Education of U.S. States and provinces of Canada have signed with the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC), there is a mutual commitment to promote quality teaching of the Spanish language in the United States and Canada and of the English and French language in Spain. The general objective is to make a contribution that will be essential in educating citizens of the next century: fluency in other languages and an appreciation for the principles of other cultures as a means to promote relations between individuals and peoples.

Such agreements have created a promising relational structure linking numerous Administrations even beyond strictly the field of education. Hundreds of teachers and students are involved annually, and important benefits are being produced for both U.S. and Spanish students.

Within this framework which is committed to educational, cultural, economic, and social objectives of extraordinary importance for the United States, Canada and Spain, the vision of those who head educational policies on priorities determining school system operation and the efficiency with which administrators carry out programs to attain such priorities are essential factors.

It is for this reason that U.S. Departments of Education, the Canadian Ministry of Education and the Spanish Ministry of Education and Culture have considered holding work meetings on a political and technical level with the following groups:

- Superintendents and Commissioners of the Departments of Education on the part of the U.S. and Canada and the Minister of Education and Culture on the part of Spain.
- The U.S., Canadian and Spanish parties responsible for the administration and management of school systems (Deputy Superintendents, general directors, department heads, etc.).

These meetings should be an expression of the maturity reached by the system of educational cooperation that exists between United States, Canada and Spain., and should serve to establish future goals, create joint plans and programs for action, and continuously evaluate the levels of effectiveness reached.

Formally it should perhaps be the meeting between political leaders that marks the starting point of this new phase of the commitment assumed by U.S. Departments of Education, Canadian provinces and the Ministry of Education to improve the effectiveness of joint programs. However, it seems timely to initiate these meetings with a work seminar in which those who are most directly involved in the development and application of the programs linking the referenced Administrations would participate in the Seminar for Administrators of Programs for Educational Cooperation.

This seminar was created to have a permanent nature and means to be a forum of reflection, information exchange, and debate on the most important determining factors of quality in second language education and foreign language education).

Gonzalo Gómez-Dacal
Counselor of Education and Science
Embassy of Spain in Washington, DC

Message from the Sub secretary of Education and Culture – Dra. Ana Pastor

Representatives of the Departments of Education of the States and School Districts of the United States and Provinces of Canada with which the Ministry of Education and Culture has signed memoranda of understanding for educational cooperation, Mr. Secretary General of the Ministry of Education and Culture, Ms. Deputy Director General for International Cooperation, Mr. Counselor of Education and Science for the Embassy of Spain in Washington, D.C., dear friends:

It is both a pleasure and an honor for me to welcome you to Madrid on behalf of the Minister of Education and Culture, Mariano Rajoy Brey, and to furthermore have the opportunity to personally meet with those with whom we have made a commitment to providing programs for educational collaboration in order to contribute to making the education received by the students of our countries one that will prepare them for the challenges to be faced by groups and individuals in the next millennium; an education in which the knowledge of different languages and a respect and appreciation for the values of other cultures will be essential components.

The globalization of economic processes, the creation of supranational communication systems and exchange, the growing exposure to frames of thought that are different from ours, the consolidation, in a word, of the global village referred to by McLuhan, requires answers from the educational systems that equip young people with the necessary skills to live in a world in which, without loss of the characteristics that distinguish each human group, borders will have to come down and exchanges grow exponentially.

It is within this new setting that plans for educational cooperation being developed between the U.S. and Spain take on meaning and gain importance, as well as those plans to which Canadian educational administrations are also making a commitment and which as of this date include the efforts of twenty-eight Departments of Education, the fruit of their labor being exchanges between hundreds of teachers and students and the ties being created between individuals and institutions and between the countries themselves, already encompassing more than the strictly scholastic.

The fact that this structure of cooperation has been created can undoubtedly be explained by several reasons:

- First, by the vision that the responsible members of our educational administrations have with respect to what type of education schools must offer so that students may face the professional and personal challenges that society will present to them in the twenty-first century.
- Second, the excellent relations that exist between Spain and the U.S. and Canada, and between their governments.
- Third, by the increasing importance of the Spanish language as a vehicle of communication in the area of culture, economy, politics, and the relations between individuals and peoples.
- Fourth, by the dedication and hard work on behalf of those responsible for educational administration, you, to promote and launch educational cooperation.

Furthermore, we are in a historic age in which languages have stopped being an instrument of domination, and in which the ability to speak several languages is ever more a means to create attitudes of tolerance and respect that go beyond the race, place of origin, religion, or culture characterizing each individual. It is not the time any longer, as Nobel Prize winner Camilo José Cela, master of words, says, for war between languages, because, and this time I am using the words of another Nobel Prize winner and great

humanist, Octavio Paz, languages belong to all and to no one in particular. They are his who speaks them and his who listens to them.

During this end-of-century and in the first decades of the next century, we will witness one of the most socially and politically-important phenomena in the history of the human race, in my opinion more important than the revolutionary age of technology and communications that also will be produced in this same period of time. This phenomenon is no other than the exciting test of coexistence between races, languages, and cultures that has already begun in the more advanced countries and that will lead to a new order in relations between individuals and nations.

In this change of reference system, of paradigm, to use the words of Kuhn, languages play a special role, since they constitute the means by which we enter into contact with "others", not on the basis of skin, a boundary that is not always easy to cross, but rather directly, by allowing that each individual express his thoughts as he thinks them and that he who listens receives them without classifying or translating.

Right now the Spanish language is the means of communication of three hundred thirty-two million people, and that figure will increase to five hundred fifty million in the year two thousand fifty, Spanish being the official language in twenty-one countries which would have to include the United States, since the number of people who speak Spanish in the U.S. is rapidly approaching thirty million.

This is why I believe, dear friends, that we are on the right path: the agreements between our administrations have a precise affect on the Spanish language education received by U.S. and Canadian students without interfering with, and what's more, giving strength to, the students' studies of the language that is their own as citizens of the U.S. or Canada.

The agreements for educational cooperation are proving to be efficient tools for integrating the efforts of the administrations that have signed them, and this is so, in my opinion, due to the following reasons, among others:

- They are "two-way" agreements that consequently produce benefits for both parties.
- They establish a system of cooperation that integrates a perfectly structured and ample range of programs.
- The sought-after objectives satisfy real needs of students and respond to present-day family and societal expectations.
- They affect the components that most effectively influence quality of education: teachers, students, and didactic resources.
- They are based on mutual trust between the signing parties.

In this process leading to increasingly close collaboration between all of us, the nature of the Seminar for Administrators represents, in my opinion, a qualitative change of extraordinary relevance, since its aim is to become a forum in which, not bilaterally, as is the case currently, but rather multilaterally, we can debate our ideas and strategies and make exchanges that undoubtedly will be a factor of enrichment for all of us who more directly assume responsibility for carrying out the programs established in the memoranda of understanding.

I thought it especially appropriate that the Seminar be conceived as a permanent work group. This, without a doubt, will increase in all of us our commitment to developing and presenting initiatives that can be brought before the opinions and appraisals of everyone, and afterwards utilized and carried out with the necessary adjustments in schools of different districts and States.

The teamwork introduced by the Seminar for Administrators will be essential to perfecting current programs and to presenting new initiatives. From among these I would like to point out, because of their innovative value, the International Spanish Academies, the effective implementation of which will demand that we all make a substantial effort in areas as important as:

- Teacher training.
- Designing integrated coursework.
- The selection and creation of didactic resources.
- The utilization of new information technology.
- The creation of a multicultural space in educational establishments.
- The definition of educational strategies so that students reach high standards of academic performance.

In order to realize this type of project, I believe that the participation of the U.S. Department of Education in this forum of study and innovation is greatly important. Allow me, on behalf of everyone, to express how glad we are for the attendance today of Dr. Milagros Lanauze, whom I ask to convey both to the Director of the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages, Dr. Delia Pompa, as well as to the Secretary of Education, Dr. Riley, our appreciation of their support of the Seminar and other initiatives. I mention once again the *International Spanish Academies* that form part of the memoranda of understanding that the Ministry of Education and Culture of Spain has signed with the Departments of Education of States and school districts.

I would also like to point out that, although they were unable to attend this Seminar meeting, the Departments of Education of the States of North Carolina, Massachusetts, Mississippi, and Nebraska, as well as that of New York City, have shown great interest in knowing the results and participating in our next meeting in the year two thousand, where there will be more of us.

Also, allow me to address the representatives of the two Canadian provinces, Alberta and Quebec, who share with all of us our concern for promoting foreign language education and an awareness and appreciation of the values of other cultures in our school systems, responding, moreover, to a tradition of tolerance and acceptance toward other countries that is characteristic of the great country of Canada. Thank you very much for coming, Dr. Sokolowsky and Dr. Merchand.

I would also like you to know that the Minister of Education and Culture, who would have liked to have been here with us, and who has asked me to convey to you his best regards, is interested in holding a meeting with the Superintendents and Commissioners of the States and Districts and with the Ministers of the Provinces that have signed memoranda of understanding with the Ministry of Education and Culture. The Counselor of Education and Science in Washington has been put in charge of trying to resolve the difficult problem of finding a time that would suit all of their tight schedules, and I know that he is already working on this.

This meeting of the responsible members from the Departments of Education will serve not only to establish a personal contact between all of them, but to give a new impetus to our plans for collaboration, for which I am sure new and more ambitious goals will be set. The date that we are looking at hypothetically would be in the month of October or November of the emblematic year two thousand.

Finally, I would like to congratulate you on your presentations, whose content we will study with the greatest care and interest. I hope that you remember your stay in Salamanca and Madrid as having been pleasant, both because of what you accomplished at the Seminar and because you enjoyed the hospitality and charm of both cities. Know that you will always be welcome in Spain, and that the Ministry of Education and Culture is always ready to welcome you as friends.

I thank all of you very much.