

Request Proposal for Spanish Speaking Classes

Target Group:

Classes in speaking Spanish would benefit the entire Town Staff. With the growing population of Hispanics it has become increasingly difficult to converse. In order to provide Town service to all residents it is of profound importance that the Town staff be able to communicate with everyone. All departments are dealing with Spanish speaking individuals and trying to assist them as well as conduct business.

Benefits of Request:

The Town staff will benefit from these classes. Not to mention the Spanish speaking public we deal with on a regular basis will also gain from the fact we understand them and they can communicate with us. The ability of all parties able to communicate will make our job straightforward and the citizen less frustrated.

Why participate in Spanish speaking classes:

Our main goal and objective is to provide a service to the citizens of Chapel Hill. Whether it is for bus service, collecting taxes or rent, responding to a fire or police call or helping put through a permit to build a house, we are here to assist the Citizens. If there is a barrier in communication our job becomes difficult and time consuming. Any method that would improve the ability for us, as Town Employees to assist the public would be an improvement for all concern.

Time Line:

The Education Work group would like to see some sort of Spanish speaking instruction start in the fall of 2003. Understanding that some of the option may take more time to become available to the employees' the sooner we all start learning this language the more that will benefit.

List of suggestions for receiving Spanish speaking classes:

1) Tuition Assistance Program – not all employees are aware (or remembers) of this program. If the employee takes it upon their self to go to Durham Tech or where ever to learn a second language they need to be aware that this program exists to help them pay for expenses.

2) Some employees already use Spanish on a regular basis, if they and their supervisors are willing they can possibly work with other employees to learn “survival Spanish” In other words learn phrases that would help the communicating process and assist the Spanish Citizen in accomplishing their business with the Town.

An additional issue with this would be does the Town have to pay this person if they work over time or come back when it is a scheduled day off. Also the Supervisor and Department head need to be in agreement that this is a good thing for their Spanish speaking employee to do.

3) The last suggestions is for a Spanish teacher to be hired to conduct Spanish class here at the Town. A list of interested employees would be compiled to assure that it was cost effective to do the classes. Department heads would need to give consent that their staff would be able to attend the classes and still accomplish their jobs. Several departments have gone this route in the past. If one department should choose to do this again, it should be made aware to ALL employees that the class is being conducted and they could participate. Again Department Heads would have the final say in this matter.

All these options will be open to all employees with Supervisor and Department Heads approval.

Suggestion to continue skill once acquired:

Once the employees have acquired the Spanish speaking skills it is important to us the language on a regular basis, so as not to loose the ability to communicate in Spanish. The following are just a few suggestions.

- 1) Spanish speaking only lunches
- 2) Spanish Scavenger hunt
- 3) Going to lunch and having to order in Spanish only and then speaking Spanish during the entire time.
- 4) Incorporate activities into the Lunch and Learn program where only the Spanish language is used.