

## ***Towards SHL Benchmarks from the Bottom-Up: High-School Teachers as Curriculum Designers***

### **Abstract for conference program**

This project engaged researchers, high-school teachers, and administrators in a long-term initiative aimed at training and empowering teachers to become leaders in research-informed SHL curricular initiatives. We present theoretical underpinnings, achievements, and areas for improvement to foster a discussion moving from the local context towards a generalizable set of benchmarks.

### **Presentation description**

Spanish heritage language (SHL) programs at the secondary level lack a set of standards that address the linguistic, social, affective, and professional needs of students (Potowski & Carreira 2004) and guide the curricular decisions of administrators and teachers. While several curricular proposals currently exist for post-secondary education (e.g., Beaudrie, Amezcua, & Loza, 2021), these are not always easily adaptable or applicable in a secondary school program and can be perceived by secondary teachers as a top-down imposition disconnected from their reality. To address this need, our project engaged researchers, high-school teachers, and administrators in a long-term initiative aimed at: a) training and empowering teachers to become leaders in SHL curricular initiatives at the school and district level, b) supporting the design of an SHL curriculum that incorporates students' voices and teacher's experiences, c) piloting and revising the curriculum based on teachers' and students' feedback, and d) facilitating a conversation about SHL standards from a bottom-up perspective, moving from the local reality in the classroom towards a generalizable set of benchmarks. We grounded our work in the idea that a comprehensive understanding of SHL identity development (including linguistic, affective, social, and individual dimensions) could translate into an SHL curriculum, teaching materials, and classroom practices that address racial-ethnic self-schemas (Oyserman et al., 2003; Rosa, 2019), define clear and adequate language learning goals (Booth, Huerta, & Thomas, 2018; Parra, 2016), consider not only the students' past experiences with the language and culture but also the demands and expectations of contexts beyond the classroom, and engage learners in activities and projects that involve self-expression, community engagement, and identity negotiation (Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Trueba, 2002; Beaudrie, 2009). In this presentation, we discuss each step of the project, addressing their theoretical underpinnings, current achievements, and areas for improvement, to foster a broader discussion beyond our local context.

### **References**

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## **Keywords**

Curriculum design, secondary schools, SHL benchmarks

## **Three to five learning objectives**

1. How to strengthen collaboration between researchers / colleges and teachers at local school districts
2. How to foster a research culture among secondary school teachers
3. How to integrate adequate learning goals with the emotional and developmental needs of students
4. How to engage high-school teachers in the design, implementation, and revision of a research-informed curriculum for SHL