

School Name **Rider University, Lawrenceville, NJ**  
Course Name **Elementary Spanish II**  
Course Format **Face-to-face**

**Key Results** In fall 2014 and spring 2015, students completed, on average, 89 percent of their MySpanishLab homework. Students who completed 80–100 percent of their MySpanishLab homework scored an average of 8 percentage points higher on all major course assessments than students who completed less than 80 percent of their MySpanishLab homework.

**Submitted by**  
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**Course Materials**  
*Arriba* by Zayas-Bazan, Bacon, Nibert; MySpanishLab

### Setting

Rider University is a private, suburban institution with more than 4,300 undergraduate and 1,000 graduate students. In fall 2014, the entering class consisted of 999 freshmen and 227 transfer students, three-quarters of whom hailed from New Jersey. The students had an average SAT score of 1562 and high school GPA of 3.37.

### About the Course

Elementary Spanish II is a 13-week, three-credit course emphasizing the use of language for communicative and cultural competency while developing a solid grammar foundation in Spanish. The prerequisite for the course requires students to either pass Elementary Spanish I or meet the cutoff score on the placement test.

Fourteen sections of Elementary Spanish II are offered annually within the Department of Languages, Literatures and Cultures; I teach about three sections each year with 15–20 students per section. I have been using MySpanishLab for the past five years.

### Challenges and Goals

The goal of this course is for students to develop the four basic skills (listening comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing), and to prepare for further study in the language. At the end of the course, successful students are able to communicate in predictable common daily settings and have achieved a mastery of the grammatical concepts and vocabulary through study and continuous oral and written practice. The discussion of distinctive cultural aspects of the Hispanic world is an integral part of this course.

Learning a foreign language is an exciting, challenging, and rewarding process, and it is also a very demanding one. I expect my students to study about two hours for each contact hour. That time should be dedicated to homework, especially the study of vocabulary and grammatical structures. Assigning Student Activity Manual homework in MySpanishLab helps students put in the amount of study time needed to succeed in the course.

### Implementation

I view my implementation of MySpanishLab as an effective, three-way prong. First, I use MySpanishLab to prepare students for the lesson by assigning basic preparative homework activities related to the reading, grammar exercises, or cultural information. When students attend class, they recognize the material we are covering and have some context for talking about it and asking questions. To some extent, I would call my course a flipped classroom. The second way I use MySpanishLab is I choose activities for students to complete during class time that will further the learning connection in the classroom. The third way I use MySpanishLab is, after class, I assign 6 or 7 exercises based on the topics we have covered in class. These exercises are usually grammar-based and are machine-graded.

In total, I assign 25–30 computer-graded Student Activity Manual (SAM) activities and 2–3 eText activities for each chapter covered—Chapters 6 through 10 in *Arriba*—for a total of 130 SAM activities and 12 eText activities. I encourage all students to use the practice pre-test, which creates a personalized study plan in MySpanishLab and refers students to specific areas in which they need to work. After they spend time on studying, they can take a post-test to check their knowledge. I think this is a phenomenal study tool that can help students improve their results in a short amount of time.

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In my program, homework is a space for students to make mistakes and grow. For this reason, I don't limit attempts, because some students may need many more practice opportunities than others. In the past, I counted the average homework scores toward the final grade, but too often students would complain about low scores affecting their GPA. I decided to change my approach and now award credit for the completion of homework. As soon as I made this change, the conversations I had with my students shifted dramatically. Students would come to me with questions about content, rather than complaints. I do allow students to see their actual scores in the MySpanishLab gradebook, but the score I record in my learning management system is the completion rate of homework.

I recommend that students work on some MySpanishLab exercises every day and not leave homework until the last minute. The syllabus suggests a timeline that helps students plan accordingly. I do not accept late homework.

The MySpanishLab gradebook informs my instruction. I check the exercises and the results to make sure students understand the material. If I find that many students are scoring low on a particular exercise, I will spend more time in class on that topic. If I see that a student is struggling, and has spent a good amount of time on the homework, but is still not doing well, I will create an additional homework program, choosing exercises that will help that student get up to speed. I often meet with struggling students during office hours to go over vocabulary exercises and other items on which they need help.

#### Assessments

40 percent	Written exams (4)
15 percent	Final exam
10 percent	MySpanishLab homework
10 percent	Oral exam
10 percent	Participation
10 percent	Compositions (2)
5 percent	Quizzes

#### Results and Data

In fall 2014 and spring 2015, on average, students scored 89 percent for the completion of their MySpanishLab homework, indicating to me that students are putting in an appropriate amount of effort on their homework.

There is strong correlation between MySpanishLab homework completion scores and overall course scores,  $r = .50$ ,  $p < .001$ . The data suggest students who complete MySpanishLab homework at a higher rate also perform better in the course. It should be noted that MySpanishLab homework scores made up 10 percent of the final course grade, influencing this relationship.

Students who completed 80–100 percent of their MySpanishLab homework scored an average of eight percentage points higher on all major course assessments compared to students who completed less than 80 percent of their MySpanishLab homework (Figure 1). Figure 2 shows the average MySpanishLab homework completion score for each course letter grade.

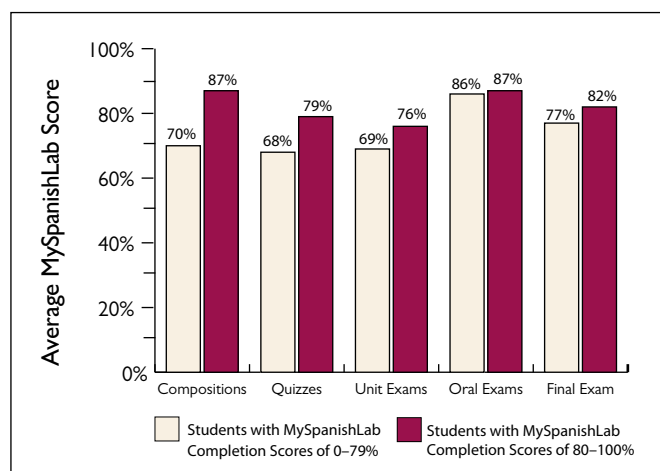


Figure 1. Average Scores for Major Course Assessments for Students Who Received MySpanishLab Homework Completion Scores of 0–79 Percent ( $n = 9$ ) and for Students Who Received MySpanishLab Homework Completion Scores of 80–100 Percent ( $n = 31$ ), Fall 2014 and Spring 2015 Combined

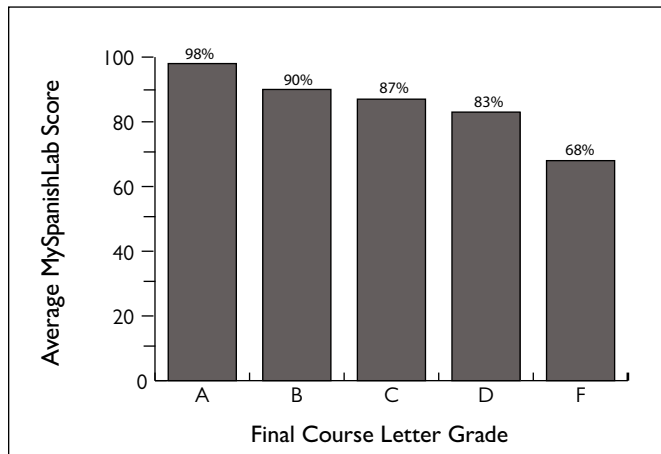


Figure 2. Average MySpanishLab Homework Completion Score for Each Final Course Letter Grade, Fall 2014 and Spring 2015 combined: A ( $n=11$ ); B ( $n=13$ ); C ( $n=7$ ); D ( $n=7$ ); F ( $n=2$ )

### The Student Experience

My students appreciate how MySpanishLab homework helps them with their language learning. The following quotes come from Spring 2015 class evaluations:

- “I love MySpanishLab because it helps me practice what we did in class.”
- “MySpanishLab is a great tool that allow us to improve our vocabulary with the use of tutorials.”
- “The study guides are awesome!”

### Conclusion

In addition to assigning SAM and eText activities, I am excited to start using LiveChat for oral exams. Previously I conducted individual oral assessments with students in my office, a very time-consuming endeavor. I switched to having students record audio in our school’s language lab. This change has increased students’ output but is still fairly limiting. Moving forward, I plan on using a combination of lab recordings and LiveChat. There are five categories in my oral exams, including topic description, question and answer, and narration, and I plan to use LiveChat for some of those topics. LiveChat will allow me to see more of the strategies students use to communicate, such as spontaneous talk vs. reading, facial expressions, etc. LiveChat will also enable me to cut the grading of some of these oral assessments in half because students will pair up, and I will be able to grade two students at the same time. LiveChat will also allow me to offer more opportunities for oral practice at several points in the semester, which will help prepare students for the oral exam. I am excited about the many possibilities!

Implementation and results case studies share actual implementation practices and evaluate possible relationships between program implementation and student performance. The findings are not meant to imply causality or generalizability within or beyond these instances. Rather, they can begin to provide informed considerations for implementation and adaptation decisions in other user contexts. For this case study, mixed-methods designs were applied, and the data collected included qualitative data from interviews, quantitative program usage analytics, and performance data. Open-ended interviews were used to guide data collection.