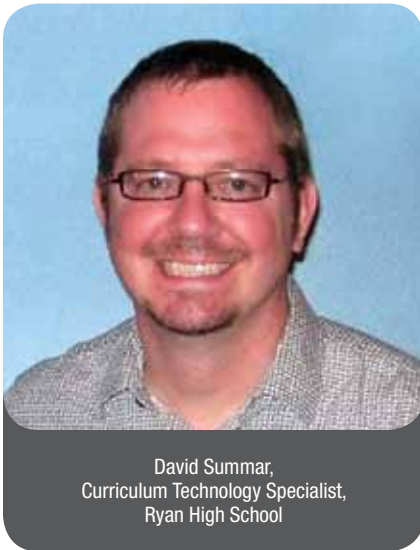




## Mastering World Languages through Digital Communication.



David Summar,  
Curriculum Technology Specialist,  
Ryan High School

**W**hen Denton Independent School District in Denton, Texas, installed their Sony Virtuoso™ language labs, they knew it was the right technological move to make, but they had no idea just how popular and well received the labs would be with their teachers – and especially with their students.

“As one teacher put it, ‘The kids just like it.’” said David Summar, Curriculum Technology Specialist at Ryan High School, part of the Denton Independent School District. “And because they like it, the lab is a motivator for them.”

Denton ISD, located near the Dallas/Fort Worth area, is the second-fastest-growing school district in north

Texas. In the recent past, the district administration made the decision to equip their schools’ new language labs with the Sony Virtuoso and Soloist® digital language learning software acquired through their local SANS authorized reseller, Teaching Systems, Inc. Today, Denton has four Sony labs in their middle schools and six Sony labs (two per school) in their high schools.

By all accounts, Denton ISD has a robust world language program with approximately 4,500 middle and high school level students enrolled in Spanish, French, Latin, German, and American Sign Language (ASL).

### Denton’s world language curriculum/technology mash-up.

The faculty’s enthusiasm over the new technology is shared by Denton’s curriculum leaders, who encourage faculty to take advantage of the lab. This mash-up of traditional curriculum with new technology has proven to be both challenging and rewarding, which is why having a Curriculum Technology Specialist such as David Summar on board is so important.

Summar’s job is to help teachers integrate technology into their teaching and instruction. “Some teachers are more comfortable with technology than others,” he explained. “Some just

like having someone there to get them started, while others are intimidated by the technology and need more help.”

But it seems even the less computer-savvy teachers at Denton have embraced the Sony technology. “The German teacher at our school, Jörg Dettmer, is such a positive example,” said Summar. “I’m so proud of him, because, although he commented that his generation was not typically on top of the latest technology, he was one of the first to get in there and tackle it. Now he’s in the lab with his classes about five times a week, and there are a lot of good things he’s getting out of it too,” he added.

Summar reports that Jörg has the students read alone and record and listen to themselves. He also matches students, randomly pairs them, and lets them interview each other using textbook interviews. He even lets them read skits and play grammar games in German. “What I see happening is, the instructors get in the lab and start using basic features, then they start playing with it, get more comfortable, and find more sophisticated things they can do,” Summar explained.



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More than one teacher reports that the lab's chat and conversational features are students' favorites, and one of the main reasons that teachers want to utilize the lab. "Teachers want those kids talking," said Summar. "And that is one of the great things about headphones...when you put headphones on students in the lab and put them in front of a screen it helps them focus. If you have 30 students talking at once, they get distracted, but in the lab speaking with headsets, students are more zeroed in on what they're doing."



One Spanish teacher especially likes the option of reviewing a student's work in real time during class – or at a later time at her convenience. And some teachers are using guided web exploration to enhance the cultural aspect of language education.

Their ASL instructor looks forward to integrating published multimedia, including textbook DVDs, into the lab environment,

which is an application that can be utilized for any language being taught.

NOTE: SANS also offers a Sony Virtuoso ASL component to its digital language lab line-up, which incorporates video cameras for visual communication.

## The language lab as a competence builder.

Utilizing a different approach, another teacher uses what she calls a "competence builder" exercise, in which the students first "text chat" an exercise, then do the same exercise orally. She believes this exercise helps reinforce structure and builds students' confidence before they vocalize.

What do teachers like most about the Sony software? Summar answers resoundingly: the speaking, listening, and monitoring features. "In a classroom setting, teachers have a limitation of calling on student A or student B, but in a lab, they can have all 30 students talking and interacting at the same time, as opposed to 28 listening and two speaking," Summar said. "Teachers like being able to record and save students' work and evaluate it more carefully than if they were just listening to them in the classroom."



## The digital way to go green.

Another advantage of the lab is the ability to go paperless, and innovative instructors, such as Denton's Latin instructor, are quickly adopting it. Instead of creating a test on paper and handing it out, he creates a word document with fill-in or multiple choice questions and pushes it out to students through the lab or stores it on the server, which students can access. After the students digitally complete the test, he either collects it through the lab or students save it on the server.

Because the documents reside on a network, teachers can share those documents, edit them for their test level, and repurpose them. It's the digital way to go green.

## Training the trainers: the importance of professional development.

Summar says teachers are using the lab more now than ever, as they continue to get more acquainted with the wealth of features. To keep instructors up-to-date with the technology, the school works with Sandy Hayward of Language Lab Training and Resource Inc., a company specializing in professional development focusing on SANS and Sony language lab technology curriculum integration. Summar is also available for one-on-one sessions with faculty as needed.

## Denton's digital language labs are part of the bigger technology picture.

Technology in the language lab is just part of the bigger picture for Denton ISD. The district has earned recognition for its use

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of technology, and the school board has stated they want to keep that a strong aspect of the school system. "There's a lot of industry in the North Texas area, so there is a big effort to talk to and cooperate with business leaders and see what they are looking for," said Summar. "We want to prepare our kids to be technically competent. We want to get students used to using technology by making it part of the regular curriculum," he added.

How does Summar summarize the language lab? "A lab gives people new ways to do things in the classroom they couldn't do before. That's part of the great value," he said. "From my perspective, I'm just excited to have the technology here. Not every school has it

as a resource. To have this in particular is something unique, and I'm glad we have a district and leadership that sees value in it and is willing to put it out there for kids to use."

When asked what advice he would give other schools looking to invest in digital language labs, Summar suggests to start small, define the immediate, achievable goals, and expand from there.

From his experience, Summar believes that language learning is more about people communicating than pen and paper exercises. "Communicating with one another...that's how you achieve mastery of a language," he said. And that is what the Virtuoso digital language lab is all about.



Jörg M. Dettmer teaches German 1, 2, 3 and AP

## Multi-Media Educational Tools for Spanish Language Instructors.

**H**ispanidades is a multi-media educational series consisting of textbooks, workbooks, study guides and DVDs designed for instructors of Spanish Language and Hispanic Culture. Based on the film series by Carlos Fuentes, *El Espejo Enterrado* ("The Buried Mirror"), a unique documentary produced in collaboration with the Smithsonian Institution, *Hispanidades* provides students with the background to understand the heritage of the Hispanic world—its history, culture, art and literature. DVD Narrator Carlos Fuentes, Mexico's renowned novelist and social commentator, provides a personal interpretation of the dramatic scenes recreated visually from the past.

### For Instructors, By Instructors

The *Hispanidades* textbooks, workbooks and study guides are authored by leading language, literature and Hispanic culture educators. More than seven authors contributed to developing this series, including David J. Curland, Robert L. Davis, Luis Verano and Francisco and Soñia Lomelí.

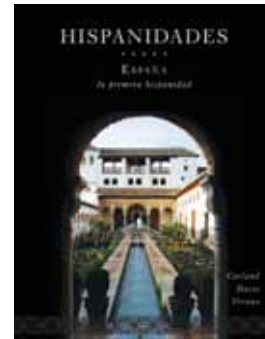
Created for instructors, by instructors, the *Hispanidades* materials are made available at prices your students can afford.

### From the Authors

In order to enter advanced study of Spanish language and Hispanic literature, students need a fundamental knowledge of the geography, history and culture of the Spanish-speaking peoples. *Hispanidades* is intended to serve as a resource to provide this background while preserving instructors' flexibility to shape their own courses.

In the two primary texts, *Hispanidades: España, La Primera Hispanidad* and *Hispanidades: Latinoamérica Y Los EE.UU.*, chapter themes relate to video segments from the Fuentes documentary, now available in DVD format. Each of the two texts contains the related programs from the original series. DVD menus allow the student immediate access to the appropriate video segment.

*Hispanidades: España, La Primera Hispanidad* concentrates on the history



and culture of Spain. *Hispanidades: Latinoamérica Y Los EE.UU.* contains a strong emphasis on the culture and literature of the growing

Hispanic population of the United States, giving advanced students and those of Hispanic origin, an important introduction to their own background. "Latin America now begins north of the border," as Fuentes comments. Teachers will find that these texts fill a widely-felt void in intermediate and advanced Spanish-language courses.

### Additional Questions?

Please feel free to contact the authors directly with any additional questions you may have. <http://hispanidades.info/>

## Technology Makes Exam Days Go Smoothly from Start to Finish.

When students are more worried about the testing process than the language they're being tested on, there's a way to take their anxiety out of the testing equation. Sony Virtuoso™ Digital Language Lab Technology is so easy to use that teacher after teacher reports that it takes much of the stress out of AP® world languages oral testing.

Sony Virtuoso APT software from SANS gives students the opportunity to develop listening and response skills before the test. The technology helps prep students for the exam so they focus on the language, not the process. And that helps them communicate with maximum effectiveness.

And it's simple for teachers at testing time, too. In four easy steps, teachers play the master recording, record student responses, collect the recordings, and copy to CDs for review and grading. The only technology involved is an intuitive instructor interface, a simple student recorder, and a SANS headset.

Interested in taking the fear factor out of your oral testing? License the Sony Virtuoso APT Software for six months (at \$99\* per student position). If it works for your language program and you want to buy it, you'll be credited back on your initial investment. Contact [sales@sansinc.com](mailto:sales@sansinc.com), or visit [www.sansinc.com](http://www.sansinc.com).

*We are happy with the Virtuoso software and the feature that addresses control and recording for AP testing.*

World Language  
Department Chair

*The Spanish AP ran smoothly, from listening to burning the audio tracks. Thank you.*

Spanish  
Instructor



## A Welcome to ITS and Americal Systems.

SANS has extended its reach by partnering with International Teaching Systems Inc. (ITS) and Americal Systems Inc. to sell and support SANS and Sony language learning technology products in the western U.S. These contractual arrangements make SANS technology more readily available in northern and southern California, Colorado, northern and southern Nevada, Utah, Wyoming, Arizona, and Hawaii.

"I'm extremely excited to be connected with these two fine companies," said SANS national sales manager Mark Goodin. "They both have extensive experience and expertise in the language learning technology market and will be a great asset to our existing and future customers."

ITS has provided language learning systems to the education market since 1987, while Americal has offered custom multimedia language learning systems to meet the specific needs of a variety of language learning programs since 1977.

According to SANS president Ron Remschel, "We welcome Americal and ITS as members of our growing U.S. and international sales team. SANS is proud that these worthy new resellers will be supporting our language programs in the western states."



**SANS Inc.**  
10 White Wood Lane  
North Branford, CT 06471

For more information, contact us at [sales@sansinc.com](mailto:sales@sansinc.com)  
or visit our website at [www.sansinc.com](http://www.sansinc.com).

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\*This represents the cost per student position to license the Sony Virtuoso APT software with a SANS headset for a six-month period. Additional installation fees may apply.