

Dear FLANC and Alexandra C. Wallace Essay Contest Committee:

I thank you for this opportunity to write about my experiences and how learning Spanish has enriched my life. I am grateful to everyone at the Foreign Language Association of Northern California for providing this opportunity for students like me.

My name is Suz Blattner and I am a senior. I have been attending the Albany Unified School District since kindergarten. I have been in the Spanish program since 7th grade and I have learned an immense amount since I started. I have had the opportunity to have Ms. Lim-McAlister, or as all her students know her, "Profe," for two years of my high school career and she has encouraged me, as well as all her other students to pursue their creativity and use our Spanish in ways that inspire us. Opportunities like writing skits and reading literature in Spanish have been a great part of my education and have inspired more of my creativity. Attached is my essay entitled, "Spanish Makes My Writing Sing" where I further discuss the benefits that Spanish has had on me personally.

I still have much more to learn and a great desire to learn more Spanish and discover other languages and cultures as well. I am excited to continue my education at Wesleyan University next year, where I would like to continue taking Spanish so I can learn more about language and explore more of the world. Thank you so much for sponsoring this event.

Sincerely,  
Suz Blattner

Suz Blattner  
AP Spanish  
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FLANC Member and Instructor: Pamela Lim-McAlister

## Spanish Makes My Writing Sing

I am a storyteller at the core of my being, but I have worked to become a writer. I did not learn to craft stories but I have had to learn how to tell them, how to mold the words on the page so they fit the images swirling in my mind.

Learning a world language has been essential to my becoming the writer, storyteller, and person I am today. Growing up in the American education system, we are not taught *how* our language works because we, as native speakers, know all the rules simply from the language being spoken around us. While this shaped my communication, I had no true understanding of how language really worked until I started learning Spanish. Not only did I begin to understand the words of those who spoke Spanish around me, to understand their perspectives with a deeper empathy than I could have without their language, but I began to comprehend the nuances of my own native language. When I wrote in English I played with the verb tenses and noticed the roots of the words, the meanings behind meaning; 'la *amistad*' taught me friendship is valued as love, as *amor*. 'Palpar' y 'sentir' showed me that outward and inward feeling can be distinguished. Spanish words danced in my mind, teaching my prose to sing like they never had before.

To me, learning Spanish has not simply been about communication, it has expanded my view on the world and shifted my perspective. I have begun to see things that, while they were in front of

me all the while, I had never seen, never understood before. No one in English classes ever explained that there is more than one way to speak in the past tense. Yet, I had been missing it. I had missed it. I missed it. Each of these adds a unique meaning to my sentence; however, if I had never learned Spanish, I never would have known.

Language has power, and understanding how it works is essential to harnessing that power. Lack of understanding leads to lack of control, but I am learning to tame my words like a fire, not so much that I let it fizzle out, but I no longer let them blaze and scorch. I hold my words close so they flicker with light, pulling in readers with the promise of warmth. The flames of my words grew only after I understood them, and for that I have my education to thank. I am learning to harness my language not through itself, but understanding its roots, its cousins and everything that has made it what it is today.

I will always be a storyteller, but my skill as a writer will only grow as I explore the world and its languages, as I learn from people who do not speak as I do, and from their meanings behind meanings. One language cannot capture all the stories that are itching to be told in the world.