

Portales and the Pandemic: How the Spanish-language Program Boosted Online Learning Success

Across higher education institutions, the 2020 pandemic abruptly forced a pivot to online instruction. At Gavilan College in Gilroy, CA, Spanish instructor David Pérez was prepared for the change.

Instructor Pérez was unsatisfied with the current course textbook; creating lessons within a Zoom set-up yielded no success. He discovered *Portales* just prior to being tasked with the online transition, and among its many benefits, the program seemed tailor-made for online learning.

Says Pérez, “Once we laid the groundwork, we were ready to go 100% online.”

A program that “speaks” to students’ needs

Upon its introduction, Pérez noted capabilities of the program that couldn’t be achieved with the older textbook approach. From PowerPoint slides to videos to audio lessons, *Portales* offered students well-rounded digital learning opportunities that they could tackle on their own, at their own pace.

The ability to have a Spanish-language conversation was also a critical component of the class. *Portales* gave Pérez’s students the added benefit of a virtual chat feature, so they could connect through the program to practice their language skills.

“The fact that they have these partner activities and chat activities is great,” says Pérez. “There’s also a recorded individual asking the students questions, so they are recorded matching their pronunciation to the instructions given — something you won’t find in every online program.”

The Results

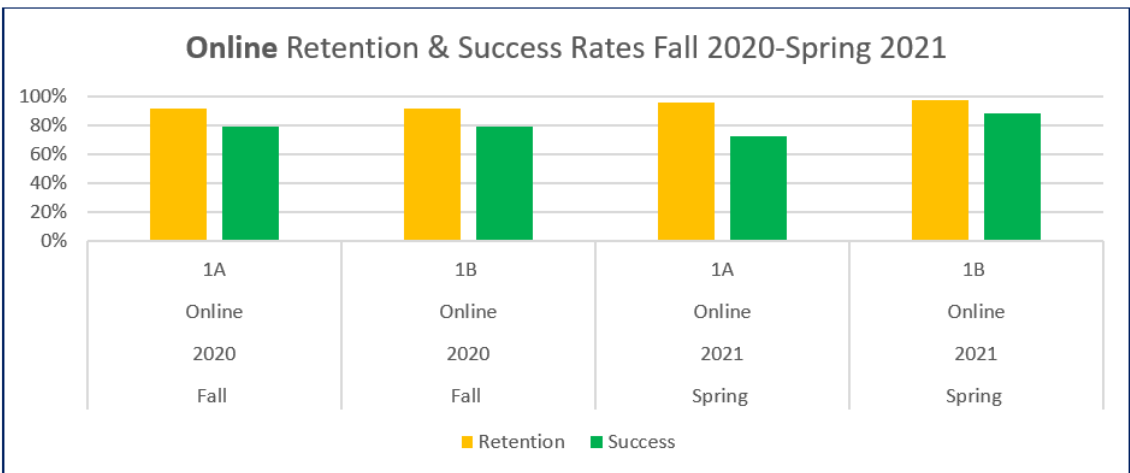
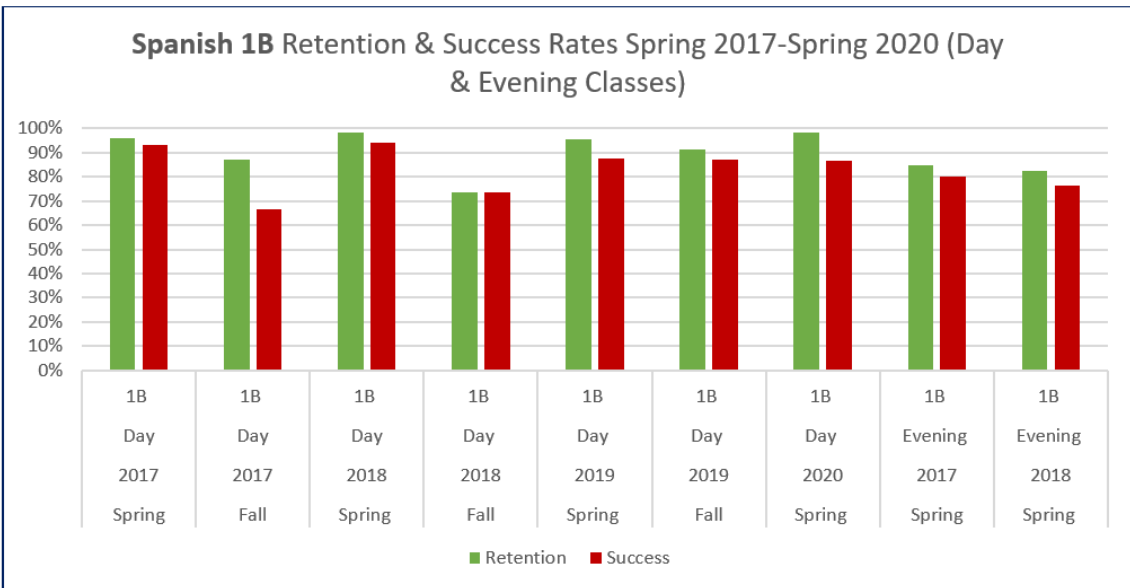
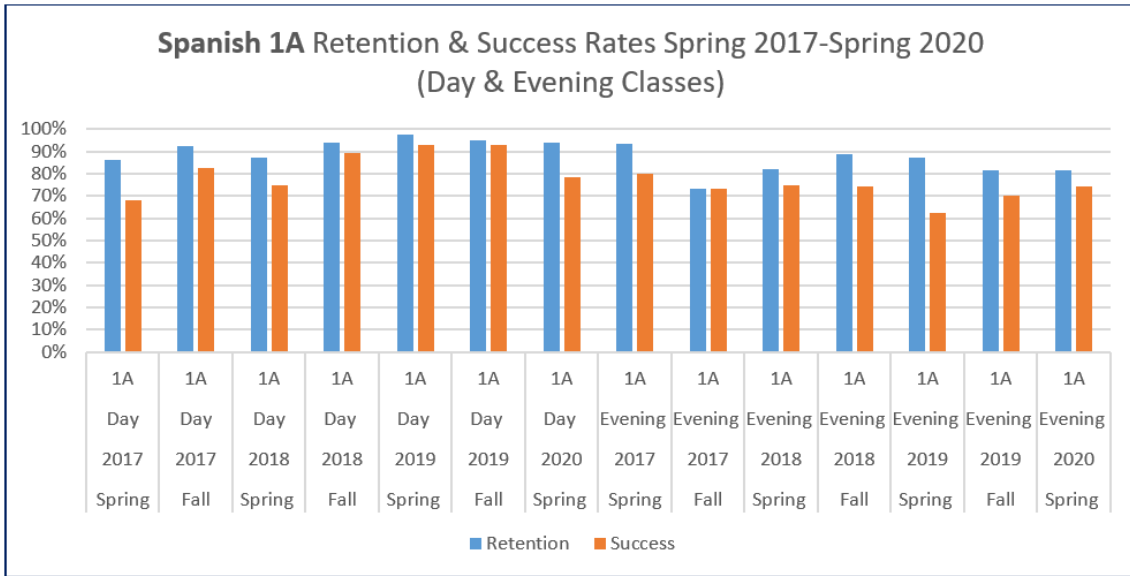
Since the adoption of *Portales*, Pérez noted a marked rise in class size, less withdrawals and increased learning success among his students.

Explains Pérez, “These students are managing lots of things at one time during a pandemic, and they still have to complete five units of a foreign language. With *Portales*, they can do it at any time. Students really like the flexibility of the online platform, and it shows.”

As a result of the pandemic, Pérez’s spring 2021 1A online section had an enrollment of 102 students. But a real noticeable improvement over previous years was seen in the class retention rate, which jumped from 82% in the spring 2018 1A evening section to 96% in the online class.

The spring 2018 1B evening section had a retention rate of 82%. In 2021, the online section achieved a retention rate of 98% during the spring semester. In addition, success rates rose from 75% to 89%, respectively.

“*Portales* helps students by giving them more time,” says Pérez. “They don’t need to drive to campus, deal with parking issues and then sit in a classroom. It just gives them back so much more, while giving them the things they need from a classroom environment.”



Portales: Teaching Spanish in the Post-pandemic World

Portales combines Vista Higher Learning's trusted Spanish content with powerful and easy-to-use administration tools, curricula and resources to help you deliver an effective introductory Spanish course. The program provides students with the interactive, dynamic and entertaining content that's essential in keeping them engaged, motivated and successful.

Regardless of whether face-to-face, hybrid or online classes, *Portales* helps instructors manage their courses with ease, provide clear insight into students' progress and allow flexibility to make adjustments at any time.

Portales by the Numbers

- **400,000+** students at 400+ schools have used *Portales* 1 to learn Spanish in the past 5 years.
- **2,962,159** # of activities assigned
- **6,920** Average activities assigned by institution
- **8,518** Number of sections with assigned activities

With *Portales* 2.0, the innovative learning experience has been thoughtfully revised and expanded by our specialized language learning team. This update brings new activity types and online group work—among many other updates—so that students build their proficiency through practice and collaboration with their peers. Learn more at learn.vistahigherlearning.com/portales

About Vista Higher Learning

Vista Higher Learning was founded in 2000 with one mission: to raise the teaching and learning of world languages to a higher level. Because we are specialized, we dedicate 100 percent of our resources to this goal and base every decision on how well it supports language learning. Our programs make language learning exciting and relevant, and drive positive outcomes for both educators and students.