

## Brazil Wants to Pay Foreign Debt with Spanish Classes

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Brazil's Minister of Education, Fernando Haddad, and the first vice president of the Spanish Government, Maria Tereza Fernandez de La Vega, will meet today for talks on exchanging part of Brazil's debt with Spain for investments in education.

The money would be used specifically to train teachers of Spanish as the need for them is about to increase significantly.

On Friday, president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva signed into law a bill making the teaching of Spanish mandatory in all high schools. Educational institutes, both public and private, will have five years to comply.

The new law on Spanish teaching was authored by Federal Deputy Átila Lira from the PSDB party of Piauí and was passed by the National Congress in July.

According to the proposal, public schools should offer the classes in foreign language centers during school hours, the Ministry of Education (MEC) informed.

In private schools the classes can be given in school classrooms during school hours or in foreign language centers. Norms for the teaching of the subject will be defined by state education councils.

A advance survey conducted by the MEC's Secretariat of Basic Education shows that 1,411 teachers will be needed to give Spanish classes in the 1,354 secondary schools in the 11 Brazilian states that border on Spanish-speaking countries.

The states are Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina, Paraná, Mato Grosso, Mato Grosso do Sul, Rondônia, Acre, Amazonas, Roraima, Amapá, and Pará. The secretariat is examining the preparation of books to give a boost to the public schools, as well as teacher training.

9.1 million students attend secondary schools in Brazil, according to preliminary data from the 2004 School Census. Of this total, 8 million are enrolled in public schools (federal, state, and municipal) and 1.1 million, in private institutions.

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