

Activities for Your Classroom

Let's Party—Birthday Style!

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Context:

Prior to this activity, students have learned numbers to at least 31, the months of the year, as well as sentence structure for dates in Spanish. Possessives have also been taught (i.e., not Julie's birthday, but rather, the birthday of Julie). Students should also be familiar with various interrogative words in the target language (What? When? How? How many?) in order to easily ask and answer the questions in the lesson. Class sessions are 30 minutes in length and are taught completely in the target language.

Objectives:

Students in grades 2–4 demonstrate understanding of expressions about birthdays by answering and asking questions. They also apply and reinforce graphing skills from the grade-level content curriculum as they respond to questions concerning how many boys/girls have birthdays in March, etc.

Examples:

1. *¿Cuándo es tu cumpleaños?* (When is your birthday?)
2. *Mi cumpleaños es el dos de octubre.* (My birthday is October second.)
3. *El cumpleaños de Elisa es el cuatro de mayo.* (Lisa's birthday is May fourth.)
4. *¿Cuántas muchachas tienen cumpleaños en junio?* (How many girls have birthdays in June?)

Targeted Standards:

Communication

- 1.1 Interpersonal Communication.
Students provide and obtain information about birthdays.

Cultures

- 2.1 Practices and Perspectives of Culture.
Students learn about the way children's birthdays are celebrated in Spanish-speaking countries.

Connections

- 3.1 Making Connections.
Students reinforce and further their knowledge of graphing skills.

Materials:

1. Laminated posters with months in columns for graphing.
2. Laminated small birthday cakes (red for boys, green for girls). See Figure 1.
3. Overhead marking pen.
4. Puppet.

Procedure:

(Note: This lesson may be completed in one day if there are about 22–23 students in the class, and if the birthday song has been taught ahead of time. If classes are larger, two days might be required, with Day Two beginning at the point where students' names are written on the paper birthday cakes, which are then placed on the graph. Do the Assessment portion on separate days after the lesson has been taught.)

Begin by asking Paco (puppet) when his birthday is, *¿Cuándo es tu cumpleaños?* (When is your birthday?). The puppet responds, *Mi cumpleaños es el tres de noviembre.* (My birthday is November third.) Repeat the information, *El cumpleaños de Paco es el tres de noviembre.* (Paco's birthday is November third.) Announce excitedly, *Hoy es el cumpleaños de Paco!* (Today is Paco's birthday!) *Vamos a cantar "Cumpleaños feliz!"* (Let's sing "Happy Birthday!")

Sing with the class the song "Cumpleaños feliz" to Paco, as well as a previously learned traditional birthday song from Spain, "Feliz, feliz en tu día." If music is not available, teach the song as a cultural birthday rhyme:

*Feliz, feliz en tu día
Amiguito que Dios te bendiga
Qué reine la paz en tu día
Y que cumplas muchos más.*

Show the *piñata* and explain that in Spanish-speaking countries a very popular custom is that of breaking a *piñata* on someone's birthday. In some cases this takes the place of a traditional birthday cake. (Note: I usually do not include with this activity the actual breaking of a *piñata* by students.)

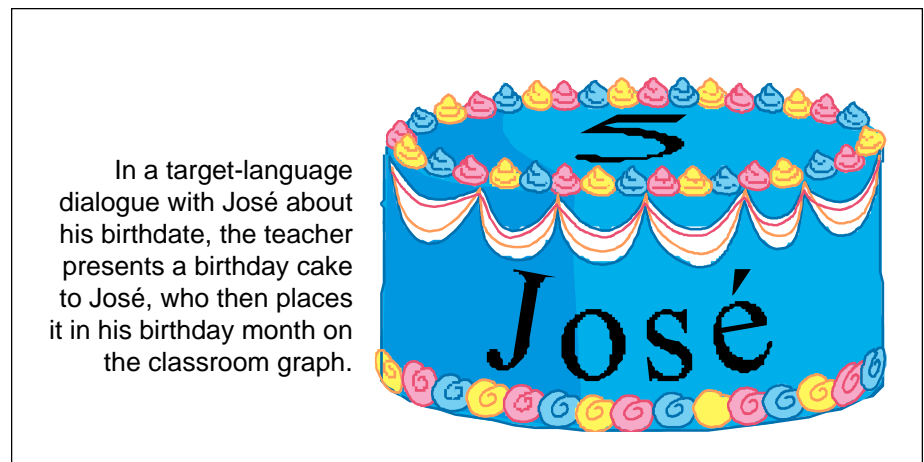
Model a conversation with Paco by having Paco ask you, *¿Cuándo es tu cumpleaños?* (When is your birthday?). Answer with, *Mi cumpleaños es*

el treinta de septiembre. (My birthday is September thirtieth.) Turn students' attention to a birthday graph on a poster by pointing out that months in Spanish begin with lower case letters instead of upper case as in English. Also write the sentence *Mi cumpleaños es el 30 de septiembre.* on the chalkboard, showing the way a birthdate is written in Spanish. Then write the same sentence, only changing the position of the number 30 as follows: "*Mi cumpleaños es septiembre 30.*" Ask the class, *¿Es correcto, o no es correcto?* (Is it correct or not correct?). Encourage the class to respond, *No es correcto* (It is not correct) and place an "X" over the incorrect writing of the date. Write a few more dates, some correct and some incorrect, for the students to identify. If the date is written incorrectly, a student must correct it. (Note: I usually let all grades, 2–4, participate in writing. In my school, students begin writing in the target language even in first grade.)

Turn to someone in the class and inquire about his/her birthdate. Encourage the student to respond in a sentence, *Mi cumpleaños es el cinco de junio.* (My birthday is June fifth.) Use a marker to write the student's name and the number "5" on the appropriate color birthday cake (red for boys, green for girls). See Figure 1.

Place a small piece of double-

Figure 1. Laminated birthday cake cut-out, with student's name and birthdate



sided tape on the birthday cake and have the student come up and place his/her cake in the correct month column on the graph.

Guide this student to ask someone else when his/her birthday is, *¿Cuándo es tu cumpleaños?* (When is your birthday?) and have the next student answer, *Mi cumpleaños es el _____ de _____.* (My birthday is the _____ of _____.) and place the birthday cake in the appropriate column. Continue this question-answer practice until all have had a turn to say in a sentence their own birthdate, as well as to ask another student about his/her birthday, and everyone has a red or green birthday cake on the graph.

Again model using Paco and ask him, *¿Cuándo es el cumpleaños de Julia?* (When is Julia's birthday?). Have Paco answer and then have him pose the same question to another student, *¿Cuándo es el cumpleaños de Guillermo?* (When is William's birthday?). Continue in this manner, with a student answering and in turn asking about another student's birthdate.

After the cakes are all posted, give children the opportunity to respond to a variety of questions, reinforcing their graphing and language skills:

¿Cuántos muchachos tienen su cumpleaños en julio? (How many boys have birthdays in July?)

¿En qué mes hay más cumpleaños, agosto o marzo? (In what month are there more birthdays, August or March?)

¿En qué mes no hay cumpleaños? (In what month are there no birthdays?)

Assessment:

1. Have class members draw a name of a classmate and make a birthday card for that person. Have them share their cards when they are finished by individually coming to the front of the class, holding up the birthday card, showing it to the class, and telling when the birthday

of the child is, *El cumpleaños de Roberto es el seis de abril.*

(Robert's birthday is the sixth of April.) Have the student who read the card present it to the student for whom it was made and introduce the next student by asking in the target language, When is Isabel's birthday? The person who made a card for Isabel comes up and, thus, the presentations continue.

2. Make true-false statements concerning the lesson (birthday customs discussed, birthdates from graph, etc.). Have students respond with *Verdad* (True) or *Mentira* (False).

Examples:

La piñata es parte de las fiestas de cumpleaños en México. (The piñata is part of birthday parties in Mexico.)

Tres personas tienen sus cumpleaños en mayo. (Three people have birthdays in May.)

El color verde en el gráfico representa las muchachas. (The color green on the graph represents the girls.)

3. Divide the class into two teams that take turns to make a true or false statement regarding any part of the lesson.

Examples:

El tres de febrero es el cumpleaños de María. (February third is Maria's birthday.)

El doce de abril no es el cumpleaños de Jaime. (April twelfth is not James's birthday.)

A member of the opposite team responds *Verdad* or *Mentira*. If the student answers incorrectly, he must sit down. The team at the end of class with the most players standing wins.