



Family Listening Session

Hearing from Parents About Their Child Care Needs

Latino Network

In January 2020, a listening session with parents and caregivers was held at the Latino Network in Tualatin, Oregon. This listening session was part of a series of family listening sessions funded by the Preschool Development Grant as a part of a statewide early learning needs assessment. The listening session was co-designed, organized, and hosted by Latino Network and AB Cultural Drivers in partnership with OSLC Developments, Inc. and Portland State University. The goal of the listening sessions was to hear family voices that have not yet been captured in understanding families' early learning needs and experiences. This listening session was held in Spanish with 10 mothers of young children.

Current Child Care Experiences and Building School Readiness

Current Early Learning Supports and Benefits

Of the ten parents, two mothers reported using a child care center, two had children enrolled in Head Start, and nine reported providing care for their young children themselves as least part of the year.

Parents talked about a variety of things they did with their children, such as taking them to parks, playing games, doing crafts, having children paint, and taking them to community activity centers for swimming and sports. Although mothers who cared for their children reported teaching them about cultural traditions, and eight parents indicated that their provider (including themselves) spoke Spanish to their children, only five said that their provider did activities that supported their children's cultural traditions.

"They only speak the language, but they don't do anything else."

"Ellos solo hablan el idioma, pero no hacen nada más."

Two parents said that their local libraries provided child-friendly activities that supported their cultural traditions, and two indicated that their older child's elementary schools did some celebrations related to traditional holidays such as the "Day of the Dead." One parent reported her child's school asking parents for input about culturally responsive activities that the school could host:

"At [elementary school] where my child goes, they offer cultural activities, folk dances, they're always asking what to celebrate."

"En la escuela donde va mi niño, [elementary school] sí celebran actividades culturales, bailes folclóricos, siempre están preguntando qué celebrar."

All parents agreed that having children participate in early learning programs is important for helping them be ready for school. Three described significant barriers that get in the way of these opportunities, however, including lack of transportation (three parents reported driving long distances to attend programming provided by Latino Network), families not qualifying for Head Start, long waiting lists for Head Start, lack of programs and child care close in or near their locations and the high costs of programs other than Head Start.

“My daughter qualified for Head Start but I could not take her there because there was no bus.”

“Mi hija calificó para Head Start, pero no la pude llevar porque no había bus.”

“There are families who do not qualify for Head Start. In Mexico, there is public free preschool education. Here you have to wait until age 5 to send your kids to school. I’d like to have public preschools for free because it helps children get ready for kindergarten. There should be priority for moms who work...everything you earn goes to the care of the child.”

“Hay familias que no califican para el Head Start. En México hay escuela pública preescolar, aquí tienes que esperar hasta los 5 años. Me gustaría que hubiese preescolares públicos (gratis) porque les ayuda a los niños a desenvolverse para que cuando lleguen al kínder vayan más preparados. Se debería dar prioridad a las mamás que trabajan, todo lo que uno gana, va al cuidado del niño.”

“Programs should have scholarships according to family income and number of children in the family. I live in Roosevelt, and there’s no Head Start there.”

Several also wanted to have access to more programs and activities that support Spanish language development and Hispanic/Latinx cultural traditions.

“My parents do not speak English...my daughter understands but she does not answer in Spanish. I’d like there to be more activities for the kids but that focus more on the language, because my girl is losing it, and through language, teach them traditions and culture. Where I live, there are no such classes...I have to come all the way here to access those programs.”

“Mis papás no hablan el inglés...mi hija entiende, pero no contesta en español. Me gustaría que hubiese más actividades para los niños pero que se enfocaran más en

el idioma, porque mi niña lo está perdiendo. Y a través del idioma, enseñarles las tradiciones y cultura. No hay esas clases por donde yo vivo...tengo que venir hasta acá para acceder a esos programas.”

“My child is at Bridgeport school, it’s a Spanish immersion school, they start with 90% Spanish. I want my child to be able to read, write and speak Spanish.”

“Mi niño está en la escuela Bridgeport, es una escuela de inmersión en español, ahí empiezan con 90% en español. Quiero que mi niño sepa leer en español, escribir y hablarlo.”

There was consensus among these parents that the people caring for their children should help both children and families be ready for kindergarten.

“[program] helped my child to be prepared for kindergarten, she has not had a preschool experience. She knows the colors and letters, otherwise she wouldn’t have learned it at home. As a mother, I feel good, we are given a lot of help on how to educate our children in many ways.”

“[program] le han ayudado mucho a mi niña a prepararse al Kinder, no había tenido un preescolar que la prepare. Ya sabe los colores y las letras, si no, no lo hubiera aprendido en casa. Me siento bien, a nosotros nos están dando mucha ayuda de cómo educarlos a ellos, en muchos aspectos.”

“Juntos al Kinder is a program that starts in the summer for children who start kindergarten in the fall and gives parents a lot of information that they should know before their kids enter kindergarten, they guide and teach them what the [parent] conferences are all about, the parents really like it.”

“Juntos al Kinder es un programa que empieza en el verano para los niños que empiezan en el kínder y que les dan mucha información que deben de saber antes de entrar al kínder, los guían y les enseñan de qué se tratan las conferencias [de padres].”

The importance of linguistically and culturally specific providers and supports was emphasized:

“Head Start and Juntos Aprendemos gives us the option to volunteer in the class so this way we can get involved in our children’s education, to feel safe. In this program there are many families who speak Spanish, and so I feel more confident because we are immigrants and we speak the same language.”



Ideal Child Care Setting

Families described their ideal child care setting as being close to the families' home and providing mostly full-day care (9am-2pm), although some needed longer days (9am-9pm; 8:30am-3pm). Parents mentioned the importance of having a bus for transportation, and one indicated she would like the option for parents to volunteer at the child care setting for lower costs. As mentioned previously, for some families volunteering in the classroom also may create greater feelings of trust in the program provider and build safety and community. In terms of what they felt was most important to help their children learn and be successful, parents spoke of a variety of things, including creative activities (drafts, music, dancing), sports, social skills ("good manners", personal responsibility, learning about routines and schedules), and academics (reading and writing in both English and Spanish, science, how to write their names, etc.).

What would help you "be the best mom or dad you can be?"

Parents described a number of parenting support that they valued, including more parent educational programs, parenting classes, and online parenting classes; more scholarships for children to do extracurricular activities (dance, music, sports); and specifically more hours of culturally specific programming such as *Aprendiendo Juntos*, another program of Latino Network.

"En Head Start y 'Juntos Aprendemos' nos dan la opción de ser voluntarios en la clase y así nos podemos involucrar en la educación de los niños, para sentirse seguros. En este programa hay muchas familias que hablan español y así me siento más segura por el hecho que somos inmigrantes y hablamos el mismo idioma."

Helping Support Families with Children with Special Needs

Two parents recounted examples of how early learning program providers can play an important role in helped parents to recognize, and get help for, children who were having challenges (one autistic, the other with obtaining glasses):

"I noticed a child I took care of was falling very often...I informed the mother and finally she took her to the doctor, and it turned out the girl needs glasses. The parents hadn't noticed because they were working so hard. Sometimes people who take care of children look at things that parents don't look at because they're always working."

"Notaba que la niña que tenía en mi cuidado se caía muchísimo... Le informé a la mamá y finalmente ella la llevó al doctor, y la niña necesitaba lentes. Los padres no se habían dado cuenta porque andan trabajando mucho."

"[I cared for two children who] isolated themselves, they bit a lot too, did not interact with other children. [I] informed one of the mothers on what was going on with her child and the mom did not believe it, until she took the child to the doctor and they were able to assess the child and confirm that the child was autistic. The children were transferred to a special school. The caregivers helped the parents realize the needs of their children."

"[tenía dos niños] y ellos se aislaban, mordían mucho también, no interactuaban con otros niños. [Yo] informé a la mamá lo que pasaba con el niño en su cuidado y la mamá no creía, hasta que lo llevó al doctor y le pudieron hacer un examen y confirmar que el niño era autista. Los niños fueron transferidos a una escuela especial. Los cuidadores de niños ayudan a los papás a darse cuenta de las necesidades que tienen los niños."



Key Takeaways

- ▶ Culturally and linguistically specific programming was seen as valuable for both parents and children in helping build readiness for kindergarten and preparing parents to understand the school system and building a support system with other parents and educators of their culture.
- ▶ Having opportunities to connect with other Spanish-speaking parents as well as Spanish-speaking providers builds trust and cultivates a feeling of safety for families.
- ▶ Early learning providers can play an important role in helping parents identify, understand, and seek help for children with special needs prior to starting school and providing referrals.
- ▶ A significant challenge for these mothers was the lack of child care near their homes and the need to transport children long distances to attend the programs offered by Head Start and/or Latino Network.
- ▶ Generally, these parents did not perceive that child care providers, even if they were Spanish speaking, provided activities that supported their cultural traditions and values, but would like to see these things integrated into their children's early learning experiences.

Another parent of a child with special needs described how one program offered by Latino Network helped her:

"I looked for this program because my child is a child with special needs, is hyperactive and in school they usually do not give much importance. He regularly spent time in the hallway, because he was in his own world. I watched my child in class when a teacher told me how my child was and I realized I had to help my son with his homework and that's why this program helped me a lot like helping my son. At home I would review materials with my son so he could level himself at school. These programs support you a lot and you feel you are not alone and there are resources for oneself."

Este programa...yo lo busque porque mi niño es un niño especial, es hiperactivo y en las escuelas por lo general no le dan mucha importancia, regularmente se la pasaba en el pasillo, porque el andaba en su mundo, son muchos niños para una sola maestra, y la maestra no puede enfocarse en un niño especial porque tiene que ayudar a los demás. Entonces mi niño estaba atrasadísimo en la escuela. Y yo estaba buscando ayudarlo a mi hijo, observé a mi niño en la clase cuando una profesora me dijo cómo estaba mi niño y me di cuenta que tenía que ayudar a mi hijo en la tarea y por eso este programa me ayudó mucho como ayudar a mi hijo. En la casa yo repasaba con mi hijo para que el se pueda nivelar en la escuela. Estos programas te apoyan mucho y te sientes que no estas sola y hay recursos para uno."

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