

READING PRACTICE & NATIVE LANGUAGE BENEFITS PROJECT - DETAILED REPORT

Flor Isabel C., Grassroots Leadership Organizer UWSL

I wanted to learn from Spanish speaking parents as to what reading practice looks like while learning to read at home and what needs might need to be met in the community in order to provide a more inclusive reading program at home. To answer these questions, I conducted interviews with 8 Spanish-speaking parents from Kearns who had students attending West Kearns Elementary. Due to my background research on second language acquisition, I wanted to ask if parents and teachers saw a benefit to students reading in their native language. I sent out a 3-question survey to teachers and got 11 responses.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

PARENT/CAREGIVER INTERVIEWS

How are Spanish-speaking caregivers supporting their students and themselves while learning to read at home? What resources do they use/access to overcome barriers while learning to read at home?

WEST KEARNS ELEMENTARY TEACHER SURVEY

Do you see any benefits for students to read in their native language at home during their early years? If so, what are they?

FINDINGS

1. SCHOOL-HOME READING STRUCTURE

- a. Parents/caregivers** Students and parents/caregivers are **struggling to maintain a reading practice at home as they do not know what reading practices are expected from the school**, this causes frustration and significantly impacts students in later grades, making them become more detached from books and reading.

- i. Translated Parent Quote:**

- *"Many of the times I [sit] my kids [down to read], but... they don't want to read and say they've already read at school."*

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Revisit instructions and provide both students and parents with an updated reading structure for at-home reading practice.
- Communicate regularly with parents around updates and check in on progress with students' reading practices at home.

2. ENGLISH LANGUAGE BARRIER

- a. Teachers are interested in supporting their students in learning to read in English and have identified that **having an English speaker and English resources at home can better help students learn English.**
 - i. Teacher Quote
 - *"Having a person who is able to read in the English language-read to the student as the student follows along with the text, as this would give the student an opportunity to hear the English language."*
 - b. Parents/caregivers want to support their children's education but **due to the language barriers and limited support from family members who speak English** they face challenges in supporting their students with assignments, English reading practice, and overall academics.
 - i. Translated Parent Quote:
 - *"Before when they were at home [before moving out], they would support each other (siblings), and now they don't have that support."*

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Provide more bilingual instructions and complete assignments.
- Provide more reading practice for ELL at school and expand opportunities for participation and reading practice in after-school programs.

3. ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND NATIVE LANGUAGE SUPPORTS AT HOME

- a. Teachers are working to provide **additional support/resources** for parents to support their students with reading practice at home but could use more support and resources to send home such as books, flashcards, manipulatives, visuals and other resources.
 - i. Teachers Quote:
 - *"I give students books to take home in addition to those given by the school twice a year using our Scholastic Book Club points (and some of my own money)."*

- b. Parents/Caregivers would like to support reading at home but **due to language barriers to accessing resources and supports they had to get creative** in finding other resources such as introducing Spanish books, translations applications and constantly visiting their local library.

i. Translated Parent Quote:

- *"Maybe if in the school, if they could provide us with a Spanish book, that would be beneficial because then there's no need to go pick out books at the library, so now they have them there."*

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Sending more Spanish and/or bilingual books home with students
- Provide additional resources and support for parents for at home reading.

4. NATIVE LANGUAGE BENEFITS

- a. Teachers expressed that encouraging a student's native language in early years is beneficial and will strengthen language skills, provide background knowledge and support an appreciation for books. They stated that encouraging their connection to their native language ultimately could support parent and student relationships.

i. Teachers Quote:

- *"It strengthens their language skills and can give students more background knowledge that they can access as they are learning English."*
- *"I believe it builds a connection with the parent and the student, as some of our parents are not English speakers."*

- b. Parents/caregivers have expressed excitement and energy on being involved in their children's language learning as they believe that **if students speak their native language or are bilingual, they will be able to provide a better future and build a better community with their peers.**

i. Translated Parent Quote:

- *"They should speak [Spanish] not because of being Hispanic, no, it's a beautiful thing, because it will open more doors for them."*

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Encourage pride in cultural identity.
 - Have more engaging multicultural events for students to celebrate their culture.
- Share with teachers and parents research regarding second language acquisition theory.

LA BIBLIOTECA COMUNITARIA DE WEST KEARNS ELEMENTARY

Due to the conversations, I got creative and with support from my community members, friends, family and United Way I was able to provide the community with a little free library: "**La Biblioteca Comunitaria de West Kearns Elementary**". We placed this at West Kearns Elementary pairing it with the summer school lunch program so that children and parent/caregivers could have access to these free and shared Spanish books during and after school hours.

Parents have expressed gratitude and excitement about seeing their children reading and sharing turns reading with each other at home. Parents have shared that their children are reading and helping each other learn Spanish and parents are also following along. Parent figures who normally wouldn't be involved in reading are now reading with their children at home.

CONCLUSION

Given the research and findings, I would like to collaborate with folks from our community, district and other organizations to provide and/or create a more inclusive reading program for all bilingual families.

Flor Isabel C., Grassroots Leadership Organizer

Flor.cuevas@uw.org

435-255-0120