



Family Listening Session

Hearing from Parents About Their Child Care Needs

Doulas Latinas International

In December 2019, a listening session with parents was held in Woodburn, Oregon to learn about their needs for, and experiences with, child care in their community. The sessions were co-designed, planned, and hosted by Doula Latinas International and by researchers from AB Cultural Drivers, OSLC Developments, Inc., and Portland State University. Thirteen parents attended the session, 9 mothers and 4 fathers currently living in Woodburn. Parents had come to Oregon from various areas of Mexico (Oaxaca, Guanajuato, and Jalisco) as well as California. The listening session was conducted in Spanish.

Current Child Care Experiences and Building School Readiness

Who currently takes care of your children ages 0-5 years and what activities do they do?

The majority of these parents told us that their children are cared for by their mothers, and about one half said they have other family members, friends, or neighbors care for their children. More than one half of the parents also have their children cared for by an in-home provider (some with a license, some without), and fewer than one half had children attending more formal child care centers. Parents described a number of different activities that the children do with their caregivers such as art, cooking, playing, writing and reading, and science and math activities (STEM). Almost all of the parents said that caregivers provided culturally specific activities as well. For example, one parent shared that, for the class celebration of the Day of the Dead, the teachers asked that the children bring in a picture for the altar. Finally, parents talked about the activities caregivers did to help children develop social and other school readiness skills, including helping children learn to do activities with other children, communicate their needs, and express themselves.

Do child care providers speak Spanish with the children?

Most parents generally said yes to this question, but one parent expressed concern that at a local center (OCDC):

"...currently a lot of the Spanish is being lost. People who work there do not speak Spanish in the school, and there are fewer teachers who speak Spanish, only the teaching assistants."

Two mothers speak indigenous languages (Mixteco and Zapoteco) and expressed that there are no caregivers who speak these languages. This makes it hard for their children to learn or want to speak these languages. There are also parents that expressed difficulties communicating due to their lack of English-language knowledge.

"...actualmente se esta perdiendo mucho el español, las personas que trabajan ahí no hablan en Español en la escuela, hay menos maestras q hablan en español, solo las ayudantes de profesoras."



Where would you like your care to be?

Parents wanted care that was conveniently located, in town, close to home or work.

Also parents wanted a location that offered good experiences for their children. One parent wanted a location near a park or at a center with its own park. Another wanted a location that has “all the educational toys for a child.”

What time or days of the week would you like your child to be in care?

As might be expected, different families had different needs:

- ▶ Some parents wanted full time care: 5am-5pm, Monday through Friday.
- ▶ Parents with younger children wanted some care, a few hours at a time, not all day.
- ▶ Parents who are farm workers wanted care after school and during summer time.
- ▶ One parent wanted access to Saturday care “so the kids won’t be watching TV and playing with phones all day.”

Their Ideal Child Care Situation

What kinds of educational, artistic, and other activities would you like your children to receive to help them prepare for kindergarten?

All parents were interested in making sure children had these kind of activities. Parents said that activities like this can help support social outcomes (like shyness, learning to be proud of themselves), provide culture and language exposure, support basic academic skills, develop a school routine, and identify if a child needs more support in their learning (e.g., speech therapy, attention deficit). Parents also described enrichment activities they would like to see added to their child’s child care experiences, such as music, dancing, cooking, physical education, gymnastics, languages, sports, cultural activities, and swimming.

To what extent do you think it is important for caregivers to help you and your child be more prepared to start kindergarten?

All parents shared that these kinds of supports would be valuable, and specifically said that they would appreciate having workshops about the kindergarten transition and how to motivate children to go to and enjoy school.

“It’s important to have talks and workshops for kindergarten readiness preparedness. It’s not the same to be in preschool as in kindergarten, as there are differences and parents would like to know them.”

“Es importante tener pláticas para la preparación del kínder, no es lo mismo estar en preescolar que en kínder. Hay diferencias que como padres nos gusta conocerlas.”

“Sometimes as parents, we don’t know how to talk to our kids so they can be motivated. Educators give us tips on how to motivate our children and prepare them for the next grade.”

“A veces como padres, no sabemos como hablarles para que se motiven, los educadores nos dan consejos de como motivar a los niños y prepararlos para el siguiente grado.”

Parents also talked about the importance of both parents being able to work as a team to support their child’s education at home. But there are some challenges that parents experience with helping their children at home.

One mom shared that with “picking them up, cooking, and bathing, there is no time for homework.”

“mientras que les recoge, cocine, baño, no hay tiempo para la tarea.”



“Tuve la experiencia que la profesora le insulto a mi hija porque la niña puso el cepillo de dientes en su escupido y la maestra le dijo: ‘hay niña como eres tan cochina’ y mi hija desde ahí dejó de hablar y lloraba, no quería ir a la escuela. Yo tuve de testigo a la ayudante de la maestra que me conto lo que había pasado. Mi niña al centro no quería ir.”

La mama hablo con la directora, y ella le dijo que si tiene testigos tiene q traerla, y con pruebas, la ayudante no quiso testificar, y mama decidió no llevarle otra vez a la escuela.

“La niña por mucho tiempo en la escuela dejó de hablar, se puso tímida y con baja autoestima.”

Finding Appropriate Care

Most parents relied on references from friends and neighbors to find care in the past. However, some of those recommendations have not gone well. Parents noted, for example, that a caregiver may have a license to care for children, but that does not necessarily mean that caregiver will take good care of the children or teach them things. Some parents shared that caregivers they have had in the past have ignored or disrespected the children in their care. Parents in this community have had to compromise quality in their search for available, affordable care.

One parent shared a story of a time her child was disrespected in the classroom and her concerns were dismissed by the head of the center:

“...I had the experience that a teacher insulted my daughter because she put her toothbrush on her spit and the teacher said to her: ‘you’re a dirty girl.’ Since then my daughter stopped talking and cried when going to school, she didn’t want to go to school. I had as a witness the assistant teacher who told me what had happened. My daughter didn’t want to go back to the center.”

The parent talked to the principal who told her that if she had witnesses, she must bring them to testify. The assistant did not want to testify, and the parent decided not to take her child back to school.

“For a long time, [my child] stopped talking at school, became shy and had low self-esteem.”

What information or help would you like to have in the future to make a good decision about child care?

Parents shared that they would like to know how many children are cared for at a location, what activities are available, what they feed the children, what safety measures are in place, and how they supervise children. A few parents were concerned about how caregivers are held accountable by the state licensing process. For example, one parent wished that caregivers would be evaluated by the state before being given a license, while another shared the story of a provider that would feed the children enough food when the liscencer visited, but did not give the children enough food when not observed by the state. One parent wished that there were more people who knew how to care for children.

Have you ever had to leave work to take care of your children because paying to care for them is too expensive?

Six parents of the 13 parents said they had to leave work to care for children because of the expense of child care. Five of those parents were mothers and one father. A couple of mothers shared that they tried working, but child care was so expensive that their whole checks went to child care. It was not worth it in their minds, so they chose to stay home. One single mom shared that even though care is so expensive, she has no choice but to pay for it so that she can go to work.

Their Needs as Parents

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

A few parents talked about the importance of having their own mothers available to them as a source of parenting advice. One parent who is in a home-visiting program through ODCD wished other parents had the information and support she has (parent education, educational materials, and educational activities guidance). There is a need for homework support and parent education to be able to support their children with education at home. A few parents wished that they had the capacity and patience to better support their children through challenges.

What other resources would you ask for?

Many parents wished that after-school programs offered more homework assistance. Four parents requested classes in the summer and weekends to help their kids keep learning. Parents also requested particular topics: math tutoring; formal (written, oral, writing) Spanish and other language classes with fully bilingual and, ideally, bicultural teachers (not only Spanish-speaking assistants); and non-academic classes like arts and gardening. Other parents shared that they would like more money, resources to travel and get to know other cultures, and parenting workshops.

Parents with children with special needs faced additional barriers to receiving quality care and noted that:

- ▶ Child care providers would benefit from more training in identifying children with special needs (one parent reported that her child was called "lazy", but in fact she has an attention deficit disorder that was not diagnosed until she was age 7 years).
- ▶ The referral process for services can be slow.
- ▶ Speech therapy may not be provided in Spanish (child's native language).

Key Takeaways

- ▶ These parents valued enrichment activities and development of social skills for children and were interested in child care providers supporting these and learning about more they could do at home; parents also held a high value for culturally specific activities and language acquisition (English, Spanish, and indigenous mother languages) being supported at child care.
- ▶ Parents were concerned that lead teachers may not speak Spanish to their children, and that caregivers with regional indigenous languages were not available to their children.
- ▶ Parents were challenged by the cost of care, which often exceeds what they make at work and forces mothers to stop working.
- ▶ Parents described the need for more reliable sources and specific information about child care providers to help them make their decisions about care. Some specific information parents shared would help them make their decisions included teacher-child ratios, activities available, and licence information.
- ▶ These parents underscored the importance of having both parents (if appropriate) being involved in parenting education and supports.
- ▶ These families relied strongly on family caregiver networks, both for child care and for parenting advice; supporting extended families (grandparents in particular) may be particularly important in this community.
- ▶ Parent experiences suggest that child care providers need more help identifying and making referrals for children with special needs, and the need for culturally and linguistically appropriate services for early developmental concerns.

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