



Family Listening Session

Hearing from Parents About Their Child Care Needs

Bienestar Forest Grove

In January 2020, a listening session with parents and caregivers was held at the Popular Education Design Bienestar program in Forest Grove, 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 Bienestar 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 13 parents and caregivers—10 mothers of young children, 2 fathers, and 1 grandmother.

Current Child Care Experiences and Building School Readiness

Current Early Learning Supports and Benefits

Most (four) of these parents reported that they care for their children themselves, and one reported having a friend/neighbor provide care. Two talked about using a local daycare center. Parents talked about having children paint, practice letters, and do their "ABC's." Three parents talked about the benefits of both preschool and educational materials provided by Bienestar (although the parent and Bienestar staff noted that the program lost funding for the parenting education materials that had formerly been provided). They described benefits such as helping children learn skills like letters and writing their names, as well as social and emotional skills:

"I have seen that those kids who went, when entering public school, they don't cry, they have relationships with other kids, they communicate, and they are not afraid. I have seen other kids that did not go and it shows at the bus stop. They are crying or they don't want to leave their parents. You can see the differences."

"Yo me he dado cuenta que los niños cuando entran a una escuela publica no lloran, tienen relación con los niños, tienen comunicación, no tienen miedo. Yo veo que hay otros niños que no los mandan, y se nota en la parada del bus, no quieren ir están llorando o les van a dejar los papas y no se quieren despegar. He visto una diferencia."



Families Want More Spanish Language Instruction and Support

Several parents noted wanting to have children learn to read and write in Spanish and about challenges for dual-language learners. Having providers who speak the families' home language was clearly important for all these families. While all spoke Spanish and said they could find caregivers/babysitters who spoke Spanish, one noted that they could not find a provider who spoke their Mayan language (Chuj).

"We are already losing much of our culture. It's true that we speak Spanish, but the reality is that English is really the focus. We don't really have time to teach reading or writing in Spanish."

De nuestras culturas nosotros ya lo estamos perdiendo mucho. Es cierto que nosotros hablamos español, pero aquí en realmente lo que se enfocan mas es el ingles. Nosotros no tenemos tiempo para estar enseñado como se escribe o lea."

One parent described the importance of early learning supports for dual-language learners, and another noted the importance of her caregiver sharing her family's culture:

"We speak Spanish at home because we want him to learn our language and he is learning English at school. Because he wasn't prepared before, it becomes confusing, he is not at the 2nd or 3rd grade level...it is very confusing for them at the beginning."

"Nosotros hablamos Espanol mas en la casa porque queremos que aprenda nuestro idioma y el inglés lo está aprendiendo en la escuela. Como no estaba preparado antes se hace muy confuso, no están al nivel que tienen que estar hasta que llegan al 2nd o 3rd grado...Pero si es muy confuso para ellos al principio."

"I really like that the lady who takes care of my girl celebrates the traditions that we follow."

"La señora que cuida a mi niña me gusta mucho, celebraran las tradiciones que nosotros seguimos."

In particular, working parents who relied on child care providers noted the important role of these persons for their children's learning:

"Because they are the ones who spend the most time with the children—for us, we mostly have time in the morning. We arrive home and need to cook, get washed up, get them ready for the next day. We have a bit of time, but not a lot."

"Si porque ellos son los que pasan lo mas tiempo con los niños—que nosotros, hay más tiempo en la mañana. Nosotros llegamos, nos ponemos a cocinar, tenemos que banarlos, tenemos que alistarlos para el próximo día. Si tenemos tiempo, pero no tanto tiempo."

Challenges: Finding Trusted Caregivers

Several parents talked about the cost of child care as well as the difficulty of finding trusted caregivers. Trust and feeling comfortable that caregivers will provide good care, including basic care such as providing adequate food were valued. Several gave examples of negative experiences with in-home providers, for example,

"Just because they are licensed doesn't mean they are doing a good job. I met a lady that was licensed, and one day I arrived from work early and found my girls eating on the floor because the lady didn't want to clean up after them. I didn't like seeing that."



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“Even now we don’t know if it’s because he has poor hearing or it’s because he doesn’t understand. We noticed he was regressing a lot. What I’m thinking and what I have observed is that he is confused with Spanish and English. He doesn’t understand. With English there is little he doesn’t understand, with Spanish he understands but doesn’t speak it. At home...we sit down with him and explain and he understands, he is very intelligent. I don’t understand why he can’t succeed when he gets to class. I don’t know what is happening.”

“Hasta ahorita no sabes si es porque no escucha bien o es porque no entiende...Lo que yo estoy pensando y lo que yo miro es que esta confundido con el español y ingles. No entiende. El inglés lo habla no hay muchas cosas que no entiende, el español lo entiende, pero no lo habla...En casa amos puesto más tiempo con él, nos sentamos y le explicamos y el sabe es bien inteligente, no entiendo porque cuándo llega a la clase no puede. No se lo que esta pasando.”

“Solo porque tienen licencia no quiere decir que van a hacer buen trabajo. Yo conocí a una mujer que tenía licencia, un día llegué del trabajo muy pronto y encontré a mis niñas comiendo en el piso porque ella no los quería limpiar. No me gusto verlo.”

One mother noted that her son was crying when she picked him up from care:

“I asked my son why he was crying and he didn’t want to tell me. The next day I asked him again. He told me that she [child care provider] was scolding the kids she watches and in order to punish them she would stick them in the closet. I was going to report her.”

“Le pregunte a mi hijo porque estaba llorando y no me quiso decir. El otro día le pregunte otra vez. Me dijo que ella estaba regañando a los niños que van ahí, y para castigarlos lo metió en el closet. Iba reportarlo.”

“It’s difficult to find someone you trust and you know will take good care of them. I wouldn’t be able to work without the help of my mom or cousin.”

“Es difícil encontrar alguien de confianza que tu sepas que los va cuidar bien. Yo no trabajaría sin la ayuda de mi mama o mi prima.”

“The difficult part for me is after school, because I take her to care and I feel there is no routine or dedication there. I would like someone here [Bienestar] or near my home that can take care of her and maintain the same rules [as the preschool]. At the moment my neighbor watches her and I sometimes come back and find them watching television.”

“Lo que me dificulta a mi es después de la escuelita, como la llevo a cuidar yo siento que ahí no le dan lo mismo rutina o dedicación. Me gustaría una persona aquí o donde vivo para que me lo sigue cuidando así con reglas. Porque yo le doy a una vecina y a veces los encuentro mirando televisión.”

In-Home Providers Were Not a Source of Parenting Advice or Help Preparing Parents for Kindergarten

All of the parents except one said that when they have used in-home child care providers, these providers have not been a source of information or activities to help children learn.

“I think that babysitters don’t usually give advice. If they barely have time to take care of all the children they have, then they don’t have time to give advice.”

“Yo pienso que las personas que lo cuidan no van a dar consejo. Si no tienen tiempo para cuidar todos los niños que tienen, no tienen tiempo para dar consejos.”



Challenges: Working Families and the Cost of Care

The cost of care was clearly a barrier and challenge for parents who wanted or needed to work.

"I stopped working for that reason, because Monday to Friday I was going to have to pay for four [children]. I thought it better to stay at home."

"Deje de trabajar por lo mismo, porque lunes a viernes iba pagar para cuatro [ninos]. No me convenía, mejor me quede en la casa."

"I told my husband I should work at night just like he works during the day. But it's the same thing—he wanted to pay my mom so we could both work [at the same time], but I told him in that case I would rather not work."

"Yo le dije a mi esposo que yo trabajo en la noche como el trabaja en el día. Pero es lo mismo. Él quería que yo le esta pagando a mi mama para que los dos trabajamos. Pero le dije que mejor no trabajo."

One parent talked about the complication of having different kinds of early learning programs, with different family eligibility requirements, although noted that they personally were benefiting from a publically funded program.

"What they want more than anything else is to make money."

One parent contrasted these experiences with the benefits of more formal preschool programs:

"The nursery is better than having someone take care of them in their homes. At the nursery they teach them a variety of things, they are more independent, they play, sing, socialize with other kids. They benefit more from going to school."

"La Escuelita es mejor que los que cuidan en las casas de las personas. En la escuelita los enseñan varias cosas, son mas independientes, juegan, cantan, socializan con otros niños. Les ayuda mas ir a la escuelita."

Several parents described the importance of getting information to help them prepare for kindergarten:

"It is important to establish a routine, kindergarten has a schedule, a time to get up. As a parent it would be useful to know the specifics of the routine."

"Es importante tener una rutina, en el kínder hay un horario que tienen que levantar. Como padre ayudaría saber mas de la rutina."

Another parent described wanting more help for parents and child care providers in helping children with homework:

"It is difficult for us to know how to help them. Because...I can tell them, look, this is the answer but they won't learn like that. That's why the teacher says if the kids don't know to come and ask them. That's why sometimes babysitters can't help with schoolwork."

"Porque nosotros...Yo le puedo decir mira es esto, pero no va aprender porque si yo le digo la respuesta. Los maestros los dice que si no saben de la pregunta que nos venga a preguntar a nosotros. Por eso a veces los babysitters no les pueden ayudar a los niños a hacer lo que tienen que hacer, porque eso es la regla que ponen en la escuela."

What Would Ideal Child Care Look Like?

All parents preferred local care in their community and near their homes. Three would like to see full day care, 5 days per week. Transportation was noted as a challenge, even if bus transportation was offered, with two noting a preference for bringing children themselves but risk in doing so:

“Many people are able to drive but they don’t have a license so there is a risk involved...even if they want to take them, the bus might be safer.”

“Hay mucha gente que podrian manejar pero no tienen la licencia entonces hay riesgo de manejar...Aunque quieren llevarlos es mas seguro ir en el bus.”

What Other Resources Would Help Parents

These parents described a number of concrete resources that they felt would help them to “be the best mom or dad possible” including good health, a washer/drier, shorter or more flexible work hours, or more work hours so both parents would not have to work.

“We all wish to be good parents. But sometimes not all of us were good kids, but now I want to be a good parent. Health and patience in order to understand my children...have good health, everything else will follow.”

“Todos quisiéramos ser buenos papas, pero a veces no fuimos buenos hijos, ahora quiero ser buen papa. Salud y paciencia para poder entender mis hijos, teniendo salud viene todo.”

One father said what he most wanted was:

“More energy in order to work a double shift, so that my wife could stay home with the kids.”

“Mas energía para trabar doublé turno, para que se puede quedar mi esposa con los niños.”

Key Takeaways

- ▶ Parents had challenges finding close-by, affordable, high-quality care, and often relied on informal care. While some parents had good experiences with these providers, others reported feeling these caregivers were not providing the supports they or their children most needed to be ready for kindergarten.
- ▶ Parents in this group had a good sense of when children’s needs were not being met in their early learning setting, and those who had children in more formal preschool programs valued the experiences they were getting there.
- ▶ This group of parents are reporting significant challenges promoting and maintaining their children’s Spanish language skills and the frustration and communication issues their children are experiencing while engaging with English monolingual learning environments.
- ▶ Lack of affordable care was a barrier to parents being able to work.
- ▶ Parents valued and preferred having providers who could speak their home language, and wanted more support for full dual-language learning.

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