

Proposal For Symposium on Spanish as Heritage Language

Title: Nuestra Herencia Familiar—Honoring Spanish Heritage Language Students Through Family Engagement

Family Engagement is the cornerstone to celebrating Spanish Heritage Language (SHL) scholars. Through engaging our families and communities, we gather testimonios that give us insight into their cultural traditions, experiences, and the importance of ensuring that their child(ren) become biliterate. This collaboration with our families and communities creates strong reciprocal partnerships where open continuous dialogue has become commonplace. Subsequently, we have been able to identify opportunities for change in our Family Engagement practices. In particular, we learned that we needed to implement innovative initiatives that would honor our SHL scholars, their families, and our school communities.

In our proposed presentation, we will discuss Family Engagement initiatives that have honored Spanish as a Heritage Language at two Dual-Language campuses in the North East Independent School District: Pre-K Academy at West Avenue and Walzem Elementary School. We will go in depth in describing how these strategies are essential in celebrating Nuestra Herencia Familiar—the Spanish Language, while simultaneously promoting Family Engagement at our campuses. At Pre-K Academy, the collaboration with parents and communities revealed the need to implement Literacy Programs that celebrated SHL scholars. At Walzem Elementary, SHL scholars are celebrated through a Ballet Folklorico program that inspires students to learn a variety of cultural dances from different regions in Latin America.

Our audience will have the following take-aways: 1) the importance of building relationships with families and communities; 2) Family Engagement is an essential ingredient to honoring SHL scholars; and 3) how our initiatives promote SHL development.

Abstract

Family Engagement is an essential ingredient in our educational system and a cornerstone to honoring Spanish Heritage Language scholars (SHL). Based on testimonios from our parents and community members, we have been able to gain invaluable insight that served as an impetus to spark innovative change. Come learn how Family Engagement practices are being implemented at two campuses in North East ISD to honor our SHL scholars, their families, and their communities.