

Norwalk Head Start Celebrates Hispanic Heritage

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The children of the Greater Norwalk Head Start capped off a month of Hispanic Heritage with arts & crafts, tacos, and a parade! The diversity of Hispanic Heritage was on display as the decorations and outfits worn by the students represented a multitude of countries and cultures.

The vast majority of students who attend Head Start and Early Head Start in Norwalk are Hispanic or Latino. However, many of these children have been in America for their entire, or at least entire conscious, lives. So, while they may be getting a dose of Hispanic culture from their parents and community, there is still a disconnect. Learning about Hispanic culture and celebrating it in the school has furthered a connection between the parents and their children and has led to greater parental involvement in their children's education.

While excitedly showing off the artwork and projects adorning the hallways, Education Manager, Danielle Campbell, was quick to point out that most of what could be seen were projects with parental involvement, meaning that parents were genuinely participating in their child's education.

Inside the classrooms, the blending of cultures was on full display. Students singing the days of the week in English followed up the first verse by singing the days of the week in Spanish. Decades of research have confirmed that children who learn multiple languages perform better in reading and writing in their primary language, are more creative, and have greater empathy than their monolingual peers. Furthermore, students are being taught to embrace and treasure their Hispanic heritage rather than reject and replace it with more Anglo culture. In 2018, it was been reported that 40% of Hispanic/Latino residents in America experienced some form of harassment based on their cultural identity. This celebration of their Hispanic cultural identity



can also help students remain confident and proud throughout their educational journey, preventing the stigma and shame that limits many children of non-dominant cultures from embracing their own experiences in their education.

In classrooms like Ms Diane Haygood's, the lessons went beyond language. The students in her classroom are learning about Hispanic culture as well as the food service industry through a restaurant set up in the classroom. Following in the footsteps of other classroom "businesses" - including an ice cream store and shoe store - the students learned about the various foods on the menu and the job of the wait staff. This lesson went beyond the academic, incorporating gratitude for those in service positions. The children served taco lunches to members of the staff, delivering the food to those who were not able to come to the classroom and providing table service to those who were able to sit down with them.

The celebration reached its peak with a parade of cultures. Many of the children were dressed in outfits that either represented the traditional culture of their families or more modern expressions of culture, like fútbol kits from Latin countries. The students strutted around the gym to a Latino-inspired "Kidz Bop!" playlist and ended with a raucous dance party.

As dismissal came and the students left to go home for the weekend, Hispanic Heritage Month celebrations at Head Start were over for the year. However, it was plainly clear that the celebration of Hispanic culture and the children's own heritage had no end in sight.

Slideshow of Hispanic Heritage Celebration









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