

Castillo calls for expanding, improving early childhood education for Hispanic children

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

SALEM, Ore. — State Schools Superintendent Susan Castillo this week urged that Hispanic children be enrolled in high quality early childhood education programs as early as possible in order to make more rapid progress in closing achievement gap. Castillo held a news conference with Eugene Garcia, Chair of the National Task Force on Early Childhood Education for Hispanics. The Task Force released a national report, *Para Nuestros Niños: Expanding and Improving Early Education for Hispanics*, earlier this year. Copies of the report were made available to members of the Oregon legislature. The report can be accessed online.

“Hispanic children, especially those from disadvantaged homes, continue to lag behind their white counterparts on school readiness and achievement in reading and mathematics,” Castillo said. “There is growing evidence that pre-K programs can produce gains for Hispanic students who have the opportunity to attend them, so the earlier Hispanic children have access to high quality early childhood educational programs, the better.”

The National Task Force’s major recommendations are listed below:- Increase Hispanic Access to Quality Early Childhood Education Programs The Task Force recommends that the federal government undertake a substantial expansion of Early Head Start and Head Start that will help to ensure that disadvantaged Hispanic children have greater access to high quality infant/toddler and pre-K programs. Similarly, states governments should expand and increase infant/toddler and pre-K programs in their states. Although providing universal pre-K should be the ultimate goal for states, priority should be given to expanding access for disadvantaged children, including disadvantaged Hispanics. States also should provide information to Hispanic parents on the availability of pre-K programs in their communities.

- Increase the Number of Spanish-Speaking Teachers and Second Language Acquisition Specialists The Task Force recommends that states establish programs to increase both the number of pre-K and K-3 teachers who are proficient in Spanish and English and the number of pre-K and K-3 teaching specialists in second language acquisition. The federal government should underwrite tests of programs for these purposes to help identify approaches that are most effective.

- Increase Efforts to Design, Test and Evaluate Language and Literacy Development Strategies The federal government is the major source of funds for education research and development. Consequently, the Task Force recommends that the federal government underwrite extensive experimentation with early education strategies concerned with determining how best to promote language development among disadvantaged children, including Hispanics. This work should include testing various English-plus-Spanish approaches for infant/toddler programs, pre-K, and K-3 education that serve disadvantaged Hispanic ELLs. Infant/toddler and pre-K experiments should include an assessment of different combinations of full-day, year-around, and multi-year programs.

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