



Bilingual Spanish & English Speaking Teachers Need Some Respect

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At the beginning of the school year, the English language learner (ELL) teacher reviews the home language survey. If parents note that another language is spoken at home, the student might receive English language learner services. This also means there is a chance the parents do not speak English. As the ELL population continues to grow, so does the number of parents whose native language is not English.

It is crucial for all parents, regardless of their native language, to have timely communication with the school. Unfortunately, that timely communication may come at the expense of some school employees. Since many schools with ELLs have a large number of Spanish-speaking

ELLs, school leaders tend to try and hire staff members who are bilingual in Spanish and English. Many times this person is not the ELL teacher or ELL assistant. They may have been hired to teach science or math but find themselves being called upon to be last-minute translators or interpreters.

Often, the staff member will translate or interpret with little to no notice because they care deeply about ensuring the Spanish-speaking families receive the information they need. These last-minute requests take away from the job they were hired to do. If bilingual Spanish and English-speaking teachers are asked to interpret and translate, they should be compensated for that extra work. They should not be required to interpret or translate for free.

September 15 – October 15 is Hispanic Heritage Month. It is nice to highlight the Hispanic teachers on the school's Facebook page. However, if those teachers are bilingual and asked to interpret or translate for free, the better way to celebrate is to compensate them. In addition to compensation, clear guidelines should be shared with the staff about how they will use bilingual speaking staff. Calling them while they are driving home from school to hop on a call is not okay.

Respect them as professionals and pay them for interpreting and translating. Being bilingual shouldn't be a burden of fearing getting used for free.