Strategies for Engaging Bilingual Audiences

In this document, we outline key tips for developing culturally responsive programs that engage bilingual families, specifically Hispanic and Latino, in informal science education. We also provide strategies for participant engagement. While many of the resources NISE Net has collected are for Spanish speaking bilingual audiences, these strategies can be adapted for other non-English speaking communities, as well.

The NISE Network aims to increase awareness, engagement, and understanding of nanoscale science and technology among public audiences, especially underserved and underrepresented audiences. Based on input from NISE Network partners, we have adapted our most popular programs for Spanish-speaking audiences. Spanish translated activities and programs are available in the NanoDays kits and through the online catalog, at nisenet.org.

Identify Audience

Non-English speaking populations in the United States are not homogeneous. For example, U.S. Hispanic and Latino audiences represent many different countries of origin, comprise both U.S.-born and immigrant residents, and include communities with varied levels of assimilation, socio-economic status, and education.

- Before you begin, develop an understanding of the makeup of the non-native speaking population(s) within your community.
- Be focused and clear about which audience(s) you're engaging or hope to engage.
- Prototype and test out different offerings so you can figure out what works and what doesn't (get feedback!)

Marketing

Do your homework. Read-up on and talk to other institutions about ways to engage and communicate with different audiences. Establish an institutional culture around reaching out to include community members in your programming and events. [i]

- Build relationships, establish trust, and make active use of community partners.
- Encourage 'word-of-mouth' marketing. People are more likely to become involved when an individual from their own community invites them or has provided endorsement of the institution.
- Establish personalized (bilingual) communication with parents and family members and build opportunities for communication in multiple ways (examples include, mailings, online newsletters, and announcements via social networking sites).
- Make advertising and promotional materials available in Spanish.
- Partner with Spanish-language radio shows, television, or Spanish-language newspapers.

Strategies for Programming Engagement

- **Provide authentic experiences**   Deliver programming in the language(s) that is most comfortable for families and encourage them to use their home language as they participate.

- **Create programming that is culturally relevant**   Link science programming to everyday experiences and topics that are culturally relevant and engaging (for example, cooking or gardening.)

- **Provide family activities**   Design projects that allow opportunities for adults and children to participate: either working together or separately at the same event. Consider incorporating family members as event helpers or facilitators.

- **Encourage program staff who are culturally aware and fluent in another language**   It is not necessary that staff be native speakers, but it is crucial that staff relate to the audience and be accepted by them. Encourage bilingual staff to identify themselves by wearing a button or special nametag.

- **Invite positive role models**   Actively seek and include ideas, thoughts, and opinions from members of the audience you hope to engage.

- **Provide sensory experiences**   Make programs more accessible by incorporating extra cues, such as visuals (models, pictures, charts, etc…), props, and body language. Additionally, provide a glossary of pertinent terms in both languages.

- **Become familiar with tools for bilingual education**   Techniques like Sheltered Instruction—an approach to teaching that integrates language and content instruction—can promote understanding and inclusiveness.

- **Make events accessible**   Determine barriers that could prevent the audience from taking part in programming and develop strategies to overcome those challenges (for example, provide institution orientation, provide multilingual interpretation and support, waive fees, provide snacks, offer childcare, provide transportation, accommodate work and family schedules.)

- **Go where people are**   Identify appropriate venues for project activities and explore nontraditional partnerships with churches, libraries, after-school programs and community centers.

- **Build partnerships with diversity focused organizations**
  Examples include:
  - Academic societies, for example, SHPE (Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers) or MAES (Mexican American Engineers and Scientists)
  - Cultural centers
  - Community centers
  - Faith-based organizations
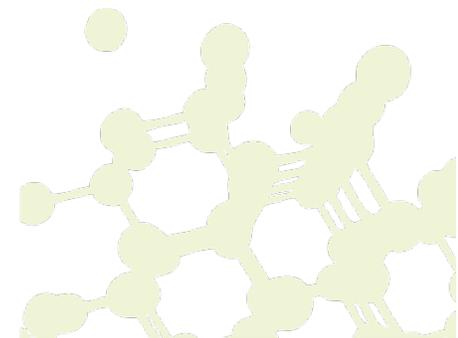
Program Ideas

- NanoDays activities and programs adapted for Sheltered Instruction
- Bilingual Story Time (for example, Horton Senses Something Small)
- Bilingual family learning guide with take-home learning activities
- Nano Museum Labels (translated into Spanish)

Additional NISE Net Resources

- NISE Net Spanish language marketing materials
  - Press Release: nisenet.org/catalog/tools_guides/nanodays_materials_package
  - 'Nano and Me' videos: nisenet.org/catalog/media/nano_me_videos
- NISE Net Bilingual Audience Workshop resources: nisenet.org/community/events/other/workshop_nise_net_bilingual_audience_workshop
- NISE Net Inclusive Audiences resources: nisenet.org/inclusive_audiences
- Bilingual Design Guide for Educational Experiences in Museums: nisenet.org/catalog/tools_guides/bilingual_design_guide
- Translation Process Guide for Educational Experiences in Museums: nisenet.org/catalog/tools_guides/translation_process_guide
- Diversity, Equity, and Access Guidelines: nisenet.org/catalog/tools_guides/diversity_equity_access_guidelines
- RISE Partnership Guide: nisenet.org/partner_guide

This document was adapted from the National Science Foundation supported SciGirl's Connect 'Engaging Latio Families: Key ingredients for successful STEM participation.' The original document can be found at: scigirlsconnect.org/page/work-w-latino-families

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[i] Hobbs, B. (2004). Latino outreach programs: Why they need to be different. *Journal of Extension, 42*(4), 4COM1.