



Bilingual Audio Version of School Newsletter

Whittier International Elementary School, Boulder Valley School District

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The addition of a bilingual audio version of the school newsletter at Whittier International Elementary has been instrumental in communicating effectively with families. By providing multiple modalities for families to access school announcements, Whittier has tried to ensure that all parents have equal access to important information about their child's education.



The process for improving the school newsletter was initiated by the Families and Educators Together (FET) team leader. Recognizing the challenges that Spanish-speaking parents face in fully accessing written school communication, the committee garnered feedback from stakeholders and advocated for the necessary resources to improve the written format of the school newsletter and include a bilingual audio version for families to listen to instead of read. In order to improve the readability of the school newsletter, families provided valuable suggestions about the order of announcements with the most urgent and important announcements and anything requiring family action steps included first, a calendar of upcoming events, ensuring concise paragraphs, and consistently using titles & bulleted lists that transferred to viewing on mobile devices.

Although the written newsletter was already being provided in multiple languages, families cited literacy barriers to their access to information. As a result, Whittier staff created an audio version in English and Spanish each week. This was accomplished by a bilingual staff member spending five minutes reading the school newsletter aloud in a Google Meet recording and including the link to these recordings at the top of the newsletter.

Families reported that they found the audio version of the newsletter much more user-friendly, some accessing school announcements for the first time! They appreciated the short length of the audio recording (just 2-3 minutes) and also the personal connection with the bilingual staff member who created it. Challenges to implementation included time for school staff to create the recording in advance of the school newsletter being sent out and also ensuring that all families were aware of the new audio format. Next year the committee plans to examine the timing of communication and other feedback from families.

Involving families in the process of giving feedback and making suggestions for improved home-school communication was powerful for family engagement and also provided important insights to school staff regarding barriers and needs. By listening to stakeholders, school staff was able to implement small, but powerful changes to the school newsletter that resulted in more equitable access to school information.