

Food and Culture Spanish-Language Resources in Classrooms

Meredith Parvin and Meredith Wagner

Classroom resources, such as books, that capture diverse experiences and backgrounds provide an opportunity to affirm readers in their own experiences, encourage conversations among readers about diverse life experiences, and enable readers to better understand experiences different from their own. With the Hispanic population of the United States growing, there is a unique need for books and other classroom resources to represent Hispanic cultures. Since food is an integral part of culture, community, and identity and is a way for individuals to stay connected with their culture, resources that include references to food are beneficial. The purpose of the needs assessment was to determine current characteristics of Spanish-language classroom resources and identify gaps between current and desired characteristics of Spanish-language resources. Participants included adults in the United States who taught in a preschool, elementary school, middle school, high school, or college-level classroom. Participants were recruited via email using email addresses the researcher obtained from school websites and personal contacts, as well as via the researcher's Facebook account, and asked to complete a 26-question online survey. Results showed that 46% ($n = 25$) of participants had between 1 and 5 Spanish-language resources in their classroom. Gaps identified between current and desired characteristics of Spanish-language resources included the target age, genre, language, and countries. More specifically, results revealed a need for additional Spanish-language classroom resources, particularly resources that are bilingual, both fiction and non-fiction, targeted at early elementary school readers, and focused on Argentina, Cuba, Costa Rica, Mexico, Peru, and Spain.