

My name is Karen Twain and I am the Assistant Superintendent of the Tigard-Tualatin School District. I have been in education for over 30 years in a variety of roles including working at the state for a year and a half where I was the Director of Early Literacy. At that time, our State Superintendent, Governor and I proposed a plan to have all students in Oregon reading by third grade. The plan had several components but one of the most important was the partnership we wanted to create between schools and culturally specific community based organizations.

While the bill didn't pass due to funding shortfalls, I, and many of my colleagues from K-12 knew what could make a difference for our young learners. I came back to my district with that information and immediately made contact with Latino Network. We set up an agreement that they would come in to one of our schools and work with that school's community of Latino 3-4 year olds and their families. I can tell you that we have never had a more successful program in our district with a high return on investment. I know we will continue to realize that investment's dividends over time. Here are some of the results:

Child Outcomes:

- 95% of children increased their ability to recognize written letters
- 100% of children demonstrated the ability to recognize their name in writing
- 95% of children demonstrated the ability to recognize and name their first initial
- 90% of children increased their ability to recognize written numbers
- 90% of children were able to count to 10 or higher, or increased their ability to count

Parent Outcomes:

- 95% of parents report increased knowledge about kindergarten
- 100% of parents report reading more frequently with their children
- 88% of parents report reading with their children at least 3 times each week
- 100% of parents report engaging in more early learning activities with their children at home

We have now added the program, Juntos Aprendemos, at three more of our schools. This year, not surprisingly, they are experiencing incredible success with their families and students. Needless to say, we would like to have this in every one of our schools but funding continues to be an issue. We are pulling from our district general fund and trying to access grants but there is simply not enough money to access this invaluable resource. We are in our third year of the program at four schools and see the immediate results. We know that as we continue with our partnership with Latino Network, we will have improved graduation rates, better attendance, and stronger relationships with our families. We can literally see the third grade reading benchmark within reach because of our work with this early learning program.

Tigard-Tualatin plans to continue this important work with Latino Network and also engage with IRCO and Black Parent Initiative to further our efforts. In this light, I would like to throw my district's full support of the establishment of the proposed

Early Childhood Equity Fund. We absolutely need funding for culturally specific early learning programs. If we are serious about closing the opportunity and achievement gaps in Oregon, this is the perfect starting place.
