



Background

On February 6, 2010, local Spanish-language media outlets, several local school districts and universities, a number of businesses, and a host of non-profit organizations worked together to create a community education fair, Feria Para Aprender. This was the fourth time that this event took place in Austin (prior events occurred on February 17, 2007, February 16, 2008, and February 7, 2009). The 2010 event was chaired by its founder Sylvia Acevedo, CEO of CommuniCard, LLC, and organized by Austin Partners in Education (APIE). The goal of the event was to provide information to community members, particularly Hispanic parents, about educational opportunities and the importance of education. In previous years, the Feria Para Aprender was held at the Burger Activity Center in Austin, Texas. In 2010, the event took place at the Travis County Expo Center for the first time.

The Annette Strauss Institute was pleased to help with the event by conducting an on-site event survey. Below, we report on data that was collected from 425 individuals who completed the survey in 2010. Where appropriate, we also include data from prior years for comparison.

Feria Para Aprender Attendees

Local Spanish-language media outlets, school districts, and the other event sponsors heavily advertised the Feria Para Aprender. The survey documented that attendees came from a variety of different locations and heard about the event from different sources.

Thirty-one percent of survey respondents identified that they were from zip codes surrounding the Travis County Expo Center.¹ Compared to 2009, where 41 percent of respondents were from zip codes surrounding the Burger Center, more respondents in 2010 traveled from other parts of Austin to attend the event. Zip codes named by at least five percent of respondents are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Common Zip Codes

| Zip code | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 |
|----------|------|------|------|------|
| 78753 | 12% | 9% | 6% | 6% |
| 78758 | 11% | 5% | 8% | 6% |
| 78744 | 10% | 14% | 11% | 21% |
| 78723 | 10% | <5% | <5% | <5% |
| 78724 | 7% | 7% | <5% | <5% |
| 78752 | 6% | 5% | <5% | <5% |

Table 2: Age of Children

| Age of children | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 |
|-----------------|------|------|------|------|
| None | 2% | 1% | 2% | 4% |
| 0 – 5 | 51% | 56% | 50% | 52% |
| 6 – 10 | 68% | 69% | 64% | 59% |
| 11 – 13 | 29% | 24% | 28% | 29% |
| 14 – 17 | 19% | 16% | 18% | 18% |
| 18 + | 9% | 9% | 13% | 9% |

Most survey respondents (86%) had children between 0 and 10 years of age. This is slightly lower than 2009, where 92 percent had children in this age range. The percentage of respondents who had children in each age range is shown in Table 2. Only nine percent of respondents, for example, had children who were 18 years of age and older.

*multiple responses permitted

Nearly all respondents (91%) reported that they learned about the Feria Para Aprender either from school or from television. This is an increase from 2009, when 83 percent learned about the event from these sources. Learning about the event from other sources was similar to prior years, as shown in Table 3.

There were some demographic differences in hearing about the event. Those with children aged 6-10 were more likely to hear about the Feria from their school (68%) compared to other attendees (42%).

Table 3: Event Information

| Heard about event from ... | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 |
|----------------------------|------|------|------|
| School | 60% | 59% | 50% |
| Television | 56% | 52% | 49% |
| Radio | 19% | 22% | 16% |
| Newspaper | 14% | 9% | 17% |
| Friend/family member | 7% | 11% | 13% |
| Other | 4% | 5% | 9% |

*multiple responses permitted

Those preferring that both Spanish and English be used at the event were more likely to learn about the Feria from radio (23%) compared to other respondents (14%). They also were more likely to hear about the event from the newspaper (17%) compared to other respondents (9%).

Repeat attendance was similar in 2010 compared to years past. The event attracted a number of people who had not attended a previous Feria Para Aprender. Sixty-two percent of respondents were attending this event for the first time.

Table 4: Previous Event Attendance

| Attended before | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 |
|-----------------|------|------|------|
| Yes | 36% | 29% | 25% |
| No | 62% | 67% | 75% |

*does not add to 100% due to non-response

Table 5: Transportation to the Event

| Took a school bus | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 |
|-------------------|------|------|------|
| Yes | 26% | 23% | 22% |
| No | 70% | 71% | 77% |

*does not add to 100% due to non-response

Around a fourth of respondents reported that they rode a school bus in order to attend the Feria Para Aprender (Table 5). Bus riders came from different zip codes this year. In 2009, 32 percent of bus riders came from 78724 and 78741. This year, 51 percent of bus riders came from 78753, 78723, 78724, 78758, and 78744.

Feria Para Aprender Assessments

Respondents were asked to reflect on their favorite parts of the event, what they learned, and how navigable they found the event.

Survey respondents were asked to identify their favorite part of the event. The two most popular responses were the bilingual classrooms and the exhibits, as shown in Table 6. For “Other,” 11 percent of all respondents said “everything” or something similar and 2 percent mentioned books and reading. Different parts of the event appealed to different attendees. Parents with children aged 14-17 named the exhibits as their favorite part (54%) more than other respondents (41%). Parents with children aged 11-13 named science as their favorite component (38%) more than other respondents (25%).

Table 6: Enjoyment of Event Components

| Favorite Part | 2010 |
|----------------------|------|
| Bilingual classrooms | 45% |
| Exhibits | 43% |
| Science | 28% |
| Other | 18% |
| Photos | 11% |
| Theater | 7% |

* multiple responses recorded

Table 7: Frequently Mentioned Event Learning

| Learned about ... | 2010 |
|---|------|
| Colleges, scholarships, or careers | 22% |
| Motivating, preparing, or teaching kids | 10% |
| Reading | 4% |
| Health | 4% |
| Other community services | 3% |
| Banks, taxes, or laws | 2% |
| Science and math | 2% |
| Other (e.g. education, lots of things) | 41% |

* multiple responses coded

Respondents were asked whether they learned something at the event. **Ninety-two percent of respondents reported that they learned something at the event.**

When asked what they learned, there were many different responses. The most common response was learning about college, scholarships, or careers, mentioned by 22 percent of respondents (see Table 7).

Some examples of the responses provided by respondents regarding what they learned are below.

Que es muy importante motivar a los niños para que lleguen a ser alguien en la vida.

That it is important to motivate our children so that they can become someone later on in life.

Que sí podemos ir a la universidad y obtener becas para personas sin estatus legal.

That we can go to college and obtain scholarships for people without legal status.

Como entender lo que leo.

How to understand what I am reading.

Hay muchas cosas que no sabíamos, como, por ejemplo, que hay muchos lugares para aprender inglés.

There are many things we didn't know about. For example, that there are many places that teach English.

Aprendí de muchos programas que no conocía. Por ejemplo, como se debe de preparar un niño antes de ir al colegio.

I learned about many programs that I didn't know about, such as how to prepare a child before he heads to college.

Que hay más información en español sobre cómo ayudar a los niños a conseguir una carrera.

That there is more information in Spanish on how to help kids get a career.

Aprendí lo importante que es que los niños terminen la secundaria.

I learned how important it is for kids to finish high school.

A cómo explicarles mejor a mis hijos sobre la educación y cómo alcanzar sus metas.

How to explain my children the importance of education and achieving their goals.

Que hay mucha información sobre cómo llegar a estudiar [en la universidad], especialmente para la gente latina.

That there is a lot of information on how to go to school, especially for Hispanic people.

Que aunque sea mamá de dos niñas, puedo seguir estudiando.

That even though I am a mother of two girls, I can keep pursuing further education.

Que nuestros niños pueden estudiar y que, aunque los padres no tengamos mucho dinero, hay ayuda para todos.

That our kids can get educated and that, even though the parents don't have a lot of money, there is help for everyone.

* responses edited for clarity

Respondents were asked to identify what helps a child get into college. The response options are included in Table 8. Most attendees (82%) identified that good grades can help a child get into college. Around half believed that speaking more than one language or participating in after-school activities could help. Only 13 percent believed that being a minority could help a child get into college.

Table 8: Knowledge about Obtaining a College Education

| What can help a child get into college? | Respondents |
|---|-------------|
| Good grades | 82% |
| Speaking more than one language | 51% |
| After-school activities | 43% |
| Being a minority | 12% |

* multiple responses permitted

There were some demographic differences in thoughts about obtaining a college education. Those with children aged 6 through 10 were *less* likely to note that being a minority could help a child get into college (10%) compared to other respondents (18%). Those with children aged 11-13 were *more* likely to note that good grades could help (89%) compared to other respondents (81%). Those with children aged 18 and above were more likely to state that being a minority (24%), speaking more than one language (68%), and after-school activities (68%) can help a child get into college compared to other respondents (minority: 12%, language: 50%, activities: 42%).

Those respondents who preferred that the Feria be conducted in both Spanish and English were more likely to report that being bilingual could help a child get into college (56%) compared to other respondents (45%).

We also asked respondents how many years of school a child needs to complete in the United States, giving them the following response options: 5 years, 8 years, 10 years, 12 years, and not sure. In debriefing with the team administering the survey, they suggested that some respondents misunderstood the question, thinking that it was asking how many years of schooling were left for *their* child instead of *all* children. We therefore report only the percentage of respondents noting that they did not know how many years of school a child needs to complete in the United States. Twenty-four percent of respondents said they were not sure how many years of school a child needs to complete on the United States.

Navigating the Feria

Table 9: Ease of Navigation

| Ease or difficulty of finding way around | 2010 |
|--|------|
| Very difficult | 4% |
| Somewhat difficult | 34% |
| Somewhat easy | 27% |
| Very easy | 34% |

*does not add to 100% due to non-response

Respondents were asked about how they navigated their way around the Feria. Although a majority of respondents (61%) found their way around very or somewhat easily, 38 percent reported encountering some difficulty. Those with young children (0-5) were less likely to report that the event was very easy to navigate (29%) compared to other attendees (41%).

Table 10: Colors Helpful in Finding Way Around

| Colors helpful | 2010 |
|----------------|------|
| Yes | 91% |
| No | 7% |

*does not add to 100% due to non-response

Nearly six in ten (58%) of respondents noted that they preferred a mix of English and Spanish at the Feria. Forty-two percent preferred the use of mainly Spanish. Few respondents, only 3 percent, preferred that mainly English be used at the event.

Respondents were told that each section of the Feria para Aprender had a different color. They were asked whether the colors helped them to find their way around. Most respondents, 91 percent, did find the color coding helpful.

Table 11: Language Preference at the Feria

| Preferred Language | 2010 |
|--------------------------|------|
| Both Spanish and English | 58% |
| Mainly Spanish | 42% |
| Mainly English | 3% |

* multiple responses recorded

Information Obtained at the Feria Para Aprender

Respondents were asked to report whether they obtained information about infants/toddlers, elementary school, middle school, high school, GED, college, or learning English at the Feria Para Aprender.

Table 12: Information Obtained at the Event

| Information about ... | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 |
|-----------------------|------|------|------|
| Infants/toddlers | 35% | 34% | 40% |
| Elementary school | 63% | 71% | 67% |
| Middle school | 40% | 36% | 40% |
| High school | 34% | 28% | 34% |
| GED | 24% | 22% | 12% |
| College | 51% | 43% | 32% |
| Learning English | 42% | 45% | -- |

*multiple responses permitted

Respondents made use of all of the available information at the event. Sixty-three percent of respondents reported obtaining information about elementary school at the event – the most frequently mentioned category. Other results are displayed in Table 12. The percentage of respondents who learned about college at the Feria increased since 2009, growing to 51 percent this year. The percentage obtaining information about elementary school declined from 71 percent in 2009 to 63 percent in 2010.

Table 13: Information Obtained about Child’s Age Group at the Event

| Information about ... | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Infants/toddlers gained by parents with kids aged 0-5 | 50% | 46% | 60% |
| Elementary school gained by parents with kids aged 6-10 | 71% | 79% | 80% |
| Middle school gained by parents with kids aged 11-13 | 66% | 69% | 71% |
| High school gained by parents with kids aged 14-17 | 54% | 47% | 62% |
| College gained by parents with kids aged 18 and over | 68% | 56% | 48% |

Respondents were fairly successful at obtaining information relevant to their children. As shown in Table 13, 50 percent of respondents with children between the ages of 0 and 5 said that they received information about infants/toddlers. This percentage is similar to 2009. Seventy percent of parents with children between the ages of 0 and 5 received information about the next educational step for their children, elementary school (see Table 14).

Seventy-one percent of respondents with children between the ages of 6 and 10 said that they received information about elementary school 41 percent obtained information about middle school – the next level of education for their child.

Sixty-six percent of respondents with children between the ages of 11 and 13 said that they received information about middle school and 46 percent received information about high school.

Fifty-four percent of parents with high school aged children received information about high school and 64 percent received information about college. Sixty-eight percent of parents with children over 18 obtained information about college.

Table 14: Information Obtained about Child’s Future Age Group at the Event

| Information about ... | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Elementary school gained by parents with kids aged 0-5 | 70% | 76% | 80% |
| Middle school gained by parents with kids aged 6-10 | 41% | 42% | 48% |
| High school gained by parents with kids aged 11-13 | 46% | 46% | 50% |
| College gained by parents with kids aged 14-17 | 64% | 51% | 43% |

Methodology

At the 2010 Feria Para Aprender, volunteers from the event and researchers from the Annette Strauss Institute passed out surveys. In 2010, 425 on-site surveys were completed. This represents an increase from prior years. In 2007, 216 on-site surveys were completed. In 2008, 209 on-site surveys were completed. In 2009, 276 on-site surveys were completed. All years, surveys were available in both Spanish and English, and volunteers were available to consult with respondents in both Spanish and English. In 2010, 90 percent of the surveys were completed in Spanish and 10 percent of the surveys were completed in English. Twenty percent of English surveys had open-ended answers written in Spanish. Efforts were made to pass out only one survey per family. Passing out surveys at the event has a number of limitations. First, there is no guarantee that the individuals who completed the survey were representative of those who attended the event. Volunteers did their best to approach as many people as possible and most agreed to complete the survey, but it is not possible to assess whether the results can be generalized to all event attendees. Second, there may be some response bias because at the event, respondents may have felt obligated to respond positively to the questions posed on the survey. Volunteers were instructed to tell survey respondents that they were not representing the event sponsors and that they greatly appreciated the respondent's honesty to try to decrease response bias.

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About The Annette Strauss Institute

The Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Participation was established at The University of Texas at Austin in 2000 to respond to growing political cynicism and disaffection in the United States. The goals of the institute are (1) to conduct cutting-edge research on the ways in which civic participation and community understanding are undermined or sustained, and (2) to develop new programs for increasing democratic understanding among citizens.

¹ Note that we included 78754, 78653, 78725, 78721, 78723, 78752, and 78724