

Leánme: Spanish-Language Children's Literature

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Introduction

Reading and writing are essential skills that have shaped human civilization for centuries. As time has passed, the need for a solid foundation in reading skills remains crucial, especially during adolescence. Currently, America's steadily-growing Spanish-speaking population faces challenges in instilling a sturdy reading foundation for their children due to an overall lack of access to Spanish-language children's literature. This impaired access to Spanish-language children's literature is a disparity that has implications in both areas of health and economics. In our independent study, "Leánme: Spanish Children's Literature," we investigated the local implications of this disparity by conducting research within the Crawfordsville Public Library and Crawfordsville Public Schools.

Procedure

To collect information about our local community's access to Spanish-language children's literature, we obtained data pertaining book type and language from librarians and the library database at Crawfordsville Public Library. With this data, we utilized the total number of youth books to construct percentages of Spanish-language children's books and English-language children's literature. Among the Spanish-language children's literature, we analyzed the contents of these books to learn more about the types of books within this selection. Types of books were divided into categories of English to Spanish translation, bilingual, or Spanish-language. To obtain statistics on demographics of Crawfordsville schools, we obtained this from websites that contain information on public schools in Indiana.

Results & Discussion

The local status of this disparity was found to align with the rest of our nation, as 98.5% the books which comprise the Crawfordsville Public Library's youth section are exclusively English-language children's literature (Figure 1). Although CPL provides most access to English-language children's literature, it was found that only 1.5% of CPL's children's literature is Spanish-language children's literature (Figure 1). Within the content of CPL's Spanish-language children's literature, it was found that approximately 50% of these books were translated versions of English children's books (Figure 2). These findings propose the local reality of this problem; as this small number of books is insufficient for Crawfordsville school district's 21% Hispanic student body (Public School Review).

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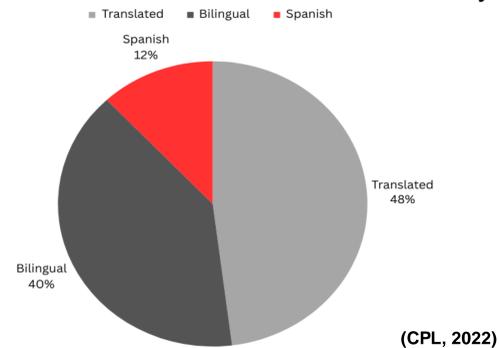
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Figure 1: Language of Children's Literature in Crawfordsville Public Library



Figure 2: Types of Spanish-language Children's Literature at Crawfordsville Public Library



Conclusions and Future Work

By identifying the increase of Spanish speakers in America through a shift in our nation's population, we can recognize and repair the pitfalls found within our communities' libraries and schools. For future work, we would like to conduct more field work in the community of Crawfordsville to interview librarians and local Spanish-speaking households. Upon field work, newfound information may allow for investigation of other potential factors that affect access to Spanish-language literature. Ultimately, the goal of this research is to educate our community about the nationwide and local disparity that implicates Spanish-speaking families, as well as to further access to Spanish-language children's literature.

Research Questions

- What is the current state of accessibility to Spanish-language children's literature in Crawfordsville?
- What are the future health and economic outcomes that are associated with lack of access to literature?

Economic

- In low-income and minority households, access to a variety of books, as well as book interactions with family members leads to increased school readiness and performance (Luo et. Al, 2020).
- Higher achieving students in school tend to earn higher wages during their careers, specifically, students who excel in reading and math skills. Academic success has a causal relationship with career success (Watts, 2020).
- A foundation of reading, as well as the content of books a child has access to directly, can relate to their success following school years. Therefore, it is essential for young children, and Spanish-language speaking children in America to have access to literature.

Health

- **Bibliotherapy:** therapeutic use of children's literature to address psychosomatic disorders or prevent unhealthy habits (Pulimeno, 2020).
- Reading aloud to children is a catalyst for childhood brain development; research suggests reading aloud at least five times a week boosts a child's cognitive performance by a year (University of Melbourne, 2022).
- A solid foundation of reading as a child can provide children with a "bulletproofed" neural network, as consistent reading prevents tau-protein tangles, lesions, and plaques on the brain which are linked to Alzheimer's and dementia (Wilson et. Al, 2013).



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Wabash Always Fights!