



Equity and Inclusion

By Dr. Tamara Uselman, Director of Equity and Inclusion

Es casi el Mes de la Herencia Hispana (or, It's Almost Hispanic Heritage Month)

At 60.6 million, Hispanic Americans make up the United States' largest ethnic/racial minority. Almost one of every 20 Americans is Hispanic, with a median age just under 30. Right here in Fargo Public Schools, 519 students selected Hispanic as their ethnicity. For this group, and I hope for all of us, Wednesday, September 15 through October 15 marks a chance to celebrate!

What are we celebrating? **Hispanic Heritage Month** is a time to recognize the positive contributions of Hispanic Americans in the United States. It stretches from the 15th of September through the 15th of October. President Lyndon B. Johnson started recognition of National Hispanic Heritage as a week in 1968.

How can we celebrate? First, our Hispanic and/or Latinx students with ties to Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Spanish-speaking nations of Central and South America may hold special focus on their respective cultures and histories during this month. Second, those of us who do not have Hispanic or Latinx backgrounds have the opportunity to appreciate the "Funds of Knowledge" held by our 500+ FPS Hispanic/Latinx students. This knowledge is quite an asset; one from which we can learn more – if we are open to it.

What can we do to celebrate? My expertise is limited; I clearly do not speak for Hispanic people. Some ideas shared by a Hispanic colleague include the following:

- Create space where our Hispanic students and families can share their funds of knowledge.
- See September 15 as a broader day of celebration than May 5. September 15 is when Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua became independent from Spain. Belize, Chile, and Mexico also became free from the United Kingdom and Spain in September.
- Employ "esperanza" in multiple ways in your context. Esperanza means hope. The 2021 theme of Hispanic Heritage Month is, "Esperanza: A Celebration of Hispanic Heritage and Hope." Our world could use some esperanza.
- Understand that while "Hispanic" describes someone of Spanish culture/language, "Latino, Latina, and Latinx" describe people of Latin American background.
- Read a book written by a Spanish language author to understand someone else's experience.
- Shop at a Hispanic/Latinx owned business.
- Maybe even learn (and teach) some Spanish.

My commitment during Hispanic Heritage Month is to learn more deeply about the quinceañera from Hispanic friends. *What about you?* May you find joy in learning about Hispanic heritage from Hispanic Americans, 519 of whom are right here in our classrooms.

Meanwhile, adiós. Aprende con esperanza y alegría.

