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ASK GINGER AND WAYNE:

LA COSECHA: What Makes This Conference SO Special?

Wow, how do we even begin to describe the incredible energy, passion, sharing, networking, and high-level dialogue that happens at La Cosecha year after year!!! This annual national dual language education conference in November is filled with emotion and excitement as dual language educators from all regions of the U.S. and beyond gather together to get renewed, as we share best practices and knowledge of the research that informs our field. Teachers, parents, students, principals, central administrative staff, superintendents, school board members, state leaders, tribal leaders, university professors, researchers, curriculum developers, book publishers, and policy makers from diverse backgrounds all gather together to learn from each other. Several thousand participants come from at least 42 states of the U.S., 7-10 countries, and over 19 Sovereign Tribal Nations. This is a happy conference, because everyone attending is focused on implementing the premier, enrichment model of bilingual schooling.

To appreciate the magnitude of the conference, each-time slot has approximately 50 concurrent sessions, with many choices of topics for all attendees, including sessions on indigenous language preservation and revitalization, a strand on family and community partnerships, and a student leadership institute. This has always been a conference for and by teachers, so that dual language teachers can attend lots of hands-on sessions to get ideas for their classrooms. Delicious lunches are efficiently served for all participants, with no extra fees charged. Nine or ten pre-conference institutes provide in-depth knowledge of important topics in our field, taught at the level of university courses, with school visits another opportunity for valuable insights. As everyone gathers together in the downtown area of Albuquerque one year and the next year Santa Fe, all participants can cross paths with national experts and colleagues who share our passion.

One more extraordinary experience at La Cosecha every year is the incredible celebration of the cultures of New Mexico, a unique state for its preservation of its indigenous and Latino roots. This includes musical experiences such as the annual peña, where musicians gather together to spontaneously share music from all parts of the Americas; popular contemporary Latino bands for participants to dance the night away; and a Pow Wow, celebrating traditional drumming, chanting, and dancing of the New Mexico pueblos. Throughout the conference program, music and drama experiences for teachers to take back to their classrooms are provided by popular artists and musicians, and in the halls of the conference center, student groups from local schools and pueblos share performances of their musical and dance heritages.

Every year in the first week of November, dual language educators happily gather together at La Cosecha to celebrate our success with multilingual/multicultural schooling for all!