

## Episode 6: HOPE en Español in Early Childhood Education and Beyond: Featuring Dr. Javiera Brierley Vera and Flavia Maccio

Podcast transcript

“We learned that putting a magnifying glass on the outcomes that we wanted to provide, created a community where not only children were having positive experiences, but also early childhood workers and their families could find ways to have a more positive outcome.... -Javiera Brierley Vera, MD

**Robert Sege:** Welcome to the HOPEful Conversations about Child Development podcast series. I'm Bob Sege, a pediatrician and director of the HOPE National Resource Center at Tufts Medicine.

**Baraka Floyd:** And I'm Baraka Floyd, a community pediatrician at Stanford and HOPE Facilitator and Champion. The Healthy Outcomes from Positive Experiences, or HOPE Framework, emphasizes the Building Blocks that children need to thrive: relationships, environments, engagement, and emotional growth. In this podcast, we interview leaders in child health and development in order to learn more about how to support families in creating positive childhood experiences for their children. You can learn more about HOPE by visiting our website [positiveexperience.org](http://positiveexperience.org).

**Sege:** We're back this week with Dr. Javier Brivera Vera and Flavia Maccio, who are leading HOPE en Espanol. Last week, we discussed some of the cultural issues from Spanish-speaking people who come from 21 different countries. And, I think that the lesson that I got from that is that really approaching people with curiosity and cultural humility, asking about what each of the Building Blocks means to them and to their families. We had a wonderful conversation last week, and this week, we're going to continue it and offer some particular tips for people who work with Spanish-speaking families. So, with that, I'm going to start with Flavia and ask you a question, if that's okay.

**Flavia Maccio:** Yeah, of course.

**Sege:** Flavia, I understand as a HOPE Champion, you're able to use the HOPE Framework to transform your community and agency in Michigan. Can you tell us what problem you faced, how HOPE helped, and what results you obtained?

**Maccio:** Yeah. So, as we work in early childhood system building, we have worked very closely with many community organizations in our county. One of them is an organization that runs the Head Start program, which is the federally funded early childhood program. As anybody in the field knows, early childhood has a high turnover rate and burnout. We had just found HOPE very recently, and we were eager to implement HOPE on the field. Veronica Pecumer is our lead, and she had the great idea to connect with this community partner and say, “Hey, we think that we can support you with this new framework that we have been exploring.” We work with this organization from all levels, from the director to the teachers, facing families, introducing them to HOPE, and other frameworks that created the spaces for them to communicate with each other with their coworkers, reflect on goals and work together in a strength-based approach. We know that in workplaces there are conflicts, there are things that we all have to work out and navigate. We wanted to support the teachers in that respect

and also as they serve families. This process was done in an area of a high Spanish-speaking population. So, we had professionals and families that we were supporting indirectly. This process took two years, and the results were amazing from the director's perspective. She shared with us that the turnover rate decreased very noticeable from two figures to one. And, they heard from staff that the atmosphere was more welcoming, a better place to work. From the data that we collected, the staff reported using strength-based approaches more often, and the communication with people and supervisors improved. We learned that putting a magnifying glass on the outcomes that we wanted to provide, created a community where not only children were having positive experiences, but also early childhood workers and their families could find ways to have a more positive outcome was key in this process.

**Sege:** Flavia, I really love to hear that story and the first time I heard it was really so wonderful because the people who work with children and families also need support. And, I was wondering, before we go on to the next question, can you give us one or two examples of specific things that you did to support the early child workers using the HOPE framework?

**Maccio:** At the beginning, we started meeting with managers and the upper [leadership] of the organization. But, I think that our turning point was when we connected with direct service professionals, when we talk to the teachers. And, that's where really the project took a new life. Because, for them, it was so important to be listened to, to trust, to have us be some sort of connection between the assumptions that sometimes are made when people make decisions that we don't agree with and just supporting them in the sense that what they are doing every day matters, that they have strengths that they are modeling for parents, that the way that they talk to children is a way to parents to learn how they can continue that learning at home. I think it was instrumental when the teachers, the staff that is facing families every day when they could see how applying the Building Blocks and the strength-based was making the impact. I think that's where we got our, their buy-in. If we don't know why we are doing something, it's unlikely that we're going to jump on it. Right. And I think that was their why, understanding that they have strengths, that the families had strengths and that when we incorporate the strengths to everything else that we noticed that can make a difference.

**Sege:** And Flavia, I just want to just reiterate how wonderful it is because I remember when you first told me the story and told our team that particular agency wasn't able to hire enough staff to care for as many children as they were licensed to care for. And then, after using the HOPE implementation, not only were the staff happier, but they were able to take care of more children, which was absolutely spectacular. And, I heard from an early child educator, not from your community, from a different one, that she, when she learned about HOPE, viewed her job differently because she started out thinking, I live in an under-resourced community and just doing childcare, I can't change all the systems issues of which there are a lot. And then, she realized that she was giving a gift to these children because for the hours that they were there, they had relationships with each other and with the staff. They had an environment that promoted curiosity, that was safe, they weren't being told no all the time, they were engaged. And, she told a story of how the three-year-olds helped set the table and clear the table for lunch. So, it was their spot. And, you can't even begin to think about emotional growth because all kinds of growth happen in those little kids. But, that made her realize that what she was doing was a gift for life, that would last the whole lives of these children. And that is just amazing to hear. So, thank you.

**Floyd:** Javiera, you've worked to incorporate HOPE into public health in Chile. Can you tell us about how this work has helped organizations in Latin America improve access to positive childhood experiences?



**Javiera Brierley Vera:** Yes, of course, Baraka. So nice to be here again. It's been a process. We know that for advocacy work, it takes some time. And, it started small when I was doing the elective back at the [HOPE] National Resource Center. And, I would say after three years of bringing the whole framework into Chile, we've had a lot of conversations with a lot of key stakeholders. And I've went to plenty of organizations, and I had to build a team around positive childhood experiences and positive experiences in general, so we could have more people talking about the same. But now, I've found out that after having many conversations with different organizations, it just makes sense to them and they want more. What has happened is that, for example, America Solidaria took the trainings and then incorporated the HOPE framework into their projects. Also at my university, Universidad Catolica de Chile, in the Department of Family Medicine, we've incorporated the HOPE framework. For example, in the infant mental health course, now with the team, we're working into putting together positive childhood experiences Congress at the end, hopefully of the year. Yeah. So, you are all invited and we would love to spread the message. And, I think, what we need to do is to talk about this. As Flavia was saying, we are the positive experiences as providers as well. We can be the positive experience for our organizations, for our governments, and we need to spread the message. And, for that, the National Resource Centers give us the tools, so they give us the trainings, they can help organizations become certified. And, we're working towards that in Espanol as well. We are working to translate the materials, so we can implement Spanish cohorts and bring the local examples and the culturally resonant materials to each of the 21 Spanish speaking countries. We're working towards that. So, basically, having lots of conversations with key stakeholders. We're having these conversations because we believe in the power of positive childhood [experiences], believing that we can make the change and we have the power to transform our context.

**Floyd:** So what I hear is really trying to build collective impact. Can you tell us a little bit more about the initial folks that you started to build your team with?

**Brierley Vera:** Yes, of course. I started with people I trust. We started building a team of four or five people, family medicine physicians that wanted to spread the message. And, we've been working together monthly in order to have, for example, the capacity to build the National Congress at the end of the year or the capacity to train more people here in Chile. And then, for example, America Solidaria also has their trainers, they train their own organization and some other organizations are asking us to give them training now. It starts with getting embedded of the HOPE framework, get to know it well, get to know the evidence behind it, and then starting to spread the message.

**Floyd:** For our listeners, I just want to highlight the fact that Javiera's group was not just people that she trusted, but they were individuals that had the capacity to get to collective impact by being able to internalize and understand the framework and spread it to an amount of people that would matter. All right, yes, thank you so much.

**Sege:** Flavia, in your agency, you support early childhood professionals who work with recent Spanish-speaking immigrants to the U.S. Can you tell us one or two things that's unique about their experience and those of us who work with new immigrants should know?

**Maccio:** Yes, I think that one of the things is being cognizant of sometimes the isolation that a person in a new country experiences. Another one is sometimes the financial toll that they have because they are not just seeking employment to support their family here, but also they are sending financial resources to their family and their country of origins. They must be sustaining a whole family there with

their work here. That is important to know, and to acknowledge as part of how they connect with each other. And what's the importance of relationships for them.

**Sege:** Thank you.

**Floyd:** What is your audacious goal for HOPE in espanol for the future?

**Brierley Vera:** I can go first, Baraka. What I would love is that we would have every Spanish-speaking government speaking in the language of HOPE. That every government that is working with children and adolescents can systematically promote access to each Building Block in Spanish with materials that we create ourselves about the HOPE framework. And, we also want to create a community of practice that meets regularly. We can have a shared agenda and shared objectives, how to spread this more widely. And I feel like it's the momentum. It's a great momentum to scale this. We have lots of HOPE Facilitators that speak Spanish and are already doing the work. We would like to put them all together in a big network so we can promote access to positive experiences in the languages. We are already doing it. It's just a matter of time in which we can speak about this in Spanish the same way we speak about this in English right now.

**Maccio:** Yeah, I totally. Yeah, I agree with Javiera. I think that is, yeah, it's a little bit dangerous to ask us what is our goal, because we're going to be asking for the moon right now. We are so encouraged by the work of supporting professionals in working with families that we are diving deeper into making forms, policies, HOPE-Informed. We are in our neck of woods. We are revamping every single paperwork that a preschool family receives to make sure that is parent friendly, that is strength based. We're looking for funds to repeat this project that I told you about with preschool programs and community programs, because we believe that HOPE not only supports families, but the professionals that work with them. That way, we can expand capacity and make it go farther and farther.

**Floyd:** Flavia, you just said it all right there. HOPE supports kids and families like and builds capacity. Thank you so much.

**Sege:** I want to join Baraka in thanking you guys both so much for joining us. Javiera, Flavia, I've learned so much from you during this session and last week's session. And, what I'm left with is that Spanish-speaking people like everyone else, responds to these Building Blocks of HOPE, identifies with them and the people, bring with them their own culture if they immigrate or if they live in Chile or Argentina. And, the idea that HOPE is spreading throughout the Americas, thanks in part to you, not only in English, but in Spanish. And, I remember when we were discussing this in advance, there are 500 million people whose heart, language is Spanish. Javier said her audacious goal for HOPE en Espanol is to reach all of them. That is a wonderful goal. Cannot thank you enough both for joining us in this podcast and for each of you for the work you are doing in your communities to support children and families using the framework of HOPE. Thank you.

**Floyd:** Thank you.

**Brierley Vera:** It's been amazing. Thank you, Bob. Muchas gracias.

**Sege:** Muchas gracias.



**Maccio:** Gracias.

**Sege:** The HOPEful Conversations about Child Development podcast was produced by Kris Markman and Patricia Reyes at the Tufts Clinical and Translational Science Institute. Funding for this podcast was provided by the Freedom Together Foundation. For more information, a transcript, and resources related to today's HOPEful conversation, please visit us at [positiveexperience.org](http://positiveexperience.org) or follow us on LinkedIn.