

The History of the Sarape in HCPSS

The Hispanic “Sarape” (graduation stole) initiative started in 2018, by Los Gators Latinos club members at Reservoir High School. Wilde Lake, Oakland Mills and Long Reach High Schools had similar requests from Hispanic students and parents.

For the Hispanic community graduating from high school is a big milestone considering some challenges that they may face in their personal lives. It is a way for the Hispanic student population to show others the pride that they feel to be Hispanic graduates. For our Hispanic students, wearing the sarape represents their accomplishments and the celebration with their family and the connection with their indigenous roots and the Hispanic community at large.

The brightly colored stripes on the **Hispanic “Sarape”** represent the ancient customs of colorful textiles throughout all the ancient indigenous people of Latin America. These bright colors represented their devout spiritualism and the advanced knowledge they possessed.

Color meanings in Aztec culture

- RED represented the East where the red of the *bursting or rising sun* appear. The origin myths of the Aztec people told of Gods like Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca, who were witness to the first light of creation and bound themselves to the creative and destructive forces through the vibrant and vital reds of sunlight, blood, and fire.
- GREEN represented the South which was connected to the Gods Centeotl and Mictlantecuhtli. The color was embodied by a snake (the Nahuatl word *coatl*, which means serpent) and the bright green quetzal feathers (the Nahuatl word *quetzalli*, which means green feather). These quetzal feathers were highly regarded and used in making the headdress of the Aztec rulers.
- BLACK symbolized the North, the direction ruled by the God Tezcatlipoca – God of Fate, Night, and Destiny.
- BLUE was linked to the cardinal direction South, ruled by Huitzilopochtli, the Solar God and War Deity.

Color meanings in Mayan culture

Tohil, the God, gave the following color meanings to Mayans to be used on textiles along with symbols of eagles, bees, wasps, and jaguars:

- Green – the royal color symbolizing eternity and fertility.
- Red – the color of blood and sun, signifying life.
- Yellow – the color of maize and death. Mayans believed that maize was made by Gods and was the staple food of life.
- Black – the color of obsidian and symbol of war.
- Blue – the color of sacrifice. Mayan frescoes discovered in 1946 in Southern Mexico show paintings with brilliant blue backgrounds.

Color meanings in Inca culture

The principal colors used in Inca textiles were black, white, green, yellow, orange, purple, and red. These colors came from natural dyes which were extracted from plants, minerals, insects, and mollusks. Colors also had specific associations.

- Red was equated with conquest, rulership, and blood. This was most clearly seen in the *Mascaypacha*, the Inca state insignia, where each thread of its red tassel symbolized a conquered people.
- Green represented rainforests, the peoples who inhabited them, ancestors, rain and its consequent agricultural growth, coca, and tobacco.
- Purple was, as in the rainbow, considered the first color and associated with Mama Oclla, the founding mother of the Inca race.
- Black signified creation and death.
- Yellow signaled maize or gold.

This rich history of the importance of bright colors in the ancient cultures from which all Hispanic/Latinos descend is clearly depicted in the colorful stripes of the **Hispanic "Sarape"**. The pride felt by all Hispanic/Latino graduates and their families will be on display throughout the county, as this **Hispanic "Sarape"** is offered out to all the high schools in Howard County. It will represent each and every individual success story as the number of Hispanic/Latino graduates continue to increase countywide.

If you would like to place an order, visit <https://osp.osmsinc.com/p/DA601-1>, then press the "Hispanic Achievement" tab to start your order.

For more information, contact your school's Hispanic Achievement Liaison, or Gaston Gamez, Hispanic Achievement Supervisor at Gaston_Gamez@hcpss.org or 410.313.6667.