



Two-Way Communication: Building Trusting Relationships with and between Families and School Systems

**MA Statewide Family Engagement Center
(MASFEC)**

Prepared for: Family Resource Centers

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Andrea Parker, EdM

Senior Statewide Training Specialist

<https://masfec.org>

Who am I and where am I from?

Cape Verde, Spain, USA (Baltimore, Boston, Eastern PA)



Overview

- Hope, Self Care and Resilience
- Defining Two Way Communication
 - Breakout session 1
- A scenario:
 - Relational strategies for engaging with schools and families
 - Breakout session 2
- ***Earning*** (and re-building) TRUST
 - Breakout session 3 (time permitting)
- Hope, Self Care and Resilience!

Personal Wellness



How am I
really doing?

Mindful Moment: Close your eyes. (if this is comfy)

Take a moment to breath and visualize a place you love to visit.

Breathe deeply. Inhale and Exhale.

Feel your rib cage/diaphragm expanding and closing like a zipper.

Do this for 3-5 min or until you feel calm and centered.

“You see, you closed your eyes. That was the difference. Sometimes you cannot believe what you see, you have to believe what you feel. And, if you are ever going to have other people trust you, you must feel that you can trust them, too - even when you’re in the dark. Even when you are falling.”

Mitch Albom, Tuesdays with Morrie

What is Two-Way Communication?

What are the first words that pop into your mind, when you hear “two-way communication”?

Vote at: [Slido.com](https://www.slido.com), with the code #2Way

The Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships (Version 2)



Breakout Room 1 - 8 min

- check in
- introduce yourself
- share an example of when communication was fluid/effective
- OR
- share an example of when it was not
- decide who will share out

What is Two-Way, Culturally Relevant Communication?

Two-way, culturally relevant communication is intentional and planned ways to transmit information in families' home languages, providing means for families to ask questions and ask for clarification on school communications. When letters/emails are sent home, care should be given to explicitly assure families' understanding of the messages.

Definition adapted from, WIDA: The ABCs of Family Engagement and the MA state, "Strengthening Partnerships" framework, Module 3.

In Other Words.....

Relationships are built on trust.
Trust is earned, in part, through
communication.

Two-Way, Culturally Relevant Communication Scenario

Maria Esther, the Family Engagement Liaison at Shady Rock Middle School (Long River School District), was preparing to share the principal's "Back to School" letter with families. She was recently hired to translate communications to Portuguese and Spanish, so that all families could access the information (U.S. Departments of Education & Justice, 2015). As she considered terms like literacy, student progress, grading, engagement, learner autonomy, self-directed learning, remote attendance policy and formative assessment (Sosa, 1997; Blakley, 2003; Nicolau & Ramos, 1990), she wondered, herself, what families were supposed to do/understand? Although Maria Esther is a certified translator/interpreter, she was unsure how to express these ideas in a way that would be meaningful for families. In fact, she wondered to what extent the English speaking families would understand this jargon?

Assessment Question:

- How is simply translating the letter insufficient?
- What steps would you suggest to Maria Esther?

(All names and institutions are fictional)

Scenario Adapted from, MA state, "Strengthening Partnerships" framework, Module 3.

Breakout Room 2: 8min

- reread the scenario, if necessary
- does this apply to your context?
- If so, consider and respond to the questions
- If it does not, develop a scenario that does
- decide who will share out

Strategies for two-way communication

- Read school communications/ask for translations/summarize
- [Check out this document: WIDA ABCs of Family Engagement](#)
- Follow up with families to check for understanding
- Connect with someone on the school committee
- Join the school council or attend school committee meetings
- Connect families with families
- Ask about and utilize community resources
- Ask “how you can I support your family”?
- Do you know someone who could be the **cultural broker?**



What motivates families to be involved in education?

All families want their children to:

- be strong
- be healthy
- be happy
- be engaged
- be motivated
- be part of a community
- feel like they belong



Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler

Relational Trust

Who else do your families trust?

How to we repair and heal when trust is broken?

What does trust look like, feel like, sound like?



Breakout Room 3, time permitting

- Think of a time/incident when trust was lost/damaged
- Share/discuss
- Was there time/space for healing?
- What would you do/suggest doing next time?

So what, now what?

What does all this mean?

With the families you serve in mind, what is one concrete step you will take next week?

Pop 1 idea in the chat box. See what others have to say!

Think of a follow up question you would ask that person.

Learn More and Build Community....

[Positive Solutions](#): Free, ToT, last sessions are May and June

[Family Engagement Modules \(self-paced\)](#)

[Live ToT](#)

[Weekly Mindfulness](#)

[Universal Design for Family Engagement](#) (Guide, not training, yet)



FEDERATION FOR CHILDREN
WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Thank You!

Andrea Parker
aparker@fcsn.org

How did we do?

I feel I am better able to engage with families or to help families engage with their child's education, following this session.

Please put a number in the chat box

1- very much disagree

2- disagree

3- somewhat agree

4- agree

5- very much agree



FEDERATION FOR CHILDREN
WITH SPECIAL NEEDS



Massachusetts Statewide
Family Engagement Center

Communication Tips from “Immigrant Connections”

SPECTRUM OF OPTIONS:

Most- to least-meaningful communication practices when there is a language barrier with parents.





STRATEGY #1

Understand families' backgrounds:

- ❑ Cultural piece
- ❑ Immigrant families (not EL families, ESOL families, etc.)
- ❑ Systems involved with





U.S. Department of Justice
Civil Rights Division

U.S. Department of Education
Office for Civil Rights



Information for Limited English Proficient (LEP) Parents and Guardians and for Schools and School Districts that Communicate with Them

This fact sheet answers common questions about the rights of parents and guardians who do not speak, listen, read, or write English proficiently because it is not their primary language.

Must my child's school provide information to me in a language I can understand?

Yes. Schools must communicate information to limited English proficient parents in a language they can understand about any program, service, or activity that is called to the attention of parents who are proficient in English. This includes, but is not limited to, information related to:

- registration and enrollment in school and school programs
- language assistance programs
- report cards
- student discipline policies and procedures
- special education and related services, and meetings to discuss special education
- parent-teacher conferences
- grievance procedures and notices of nondiscrimination
- parent handbooks
- gifted and talented programs
- magnet and charter schools
- requests for parent permission for student participation in school activities

Must a school provide language assistance if I request it even if my child is proficient in English and I am somewhat proficient in English?

Yes. Schools must respond to a parent's request for language assistance and remember that parents can be limited English proficient even if their child is proficient in English.

May my child's school ask my child, other students, or untrained school staff to translate or interpret for me?

No. Schools must provide translation or interpretation from appropriate and competent individuals and may not rely on or ask students, siblings, friends, or untrained school staff to translate or interpret for parents.

What information should I expect from the school if my child is an English learner?

When your child enrolls, you should receive a home language survey or similar form to fill out that helps the school identify potential English learners, who are eligible for language assistance services. If your child is identified as an English learner, the school must notify you in writing within 30 days of the school year starting with information about your child's English language proficiency level, programs and services available to meet your child's educational needs, and your right to opt your child out of a program or particular services for

STRATEGY #2

Language access

- ❑ Apps that translate are not enough!
- ❑ Need infrastructure for interpretation (oral) & translation (written) services
- ❑ Major equity issue



STRATEGY #3

Remember all immigrant communities, not just Latino / Hispanic.



STRATEGY #4

Partner with your local (& state!) immigrant and refugee organizations as well as faith-based institutions that serve this population.



Resources to share with schools/systems

Engaged families impact school performance

Five Essential Elements for High-Performing Schools:

- ✓ Effective School Leadership
- ✓ Rigorous Instruction
- ✓ Collaborative Teachers
- ✓ Supportive Environment
- ✓ Strong Family-Community Ties



Underlying Essential Element:

TRUST

Engaged families support children's learning

No matter what their family income or background, children with engaged families are more likely to:

- ✓ Attend school regularly
- ✓ Have better social skills
- ✓ Earn higher grades and test scores
- ✓ Pass their classes
- ✓ Graduate and go on to postsecondary education and careers



Henderson & Mapp, A New Wave of Evidence, 2002

Family Engagement in MA

Register for the live ToT

Register for the self-paced
modules



- Family Engagement Framework
- 11 State Agencies involved
- DHS, DPH, DCF, DESE.....
- Affinity Group Listening Sessions
- On DESE Website and masfec.org



FEDERATION FOR CHILDREN
WITH SPECIAL NEEDS



Framework Guiding Principles

Guiding Principle

1

Each family is unique and all families represent diverse structures. Family engagement includes genuine efforts to understand each family's beliefs, values, priorities, goals and aspirations. **Families and practitioners make joint decisions and share responsibility in a successful partnership.**

Guiding Principle

2

Diversity is expressed and experienced at multiple levels such as (but not limited to) race, religion, ethnicity, culture, language, family structures, ability, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, and educational level. Acknowledging and accepting the need to engage all families is essential for successful engagement of diverse families and includes **recognizing the strengths that come from their diverse backgrounds.**

Guiding Principle

3

Building a respectful, trusting, and **reciprocal relationship** is a shared responsibility of families, practitioners, organizations, and systems. This positive relationship has the individual family's strengths and assets at its center.

Guiding Principle

4

Families are their child's first and best advocate. This premier role puts families in a unique position to nurture their children's growth and development and to help practitioners become knowledgeable about their child.

Guiding Principle

5

Equity is the eradication of privilege, oppression, disparities, and disadvantage. **Family engagement must be equitable.** Equitable family engagement comprises intentional and meaningful engagement activities and systems for all families or groups of families irrespective of families' level of or approach to engagement.

Framework Elements



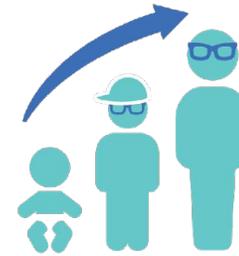
Building Positive Relationships



Promoting Family Well-being



Promoting Pathways for Partnerships with Families



Supporting Child and Youth Development and Learning

Welcoming Families to Engage

- Remove barriers to engagement
- Provide motivation for engagement



Cultural Relevance

- Your family's language, culture and heritage is important!
- What traditions, values and customs do you share?
- How will these be celebrated in your child's school (whether remote or on-site) environment? (ask their teacher)
- Share stories, icons and legends with your child
- Where/how can you access books in the home language?
- **Create a cultural "folder" or cultural portfolio for your child's teacher**

Resources to share with Families

GETTING TO KNOW

My Child

FOR AT-HOME LEARNING

Child's Name

Parent's Name

Thank you for taking a few minutes to learn about my child. I know that getting to know new students takes time and energy for every teacher – and this might be even more challenging this school year. I am sharing a few things about my child to help all of us get off to a good start. I look forward to speaking with you soon!

My long-term goal for my child this school year is...

In school, my child is usually good at...

My child sometimes struggles with...

My child's experience with at-home learning last year was...

One thing my child's teacher(s) did last spring that helped with at-home learning was...

Over the summer, my child's learning experiences included...

My child truly loves to...

My highest priorities for my child this school year are... (check 3)

- Establishing consistent daily learning routines
- Fluency with learning technology and tools
- Feeling comfortable with video-based instruction
- Making up ground academically
- Building strong social relationships with classmates
- Completing work independently
- Being sufficiently challenged
- Receiving appropriate special education supports
- Getting regular feedback on work/progress
- Managing behavior while learning online
- Other – see below



My phone number is...



My email is...

-I'm a

Invite families to fill one in with their child?

Was born in..

speaks:

Celebrates

identifies as...

misses....

Creating a positive environment

- Set up a question/riddle quote of the day in your home language
- After modeling this, you might ask your child to do it
- Create routines/structures/sibling collaboration
- Model communication/dialogue/discussion:
 - What makes you say that?
 - Hmm. Can you give me an example of that?
 - Oh! That sounds exciting! Let's practice that!
 - Wow! you are so smart! Can you show me how to do that?



Incentives and rewards

- What does your family value as important/fun?
- Cooking? Movie Time? Religious Practice?
- Walks, bike rides, camping, outdoor time?
- Playdates or play with pets?
- Screen time/movie/documentary? (Friday night movie)
- Sports, dance, science experiments, yoga, meditation
- Small prize or goodie bag

You may consider a sticker chart or self-awareness check-in chart

Set Goals, Celebrate Successes and Have Fun!

Educational Resources: Engaging and Learning with your Child

[Mystery Science](#) -

grades k-5, free until June 2021

[Science club for girls](#) -

facebook lives and list of home experiments

[Prodigy Math](#) -

Fun, standards based math learning and games

[Raz-kids](#) -

leveled reading

[Creative Writing journal/story prompts](#)

list of 300 prompts

[Creative daily lesson plans](#) - UDL

have your child pick one!

[PBS Kids](#)

games, videos, current events and learning

[Camp Kinda](#)

Guide to parenting for remote learning - in vietnamese!

[Sheppard Software](#)

Ideas for dinner conversations and virtual vacations

Fun and interactive geography games

Who is MASFEC?

What Services do we provide?

1. Technical Support and Assistance
2. Trainings
3. Weekly Mindfulness Community
4. Outreach (Black and Brown, African American, Haitian, LatinX, Portuguese Speaking, Southeast Asian Communities)
5. Access/Connection to “Cultural Brokers”
6. Partnering to assess needs/develop materials
7. FCSN: Information regarding Special Education Law, Congregate Care, Health Care
8. Broader Trainings at the FEDERATION (Basic Rights...)
9. We partner with DPH, DCF, SESP, EI, DESE, ECE
10. Statewide Annual Needs Assessment

Two-Way, Culturally Relevant Communication Implementation Strategies

We might suggest Maria Esther to:

- Share concerns with administrators and ask about the vision for family engagement and tangible next steps
- Reach out to the district coordinator for family engagement or to local cultural brokers and work together to interpret the tangible steps families might take at home
- Ask teachers how parents can access things like attendance, progress, or student engagement
- Provide examples of how families can encourage and challenge their language learner (ELL) to develop academic language
- Provide a list of school/city/town resources
- Assure the school has preferred means and times for contact for each family, particularly non-English speaking families
- Schedule follow up calls to each family (by the cultural brokers, teachers..)



Current Resources:

<https://www.doe.mass.edu/families/>

<https://www.doe.mass.edu/goodquestion.html>

<https://masfec.org>

<https://nafsce.org/page/Membership>

INVITATIONS:

- Blog with us! What is family Engagement to you?
- Share your effective practices
- Join the training for the new statewide framework

Research on Family Engagement

- *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement* by Anne T. Henderson and Karen L. Mapp (SEDL, 2002)
- *Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships* by Anne T. Henderson, Karen L. Mapp, Vivian R. John, and Don Davies (The New Press, 2007)
- *Handbook on Family and Community Engagement* by Sam Redding, Marilyn Murphy, & Pamela Sheley, Editors (2011)
<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED565697>
- *Partners in Education: A Dual Capacity Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships* (2014)
<http://www2.ed.gov/documents/family-community/partners-education.pdf>



More Resources

- **Global Family Research Project**
<https://archive.globalfrp.org/family-involvement>
- **Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler Model of Parental Involvement (2005)**
<https://www.parent-institute.com/pdf-samples/h-d-and-s-model.pdf>
- **National Network of Partnership Schools**
<http://nnps.jhucsos.com/>
School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Preparing Educators and Improving Schools, Second Edition, by Joyce L. Epstein (2011)
- **SEDL National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools** <http://www.sedl.org/connections/>
https://www.sedl.org/connections/engagement_forum/
 - *A Toolkit for Title I Parental Involvement*
 - *Working Systemically: Engaging Family & Community*



Thank You!

Andrea Parker, EdM
Senior Statewide Training Specialist
aparker@fcsn.org