

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT



CPLAN
Collaborative Parent
Leadership Action Network

THE CHALLENGE:

Communication between schools and families has historically been a one-way street: educators feed parents information without providing an avenue for parents to share their own perspectives so that their values, backgrounds, identities, and cultures are reflected and respected in their child's education. This dynamic is often shaped by the implicit bias that parents from historically marginalized backgrounds are uncommitted to fully partnering with schools to support their children's education. Culturally responsive family engagement helps schools move beyond traditional methods of involvement by honoring the diverse resources that families bring to the table through the development of partnerships that improve families' ability to navigate the educational system and teachers' ability to navigate the communities in which their students live and learn.

STRATEGIES FOR SCHOOLS:

- ✓ **Invite Families to Share their Knowledge.** Parents and caretakers have unique expertise that they may be willing to share. Invite them to participate on parent panels, to lead Q&A sessions, or to be experts for others to contact. Host groups or events that invite both families and teachers to speak from their lived experiences.
- ✓ **Actively Facilitate Family Participation in School Events.** Publicize events early and often using multiple methods including on the school website or social media, via fliers or phone calls, and in newsletters. Make an effort to incentivize attendance, accommodate parents' work schedules and childcare needs.
- ✓ **Ask Families for their Input.** Parents may have a range of culturally-informed assumptions about their role in their child's education. Invite them to partner with you to provide input on projects, events, and ways to engage their children in a variety of roles including as mentors, advocates, monitors and supporters.
- ✓ **Consider Alternative Schedules and Community Locations.** Meeting families in out-of-school settings such as community centers or churches can provide an informal way to start building a relationship. Going into the community indicates a strong level of school commitment to families.
- ✓ **Provide Formal Supports for Relationship Building Between Families and School Staff.** Create school policies and professional development opportunities that support culturally responsive family engagement, including goal-oriented conferences and regular communication.
- ✓ **Create a Welcoming School Environment that Respects and Celebrates Language and Cultural Diversity.** Display student work throughout the building and ensure families receive written communication in the home languages they speak, or provide translation services.
- ✓ **Amplify Student Voice to Forge a Strong Connection.** Get young people involved early and often through student-led conferences meetings, or incentives to promote family engagement in ways that benefit everyone.
- ✓ **Provide Opportunities for Family Contributions and Leadership.** Regularly solicit parent feedback and input on school activities and events. Encourage parents with leadership capacity to be parent representatives on school leadership teams.
- ✓ **Co-design Solutions that Work for Everyone.** Instead of traditional "one-size-fits-all" approaches, use families' knowledge and expertise to co-design events, activities, policies, and school culture elements, working with parents as partners.
- ✓ **Create a Representative Community.** With the shared goal of student success at the center, invest in relationship building and school, community and cultural events that will help families build relationships with each other and with school staff.





Part 1: Identify Your Family Engagement Challenge.



Culturally responsive family engagement helps schools move beyond traditional methods of involvement by honoring the diverse resources that families bring to the table through the development of partnerships that improve families' ability to navigate the educational system and teachers' ability to navigate the communities in which their students live and learn.



Part 2: Craft a Culturally Responsive Solution.

How can you engage families as partners throughout the process?

How can you engage community partners and stakeholders?

How can you build on existing school programming?



How can you make your solution culturally responsive?