Equity and Access for Principals

ENGAGING ALL FAMILIES IN STUDENT LEARNING

This resource is a self-paced guide for principals to use to gain a deeper understanding of what can be done to increase equity and access for families in the formative assessment process. It is divided into the following sections that can be completed in increments: Getting Started, The Invisible List, Co-Constructed Family Engagement, Building Trust with All Families, Shared Values, Two-Way Communication, Mutual Respect, Communicating with Families, Learning from Families, Guiding Principles for Increasing Equity and Access, and From Policy to Practice.

Recommendations
Implementation Settings
- School leadership team meetings;
- Principal meetings;
- District level meetings; and
- Planned individual time.

Planning Time: None
Implementation Time: 185 minutes

Session Objectives

Participants will:

- Examine issues related to equitable access to meaningful engagement for all families in the formative assessment process;
- Review guiding principles for leading the work; and
- Consider policies and procedures that support equity and access for family engagement in the formative assessment process.

Getting Started

Reflect on a time when you were in an unfamiliar situation such as a time when:

- You moved to a new city or started a new job;
- You found yourself in a strange airport – maybe one where you did not know the language or understand the signage; or
- You were in a crowded and unfamiliar fast food restaurant where you were not familiar with the fast-paced "drill" for ordering, paying, and pick up.

Think about what challenges these new or different situations posed. What are some resources that could have helped you navigate the situation?

Here's what helps:

- Familiar elements – alignment;
- Access to information; and
- Relationships - someone to help you navigate.

Experience tells us that adjusting to a new situation no matter how big or small can be difficult and a little frightening. Families often feel this way when their children enter school. The following three supports may help:

- Finding something familiar in an otherwise unfamiliar setting or situation – the more your old environment looks like your new one, the easier it will be to feel comfortable and make adjustments;
- Having access to information that you need to understand the process or situation - the more you know, the more at ease you feel; and
- Supportive relationships – people who can support and guide you along the way.

Think about the families in your school for whom the language, the school culture, the systems and daily operations of the school may be unfamiliar or new. Consider what you have in place in your school that could provide these 3 important supports to families.

- Aligned with a familiar environment;
- Access to information; and
- Relationships

The Invisible List

Think about this quote.

> What made these tools different from any I'd used before was their power to reach in all directions. Whether sending updates on school cancellations or tweeting about great student projects, with a few keystrokes, I could share ideas and information with students, students' families, community members, and the larger world—while inviting everyone's responses... Using social media and digital tools as a lever, we can open the door to new ways of learning, thinking, and communicating for all members of our community.
>
> *Trise Moore, "Drawing on Parents' Strengths: The Role of Districts and Schools in Empowering Families to be Effective Partners in Learning."*

- Do some of your families seem more prepared for the "school experience" than others?
- If yes, think about what you could do to ensure all families have a way of building their own "invisible lists."

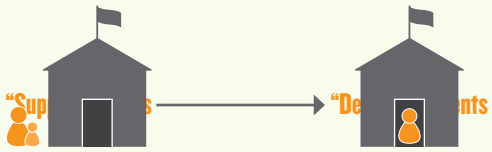
Here is an example of how one school leader thought about addressing the issue:

Former Miami-Dade County School Superintendent, Rudy Crew, who oversaw one of the most culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse districts in the country, felt strongly about the importance of ensuring all families had access to the information and opportunities they needed to be engaged in their child's learning.

He often referred to parents as "supply parents"- those who "supplied" or handed over their child to the school to be educated. Often, because of poverty, lack of English skills, limited education background or other obstacles, the "supply" parents didn't know how to support their children's learning at home or how to use the school system to get the most for their children.

Now, compare them to "demand parents" – those parents who are more consumer-oriented and interact with the school as informed consumers with choices. Demand parents are typically well-educated and middle or upper class. They reinforce the school's and teachers' missions at home, they know what honors or enrichment programs are available, and they offer their opinions about their child's progress and the school's overall performance.

- What does the term "demand parents" imply about Rudy Crew's image of parents and their engagement with the school?



"Supply" Parents:	"Demand" Parents:
• Feel like outsiders in the school	• Feel comfortable in the school
• Lack information on how the system works	• Understand the system and what to expect
• Don't know what to ask and may not know how their children are doing	• Know what questions to ask
• Are not sure about how or what to share	• Are aware of their children's progress
• Are not engaged	• Feel comfortable sharing information about their children
	• Are engaged

Look at the list of descriptors for supply and demand parents. Do you believe you have both supply and demand parents in your school? Who are the supply parents? Who are the demand parents?

Dr. Crew believed that schools have a responsibility to engage, not just involve, all parents – to create the opportunities for parents to move from being supply parents to demand parents. He also believed that parents have a responsibility (and a desire) to support their children's learning. To expect less was to disrespect the role and importance of family engagement.

In this "mutual or shared responsibility" framework, he was promoting what is referred to as "co-constructed family engagement."

- Consider the descriptions of what a demand parent looks like. How would you describe "co-constructed family engagement" in the formative assessment process?
- Think about ALL of your families including those with diversity in language, culture, race, and ethnicity. What opportunities for co-constructed engagement in the formative assessment process are in place for your families?
- In a school where family engagement is truly co-constructed between all families and staff, what role would families play? What role would the teachers play? What role would principals play?

- Given the demographics of your school community, what strategies might you put in place with your families to help create more co-constructed family engagement in the formative assessment process?

Co-Constructed Family Engagement Through an Equity and Access Lens

This is characterized by:

1. Trust;
2. Shared values;
3. Ongoing, two-way communication; and
4. Mutual respect.

Co-constructed family engagement is by definition a strengths-based, reciprocal partnership in which the input of parents is linked to meaningful and relevant engagement opportunities offered by the school. Research tells us that co-constructed family engagement depends on four foundational elements that must be in place to ensure all families have access to the information and opportunities they need to participate fully and equitably in their child's learning.

- Are these elements in place with regard to interactions with all families in your school or just some families?
- If these elements are not in place for all families, what might the barriers be and how could your school overcome them?

Now explore each of the four elements a little deeper.

Building Trust with All Families

Trust is the cornerstone of creating equitable access and supporting authentic shared responsibility and co-created family engagement. Principals set the tone for the school as a whole and support teachers in their role as primary points of contact with families.

A study of trust in the Chicago Schools found that higher achieving schools had higher levels of trust, while schools with the lowest achievement rates had minimal trust. The researchers used four qualities to define trust.

Take a minute to read the following definitions, and then think about how you and your school are doing in creating an atmosphere of trust.

Respect: Recognizing that each person plays an important role in a child's education and knowing that parents and educators can talk honestly and openly.

Competence: Feeling that educators and families can create an effective working environment and will work hard to get the job done.

Integrity: Feeling that people keep their word, doing what they say they will do, and always put the best interest of children first.

Personal regard: Knowing that people in the school community are willing to go out of their way to help each other.

- What are you doing well?
- Where might you make some adjustments?
- How do you see these elements working in your relationships with diverse families in your school?

If you feel there is a need to address trust at your school, think about conducting an informal assessment of trust levels in your school and discuss perceptions of school-family relationships with teachers, other school staff, families, and key community members.

Shared Values

For family engagement to be effective, families must know, understand and agree with the values of the school where they have entrusted their child. Shared values help to define what a school is, what it does and what it aspires to be. It is common for shared values to be found in a school's mission statement but not necessarily lived in day-to-day operations.

Family engagement will be most effective when families' values align with or match the values of the school. Sharing the school's values early on in the parent-teacher and home-school relationship is important in helping parents to identify their own values of education and how well those values match

the values of the school and individual teachers. When there is a mismatch between values, the onus is on the school to clearly articulate its values and work with the family to align their values as much as possible.

- Identify three to four shared or core values that your school embodies.
- Are they known, visible and easily accessible to school staff and families?
- What does each of those values look like in the daily operation, policies, and interactions between staff and families?
- How well do your school values match the values of your families? How do you know?

Two-Way Communication

Communicating with families is often the first step toward increasing engagement. Communication practices need to be sensitive to the diverse languages and cultural backgrounds of families. Equal attention must be paid to listening to families and gathering their feedback.

Communication is the basis for any strong relationship. Teachers and schools can communicate with parents through a variety of different means.

- What strategies are currently in place at your school to communicate with parents about the formative assessment process? What is usually the nature of the communications?
- What strategies do you have in place right now to communicate in diverse ways with all families about the formative assessment process? How do these strategies take into account the various literacy levels, English language learning levels, etc. of each family?
- What strategies could you put in place?
- What can your school and individual teachers do to better listen to families and encourage regular feedback from them about the formative assessment process?
- In what ways are families able to share information with the teacher about accomplishments that occur outside the school day?
- Are your communication practices sensitive to the diverse languages and cultural backgrounds of the families?

Mutual Respect

Mutual respect is born out of two individuals who recognize each other's values and evaluate these values by shared norms. When we take the perspective of the other and see how that value might be important from the other's perspective, mutual respect can occur.

Mutual respect can be promoted through shared values. Once agreed upon, shared values become the foundation for building mutual respect between and amongst people - children and adults. For example, the school may value "active learning" by children and encourage them to challenge each other as well as the teacher. Parents may promote "active learning" by providing opportunities for their child to explore and experiment with ideas and objects at home.

Even if all values aren't shared between family and school, agreeing to disagree is equally as important. Doing so acknowledges each person's point of view without fear or judgment, consequence, or retaliation. Families will be more willing to engage with the school when they feel that they are respected as equal partners in the education of their child, even during times of disagreement.

What shared values have you used or could you use to develop a sense of mutual respect between the school and your families?

Communicating with Families: Cultural Considerations that Impact Equity and Access

Read the following excerpt from the Illinois State Board of Education Family Engagement Framework 2015.

Research Review: Enhancing Communication

According to a study by Christenson, et. al., most effective interventions to promote academic and social development of children are those where parents and school personenel work together to implement interventions utilizing a two-way exchange of information and those involving communication between school and home (1997). Paramount to effective communication are the beliefs that: supporting student learning and healthy development is a shared responsibility; all parents can positively impact student outcomes; and parental input and diverse perspectives are valuable (Souto-Manning, M & Swick, K, 2006; Swick, 2003). In addition, when families are engaged in ways that are linked to learning and healthy development, students make greater gains *(Henderson, and Mapp, 2002).* District and school personnel can support this by sharing information and having a dialogue with parents about:

- the Common Core and Illinois Learning Standards
- the curriculum used to address the standards
- expectations and classroom activities
- the strategies teachers are using to promote students' academic, physical, social, emotional, and behavioral development
- how parents can enhance student learning and healthy development
- the types of summative and formative assessments that will be used each year
- school-wide data and the implications
- their students' and school's progress
- any academic, physical, social, emotional, or behavioral concerns in a timely manner
- any strategies that have been implemented to address barrier(s) to learning

Epstein, M., et. al. suggests that teachers proactively communicate with families before any problems are identified. Recommendations include:

- sending positive emails or notes home that highlight the student's strengths;
- providing a parent signature log with the child's homework assignments;
- communicating regularly by phone; and
- inviting parents to participate in school events.

However, when social, emotional, behavioral or academic concerns are identified, teachers need to communicate these concerns to the parent and describe any strategies implemented in the classroom to address the barrier(s) to learning. The teacher should also invite the family in solving any school related concerns (2008).

Cultural Considerations

It is critical that programs use communication practices that are sensitive to the diverse language and cultural backgrounds of the families they serve. Sohn and Wang (2006) found that Korean born mothers, even those who spoke English well, had difficulty communicating with teachers face-to-face. Due to their strong reading and English grammar skills, their preference was to communicate with teachers through email or program letters. Rous et al. (2003) also found that families who do not speak English well may have difficulty understanding phone conversations as they are unable to rely on non-verbal cues. Lastly, DuPraw and Axner (1997) and Rous et al. (2003) found vast cultural differences in communication styles and nonverbal behavior across families in their studies. These differences, however, should not be viewed as insurmountable barriers. Awareness of cultural differences, as well as similarities, can help people communicate with each other more effectively.

References and Resources

Christenson, S.L., Hurley, C.M., Sheridan, S.M., & Fenstermacher, K. (1997). Parents' and school psychologists' perspectives on parent involvement activities. School Psychology Review, 26, 111-130.

DuPraw, M.E. & Axner, M. (1997). Toward a more perfect union in an age of diversity. Working on common cross-cultural communication challenges. Retrieved from http://www.pbs.org/ampu/crosscult.html.

Epstein, M., Atkins, M., Cullinan, D., Kutash, K., and Weaver, R. (2008). Reducing Behavior Problems in the Elementary School Classroom: A Practice Guide (NCEE #2008-012). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/publications/practiceguides.

Did you read anything that surprised you or gave you an idea of how you might reach out to specific families in your school?

What are some cultural considerations that your school has made to create better communication with your diverse families?

Learning from Families: Tapping into Funds of Knowledge

Funds of Knowledge (families' lived experiences) are defined by researchers as the "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being."

When school leaders shed their role as expert and teacher and take on the role of learner, they can come to know the families of their students in ways that can deepen their understanding and appreciation of the rich cultural and cognitive resources families can bring to a co-constructed approach to family engagement and student support. Families offer a wealth of information that not only contributes to the curriculum, but also provides teachers interacting with families through the formative assessment process with valuable insight into how students learn and function in the classroom environment.

Read the article from the NABE News issue, "Tapping into the Funds of Knowledge of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students and Families" and highlight three key ideas.

Tapping into the Funds of Knowledge of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students and Families

Carla Amaro-Jiménez, The University of Texas at Arlington Peggy Semingson, The University of Texas at Arlington

"It's called 'La Tamalada...Yolanda knows how to make tamales. My dad will make the meat and my mom will make the corn stuff that goes on the husk and we set the kids on the stools around there and we give them a pile of the masa and Yolanda knows how to put the corn husk down and rub the masa and meat and wrap it. We make our own tamales...." (Alejandra, interview)

In the context of doing home visits and interviews as part of a research study on parents' participation in their children's literacy learning conducted by the second author (Semingson, 2008), Alejandra, a single parent of four school-aged children, was given a book, Family Pictures/ Cuadros de mi Familia, by Mexican-American author Carmen Lomas Garza. Alejandra explicitly connected the Lomas Garza literary text with a Mexican cultural tradition in the household: making tamales. She connected this cultural experience with the types of school literacies and texts her second-grade child, Yolanda, was engaging with in the classroom, drawing resourcefully on cultural and linguistic Funds of Knowledge present in her bilingual/bi-cultural household (Moll & González, 2004) to support her daughter's literacy learning.

Introduction

Creating meaningful connections between home and school is not always an easy task, especially when parents and families speak a language other than the one spoken by the classroom teacher. The challenges become even greater when these families belong to a different culture than one's own. Additionally, researchers have argued that a focus on assimilation and devaluing of students' language and culture can result in notions of subtractive schooling (Valenzuela, 1999, 2005; Worthy, Rodríguez, Assaf, Martínez, & Cuero, 2003). In contrast to

such deficit models, an additive model seeks to build on students' and family's strengths and abilities and transform teachers' and schools' ways of perceiving the families with an overall goal of increasing student achievement (Amaro-Jiménez & Semingson, 2010; Moll & González, 2004; Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992).

In this article we advocate for the implementation of additive practices for educators, teachers, and administrators to meaningfully engage with Latina/o students and families, drawing upon a Funds of Knowledge framework (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). We first examine the term Funds of Knowledge referring to the original use of the term by Vélez-Ibáñez

& Greenberg (1992). We then highlight selected recent studies that have drawn on the Funds of Knowledge in bilingual and multilingual classroom settings to offer concrete suggestions for teachers and administrators of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) children and families.

Defining Funds of Knowledge

The literature on Funds of Knowledge suggests that educators must draw upon students' background knowledge and experiences to enhance learning. Studies have suggested that drawing on the experiences that students have accumulated in their households with siblings, peers, friends, communities, and parents are not only valuable to students' lives, but can assist teachers in understanding the ways in which these experiences can be practically and meaningfully connected to classroom curriculum (e.g., Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992). In an ethnographic study, Riojas-Cortez (2001) examined the ways that 12 bilingual preschoolers' play in a South Texas classroom reflected their use of Funds of Knowledge. Her data suggest that the preschoolers drew

Studies have suggested that drawing on the experiences that students have accumulated in their households with siblings, peers, friends, communities, and parents are not only valuable to students' lives, but can assist teachers in understanding the ways in which these experiences can be practically and meaningfully connected to classroom curriculum.

upon their culture and language in their interactive play (e.g., in the kitchen center) and other shared spaces. Drawing on Moll and colleagues' work (1992), Riojas-Cortez developed a useful taxonomy of 12 categories of Funds of Knowledge the children drew upon during play, which included child care, family, education, farming, and construction, among others. The author suggests that educators should intentionally draw upon these Funds of Knowledge exhibited and make connections to classroom curriculum.

In fact, a key component of the Funds of Knowledge framework is to be able to identify what unique experiences students and their families possess and later link them to instruction (Riojas-Cortez, Huerta, Flores, Perez and Clark, 2008).

Gutierrez (2002), for example, documented how drawing was used to build bridges between a third grade bilingual student's background experiences and his academic achievement in school. The researcher and classroom teacher used bilingual books and writing topics that were based on the student's interests in soccer. By tuning in to his interests through close observation, the teacher was able to create contexts whereby the student was successful in classroom literacy practices such as writing.

However, being able to tap into students' household experiences and bring them to classroom instruction can be challenging. Interestingly, Upadhyay's (2009) study of a Hmong teacher suggests that doing so may be less of a challenge for those whose experiences resemble the children's lives. By closely analyzing Lee's classroom interactions and implementation of classroom activities, the author suggested that Lee was able to bring in a variety of culturally-relevant activities into her instruction because she had, herself, direct knowledge of cultural dynamics present in Hmong families. For instance, because Lee knew about the role that gardening plays among Hmong families and culture, she was able to make a direct connection between the household experiences and the content they were learning in the classroom. Bringing these experiences, along with her sensitivity for the children in the classroom who were not Hmong, allowed these students to not only understand why science is relevant to their lives but to develop a greater understanding of the science content taught in the classroom.

Implementing an Additive Framework in the Classroom and School

As it has already been argued, teachers and administrators must value the cultural and linguistic resources that CLD students bring into the classroom. However, they must begin by being pro-active in order to seek out specific ways to engage and value parents' language, experience, knowledge, and participation within the curriculum and the learning that takes place in the classroom.

Identifying the Funds of Knowledge Present in their Households

In order to enact an additive framework for working with CLD students and families, teachers need to first identify the rich kinds of experiences that students and their

families possess (González, Moll & Amanti, 2005). Teachers should also be aware that the parents themselves may not be completely aware that these experiences can and in fact are valuable (Spielman, 2001). While it is certainly important to gather information related to their countries of origin, language(s) spoken at home, number of siblings, etc., these pieces of information can be gathered through traditional means, including classroom discussions, parent-teacher conferences and school events. On the other hand, visiting their community and home can provide teachers with a wealth of information which may not be available otherwise, such as information about their daily lives, their family dynamics, and the ways in which learning opportunities are provided in the household. By doing these visits, teachers will also move away from making use of stereotypes or over-generalizations about their students' backgrounds and rather use information gathered from the children and families themselves, to identify their strengths and to highlight how unique their experiences are.

Prior to collecting these data, teachers will need to think about how the information gathered will help them better understand their student and his/her family, how their students learn, the kinds of supports available at home, and the conditions for learning for the child. In fact, González et al. (1995) have suggested that teachers conduct research visits, as opposed to home visits, where teachers solely collect data about the family involved. Field notes, a personal journal, and questionnaires can be used while doing these visits (González et al., 1995). A list of questions, in both English and Spanish, like those provided in Table 1, can be used as a starting point. Note that gathering information about the child and families, as well as building rapport and trust with the families, should be both an ongoing and systematic process.

Table I. Questions that can be used to gather information about the Funds of Knowledge – A Focus on Literacy Practices

English	Spanish
What do you remember about your own schooling experiences?	¿Qué recuerda de sus propias experiencias escolares?
What kind of support did you have at home when you started reading and writing?	¿Qué tipos de apoyo tuvo usted en su hogar cuando comenzó a escribir y a leer?
What were your strengths/weaknesses in learning in your native language?	¿Cuáles considera eran sus fortalezas y debilidades al aprender en su idioma nativo?
Do you read and/or write in another language (second language)? If yes, which language?	¿Escribe o lee usted en algún otro lenguaje (segunda lengua)? Si la respuesta es s æ, diga cuál lenguaje.
Tell me about your experiences learning to read and write in your second language.	D game de sus experiencias aprendiendo a leer y escribir en su segunda lengua.
Do you recall the moment when your child began to read and write? If yes, tell me about that moment in his/her life. If not, please explain why you think you do not remember that moment.	¿Recuerda usted el momento en que su niño(a) empezó a leer y escribir? Si la respuesta es s , hábleme de ese momento en su vida. Si la respuesta es no, por favor explique por qué crees usted que no recuerda dicho momento.
Describe the kinds of experiences that your child has with reading and writing at home.	Describa los tipos de experiencias que su niño(a)tiene con la lectura y escritura en el hogar.
Do you help your child with reading and writing at home? Please explain why.	¿Le ayuda usted a su niño(a) a leer y escribir en el hogar? Por favor explique por qué.
Please give me examples of things you do at home to help your child with schoolwork.	Por favor deme ejemplos de las cosas que usted hace en su hogar para ayudarle a su niño(a) con cosas de la escuela.
What are some of the things you find helpful when working with your child in school tasks?	¿Cuáles son algunas de las cosas que encuentra usted son beneficiosas cuando está trabajando con su niño(a) en cosas de la escuela?
Do you prepare your own materials to help your child with reading and writing? If yes, what are these and are any of these materials or ideas especially helpful? If not, please explain what you use.	Prepara usted sus propios materiales para ayudarle a su niño(a) con la lectura y escritura? Si es as , qué materiales son estos y de qué manera le son útiles estos.

Becoming a Reflective Practitioner Who Understands the Role of the Funds of Knowledge in their Instruction

Practitioners need to make strategic use of the information they have collected about the child and families. To do so, they need to adopt the role of a reflective practitioner—this is a role which will allow them to not just analyze the information gathered, but who will critically reflect on what they do and identify areas of improvement. They can ask themselves: (1) How am I incorporating my students' and their families' assets and strengths in my teaching already?, (2) How am I taking into consideration the assets and strengths these families have in my teaching?, (3) What can I do to improve how I communicate with the parents?, and (4) What can I do to improve what I do in the classroom that is responsive to their unique lived, cultural, and linguistic experiences? (See Table 1) In other words, this reflection exercise will allow them to think about how they will use that information, and how gathering such information will aid their teaching. Asking these questions will also allow them to find ways to become more proactive in incorporating these aspects into their teaching.

Making a Direct Link between Students' Funds of Knowledge and School Curriculum

Intentionally fostering a curricular context for incorporating the Funds of Knowledge, both school- and classroom-wide, is imperative. According to Olmedo (2009, p. 27),

three characteristics need to typify the school community: 'compromiso' (compromise), 'confianza' (trust), and 'colaboración' (collaboration). Parents and teachers need to be committed to learning from one another, to fostering mutual confidence and trust, and to work together in collaborative ways to improve student learning.

To bring the Funds of Knowledge into the curriculum, teachers need to begin by making students aware that the experiences they bring from home are valued in the classroom. For example, teachers can go beyond creating pairs or buddies in the classroom to help one another academically and linguistically; the pairs can be used to allow them to compare their experiences, whether similar or different, in collaborative ways. Likewise, developing trust with the children and their families can be achieved through a variety of means, such as using family journals where the family communicates with the teacher about the successes and challenges the child may be experiencing in the classroom. Such family journals can also ensure that there will be a two-way communication between the family and the school. Other research-based strategies can be found in Table 2.

Table 2. Connecting Recent Research Studies on Funds of Knowledge to Classroom Practice

Research	How Students Funds of Knowledge were Connected to Practice	Implications for Teachers
(Dworin, 2006)	Dworin and the classroom teacher led students to draw on the writing procss and their skills in writing and translating to create dual language stories. Students began the project by engaging with reading of bilingual books that developed the theme of culturally relevant family stories. Students interviewed family members and used oral stories as basis for stories.	y Use oral language stories as basis for writing. y Value dual language work and translation of dual language texts (reading, writing, listening, speaking).
(Taylor, Bernhard, Garg, & Cummins, 2008)	Students authored stories initially by dictating and drawing in response to questions posed about their culture, home, and experiences. Parents and families were invited to contribute photos and assist with translations of the stories into their native language. These often became intergenerational projects with parents and grandparents participating in the project.	y Encourage collaboration with family members in multi-media assignments. y Parents and family can provide input and assistance in the native language.
(Tan & Barton, 2010)	A sixth grade science teacher connected a nutrition unit to students' lived experiences by having them bring, discuss, and make connections with their foods eaten at home. This increased engagement and access to the curriculum while giving student's voices.	y Make connections from curriculum to students' stories and lived experiences. y Incorporate storytelling and dialogue based on students' related connections to the concepts.

Think about your own funds of knowledge and how they influence your daily life. What funds of knowledge do your families possess?

How could you in your role as principal find out more about the funds of knowledge of the families you serve?

Guiding Principles for Increasing Equity and Access for Family Engagement

Here are four Guiding Principles[ii] to increase equity and access for all families in your school. Each principle includes key considerations to inform your work, questions to ask yourself, and possible strategies to implement. It is recommended you also ask families to include their own principles to increase equity and access[i].

PRINCIPLE #1:

Build a Culture of Inclusiveness That Respects All Families and Views Them As Valuable Assets.

To build a culture of inclusiveness in your school, think about your role in the process.

Key considerations:

- School leadership supports the development of a system of family engagement that takes into account diversity of students and families in the school and is responsive to family and student needs.
- School leadership recognizes the significance of native language and culture for student success and family engagement and builds a culture of equity and inclusiveness for linguistically and culturally diverse populations.

Questions to ask yourself:

- Do all the policies and programs in the school reflect, respect, and value the diversity of the families in the school community?
- Does the staff value the contributions of all families in the formative assessment process and work together with families to identify and address barriers to involvement?
- Are programs and activities for families low-cost or free? Offered at convenient times and places? Supported with translations and interpreters?

If you answered "no" to any of these questions, what are some possible ways you could make changes to current policies and practices to get to "yes"?

Strategy:

Conduct multiple family-led "Community Walks" at different times of the year to learn more about the neighborhoods and daily lives of families to foster a culture of inclusiveness at your school.

PRINCIPLE #2:

Create a Welcoming Environment That Builds Trust and is Responsive to Individual Strengths and Needs.

Letting families know that they are welcome in the school building, greeting them when they arrive, and posting signs in their native language are just a few ways to communicate to parents that they are valued members of the school community. Hiring administrative staff that speaks the same language as families is another way not only to welcome bilingual families, but to provide them with someone who can act as an interpreter. Providing a Family Resource Center is another way to demonstrate that families are welcome at school. Parents and other family members are also more likely to trust that the school values their involvement when they see people who share their cultural and linguistic background among the school staff.

To create a welcoming environment in your school, think about your role in the process.

Key considerations:

- School leaders develop relational trust with families by listening and respecting their opinions and following through on commitments;
- School leaders actively reach out to and engage with families in ways that communicate understanding and appreciation of diverse communication and involvement styles;
- School leaders learn about the families in the schools;
- School leaders use a strengths-based approach when responding to families; and
- School leaders recognize diverse family structures.

Questions to ask yourself:

- When families walk through the door of the school, do they feel it is a place they belong?
- Do families have opportunities to develop personal relationships with the teachers and the principal and other staff?
- Is the atmosphere family-friendly and one in which all families feel they can navigate - not just a few?

If you answered "no" to any of these questions, what are some possible ways you could make changes to current policies and practices to get to "yes"?

Something more to consider:

"School personnel often regard mothers as the primary caregivers in the family and, therefore, direct most communications about a child's school performance to his or her mother. Under these circumstances, paternal involvement may not be encouraged, and fathers may even receive messages implying that it is not welcomed" (Onikama, Hammond, & Koki, 1998, p. 6). Don't overlook other adults in students' lives — grandparents, older siblings, tribal leaders, and so on — who play a central role in their upbringing (Voltz, 1994).

Researchers have found three key factors affect whether parents are motivated to become engaged in their child's learning. For each of the following three factors, think of three things your school could do to support families.

How parents develop the information they need to give to the school: Do they know what the school expects them to do with regard to formative asssessment? Are these expectations consistent in their network of friends and family?

How confident they feel about their ability to help their children in the formative assessment process: Do they feel they have the knowledge and skills to make a difference? If not, do they know how to access additional school support?

Whether they feel invited into the formative assessment process both by their children and the staff: Do they get strong, positive signals from teachers and the principal that they should be involved in the formative assessment of their child?

PRINCIPLE #3:

Ensure Two-Way Communication Between Families and Schools Is Linked to Student Achievement.

To ensure two-way communication is linked to student achievement, think about your role in the process.

Key considerations:

- School leaders model and support teachers to partner with families and engage in meaningful two-way exchange of information to support student learning.
- School leaders regard families as valuable sources of knowledge and information that can inform instructional planning and decision-making regarding formative assessment data.
- School leaders model and support teachers to share formative assessment data with families and provide information on how formative assessment data is used to inform instruction.
- School leaders ensure that families are given multiple opportunities to provide input and engage in activities and planning that support student learning.
- School leaders inform families about student expectations and classroom activities.

Questions to ask yourself:

- Do families feel that the school takes steps to ensure they are informed in the formative assessment process regardless of language or other circumstances?
- Do families feel it is easy to connect with and communicate with teachers and other staff, including the principal, regarding the formative assessment?
- Does the school offer many ways for families to give and receive information about the formative assessment?
- Is staff trained to interact with and share information with families about the formative assessment?

If you answered "no" to any of these questions, what are some possible ways you could make changes to current policies and practices to get to "yes"?

Strategy:

Map the school's teacher/principal-family contacts. How often are teachers/principal communicating with families? What are the main topics? When do face-to-face meetings take place? Who usually initiates them and what is the purpose?

PRINCIPLE #4:

Understand Cultures and Communicate In Ways That are Appropriate for Each Family.

To support staff ability to communicate appropriately with all families, think about your role in the process.

Key considerations:

- School leaders use a variety of ways to reach out to and communicate with families – both formally and informally;
- Schools develop activities that invite parents into the school in specific ways that build on their strengths and recognize their preferences;
- School leaders use communication strategies that are sensitive to culture and language;
- School leaders take time to learn about the circumstances and realities of the families in the school community; and
- School leaders connect with community-based organizations and leaders to develop a deeper knowledge of families' cultures.

Questions to ask yourself:

- What do we know about the ways that families prefer to communicate with the school about the formative assessment process?
- Are events and opportunities for engagement in the formative assessment process tailored to the families in the school?
- What steps has the school taken to break down barriers to family engagement related to culture, ethnicity, language, and physical or economic conditions?
- What accommodations (e.g. translation services, interpreters) are available to enable all families to participate?

Strategy:

Work with individual families, parent groups, and community members to develop guidelines for formal and informal communication between the school and families about the formative assessment process.

Equity and Access: From Policy to Practice

Principals can leverage their leadership positions to establish policies and procedures that recognize the important roles that families play as partners in supporting student achievement by ensuring all families in the school community have access to information and equitable opportunities to be engaged in their children's learning. The following are four suggested options that could be implemented to address issues of equity and access for family engagement.[ii]

Embed Equity and Access Principles for Family Engagement Into School Improvement Process.

Integrating family engagement principles within the school improvement process will help to ensure that the work is "goal-directed, positive, culturally responsive, respectful, systemic, and comprehensive." In this way, family engagement can be routinely integrated into school improvement plans, inform professional development planning, and guide approaches to providing services, programs, and activities.

Key considerations to authentically integrate family engagement policies into the ongoing school improvement process:

- All policies and procedures address the context of the families in the school community.
- Family engagement strategies and policies are coordinated and integrated across all structures and processes.
- Families' socio-cultural, linguistic, and educational needs are assessed and addressed as part of the improvement planning process.
- Policies are updated regularly to reflect the demographics of the families in the school community.

Questions to ask yourself:

- Review the major elements of your school improvement plan.
- Does your school plan address any of the key considerations listed above? If not, should it?
- Make a list of how these considerations or others that address the importance of equity and access could be integrated into the various components of the plan including recruitment, professional development, evaluation, and accountability.
- What would it take to accomplish these additions or changes?

Allocate Time and Resources to Support Families and Teachers Working Together to Examine Data and Set Learning Goals.

Principals have the flexibility and authority to allocate or redeploy time and resources to support family engagement and address issues of equity and access. School leaders play an important role in ensuring that families and staff both have adequate supports and opportunities to effectively communicate and work together. In school settings where both time and resources are limited, this may mean adjusting building priorities and/or seeking other district-level supports or guidance.

Key considerations to address issues of allocating time and resources to support family engagement for all families:

- School leaders understand the important role families play in the educational process and the impact family engagement has on student outcomes.
- School leaders can leverage their own partnerships with families to improve student outcomes.
- School leaders recognize the significance of native language and culture to support student learning and ensure families and staff have the resources needed for effective communication and interaction.
- School leaders make allocation decisions based on input from teachers and families.

Questions to ask yourself:

- Think about the way that time and resources are currently allocated.
- What percentage of resources and time is currently deployed to support family engagement in student learning?
- What activities or opportunities could you facilitate to provide families with opportunities to access student data and understand the formative assessment process?
- What will it take to enable teachers and families to have time together to look at data, share information, and develop learning goals?
- Will teachers need time outside family conference time to effectively share data and interact with all families?
- What supports might be needed to ensure linguistic needs of families are addressed?
- Will time and resources need to be reallocated to support this work?

Build the Capacity of Families and Staff to Effectively Engage in Activities Supporting Student Learning.

One important use of time and resources addressing improved equity and access for family engagement is the provision of learning opportunities that build the capacity of both school staff (especially teachers) as well as families to effectively work together as partners in student learning and achievement. Teachers and other school staff may need targeted training opportunities tied directly to practice that address some of the key issues surrounding communication and partnering with culturally, linguistically, and ethnically diverse families. In addition, a focus on equity and access for family engagement can be embedded across many traditional staff development and training events. Families, too, need information, support, and opportunities to build their own capacity to function as equal partners in supporting their children's learning. Principals, working together with staff and families, can identify needed areas of training and professional development.

Supporting staff:

Many teachers have had little experience or training on ways to engage students' families. Others may feel intimidated by parents or worry that involving parents more directly in the classroom will be a waste of time. School leaders may need to jumpstart a school-wide family involvement initiative by providing professional development on school-family collaboration, intercultural communication, connections between culture and learning, or other topics specific to involving diverse families more directly in students' education (Trumbull et al., 2001).

School leaders can consider the following to ensure staff are receiving appropriate training and supports needed to interact with the diversity of families:

- School leaders assess professional development needs of staff pertaining to engaging culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse families.
- School leaders place a high priority on assessing cultural biases and providing professional development to address it.
- School leaders support professional development efforts that incorporate family engagement activities focused on equity and access.
- School leaders build the cultural proficiency of staff to ensure all parents are effectively engaged.
- School leaders support professional development that introduces teachers to Funds of Knowledge (families' lived experiences) and how to use family input to inform curriculum and instructional planning.

Think about the families in your school community and the possible training and other learning opportunities your staff may need to work effectively with diverse families.

- What is the current status of your staff working with culturally and linguistically diverse families? Do you all have the capacity to take on more than what you're currently doing? What might be the opportunities or challenges in taking on more than what you're currently doing?
- What do you know about the professional development and learning needs of your staff (especially classroom teachers) with regard to working with culturally and linguistically diverse families?
- What are some ways that you could find out more? What would you look for? What questions would you ask?
- Consider topics that you think would improve teacher and staff capacity to work effectively with diverse families.
- If you are providing professional development and learning related to equity and access, how do you know it is working?
- In addition to professional development and learning, what are some other capacity-building strategies you could implement to support teachers and staff?

Research has found that parents' personal self-efficacy has a significant impact on whether or not they will engage in activities that support their children's learning and healthy development. Personal self-efficacy refers to a parent's belief that he/she has the necessary knowledge and skill sets required by the activity as well as the belief that it will result in positive outcomes for his/her child.

> If ethnically diverse parents feel they lack the knowledge and competence to operate within the bureaucratic structure of the school, they may involve themselves at lower levels or not at all.[ii]

School leaders can consider the following to ensure families are receiving appropriate learning opportunities and supports needed to interact with teachers and other staff:

- School leaders understand the importance and support efforts to build families' capacity to support their children's learning at home.
- School leaders provide opportunities for families to understand data and how it is used.
- School leaders engage families in open, informal conversations about their interests, goals, questions, etc.
- School leaders support the development of parent leadership academies at the school.

Think about the families in your school community. Consider ways that you could facilitate building family capacity to be full partners in supporting their children's learning and achievement.

Building Capacity

Skill mastery requires coaching and practice. Existing family engagement strategies often involve providing lists of items and activities for teachers to use to reach out to families and for families to do with their children. This information dissemination strategy is an important but insufficient condition of learning and knowledge acquisition. During learning sessions, staff and families can receive information on skills and tools, but must also have the opportunity to practice what they have learned and receive feedback and coaching from each other, peers, and facilitators.

Think about the above statement and how it applies to building staff and family capacity on issues of equity and access. Consider ways that both families and staff practice new skills and use information received in training.

Support Opportunities for Families to Connect and Learn From Each Other

Research suggests that strong peer networks with other parents in the school community may be linked to parents' level of involvement with and information about the school (Lareau, 1987). Principals can facilitate opportunities for diverse families to build relationships with each other and participate in peer learning and information sharing. Creating networks of families who share the same language or culture is often an important first step in engaging families in their children's learning at school.

Parent Cafés

See the article below and read about one school that hosts Coffee with its Spanish-speaking families at Principal/Parent Cafecitos. The article includes a quick guide to hosting Coffee with the Principal at your school.

Product Description

Title:

FAQ: Coffee with the Principal/Cafecito

Description:

A set of six frequently asked questions

Purpose:

Describes what a cafecito is and how to run one

Time of Implementation:

Prep time: 2 hours

Meeting time: 40 minutes-1 hour

Source: Amanda Butler, Fort Smith (AR) Public Schools at:

http://tinyurl.com/lq2dvlm

http://familyengagement.weebly.com/coffee-w-the-principal.html

FAQ: Coffee with the Principal/Cafecitos

1. What is a Coffee with the Principal (CWP)/Cafecitos?

A CWP/Cafecitos is an informal meeting in a small group setting that focuses primarily on building relationships and checking for parent understanding related to student learning success in schools. Through this setting, administrators can meet with families in a less formal setting than a traditional school assembly or a PTA-PTO meeting. "Cafecitos" is Spanish for the English term "coffee break." It is a strategy used as a way to involve parents in schools in several urban school districts with large numbers of Latino families.

Article: http://alturl.com/6vbac

2. What makes Cafecitos unique?

Cafecitos meetings are entirely in Spanish. Keep interpreting to a minimum and offer as much in the home language as possible. Encourage networking and create opportunities for parents to share their ideas, opinions, and concerns. Cafecitos are parent-driven. Use parents' feedback to decide what topics to discuss at future Cafecitos. Choose the first topic to discuss, and then ask the parents what they would like to discuss at future meetings. Let parents know that they can bring younger siblings to the meeting and that you'll have an activity for the siblings to do while you meet. It's important to let parents know ahead of time that it is possible that younger siblings come as well.

3. What is the main purpose of Cafecitos?

A Cafecito is a helpful starting point for establishing and strengthening relationships among administrators and families. It is a time to get to know families, and to provide them with a chance to get to know you. A Cafecito can be held several times during the year. During the first Cafecito, give families an opportunity to learn about teachers and other staff and to gain some basic information about how your school functions. Keep the meetings welcoming, fun, and intimate. It is better to offer smaller Cafecitos organized by grade levels/classrooms than to offer one large group. Eventually, a Cafecito can have more academic content and data aligned to your school's STAAR goals and SIP.

4. What do I need to hold a Cafecito?

Communications: Promote each event one month, two weeks, and the day before it is to be held. Send flyers in English and Spanish and place Cafecito notices on the school's marquee, newspaper, website, Facebook, and so on. Create an agenda and sign-in sheets.

Supplies: Coffee maker, coffee, cream, filter, cups, plastic stirrers, sugar, Sweet-N-Low, etc. -You don't have to spend a lot on refreshments. Consider buying *pan dulce* and cutting it up.

Place: A smaller room is preferable to a larger auditorium. You will want to be visible and accessible to the parents.

Staff: If possible, try to maintain a low parent to administrator/teacher ratio, such as 10 or 15 to 1. Again, consider offering each Cafecito by grade level.

5. What is the best time to hold a Cafecito?

At the start of the school year, offer a Cafecito at two different times convenient for parents. Remember that sometimes parents lack transportation and for them making different trips during a day can be difficult. Consider holding a Cafecito after the school day starts or one hour before dismissal. In this way, family attendance will tend to increase. Offer a Cafecito during evening hours and consider having a "less homework afternoon." In this way, families will not feel potentially conflicted about attending a Cafecito and not having enough time to go home and do homework with their children.

6. How do I promote Cafecitos?

Families are constantly receiving information from different sources, not just from schools. Schedule a Cafecito at the start of the school year, to allow families to prepare for child care and work accommodations. Consider sending reminders home one month, two weeks, one week, and the night before each Cafecito. Try to use several different ways to reach parents, such as a printed flyer, a sticker on each child's clothes, a banner in the school's front lobby, a Twitter or a Facebook posting, a notice on the school's website calendar, and so on.

7. How often should I offer Cafecito at our school?

The ideal frequency for offering a Cafecito will depend upon the needs of your school. If you are new to your school, consider holding several Cafecito events during the fall months. Transition to talks about academics and data once you have determined that your families' levels of comfort at the school have increased and that trust has developed between and among parents and you and your staff.

Monthly Coffee with the Principal (CWP)

Cafecito Mensual con la Director(a)

WHEN: Date/time
WHERE: Place
WHY: Brief agenda topics

CUÁNDO: Fecha/hora
DÓNDE: Lugar
PARA QUÉ: Tema(s) de discusión

ADDRESS & TELEPHONE:

Coffee with the Principal (CWP) Agenda

Agenda para Cafecito con la director(a)

Date- Time frame Ex.: 8:40-9:40

1. Administration Introduction ..... 5 min
2. Parents Introduction (Ice Breaker) ..... 15 min
3. Topic 1 - Ex.: Testing content skills to review ..... 15 min
4. Topic 2 - Ex.: Testing dates/time/tips
   Please make sure children get plenty of rest
   and arrive on time to school..... 10 min
5. Parents questions/concerns
6. Closing remarks/

Acknowledgements/celebrations ..... 5-10 min

Thank you for attending Coffee with the Principal/Cafecitos

School Name-Date-Time

Name/nombre	Student/estudiante	Teacher/maestra	Telephone/teléfono

When schools engage parents and families, ideas come primarily based on the needs and priorities that are reflected in the data gathered by families and schools, including the formative assessment process. The parent is considered a critical player in identifying a shared vision and goal. When we engage families, we have the potential to create a shared community, where families and educators work as partners to support and increase student learning.

Principals can lead the way in designing, implementing, and evaluating strategies and can provide the needed resources and supports to staff and families that will create a learning environment and culture that ensures full participation among all families. The use of the formative assessment process provides a unique opportunity to directly engage families in supporting learning at home and at school. Hopefully this guide has provided you with some considerations and examples of ways that issues of equity and access for family engagement can be effectively addressed in your school context.

Reflect on what you have learned and consider the following questions:

- What can I implement right away that will improve equity and access for families' engagement in student achievement across the school?
- What elements of the formative assessment process could be adjusted or enhanced to create more opportunities for all families to be engaged?
- What are some long-term goals I can set to improve equity and access at the school?

RESOURCES

[i] Content for the guiding principles and the policy to practice sessions have been informed by and adapted from: Illinois State Board of Education Family Engagement Framework 2015: http://www.isbe.state.il.us/family-engagement/pdf/fe-guide.pdf

[ii]Illinois State Board of Education: Family Engagement Framework: A Guide for Illinois School Districts, Schools, and Families: http://www.isbe.state.il.us/family-engagement/pdf/fe-guide.pdf

[iii]Eccles & Harold, 1996; Grolnick et al., 1997; Sheldon, 2002; Bandura et al., 1996; and Shumow & Lomax, 2002 in ISBE Family Engagement Framework Guide 2015: http://isbe.state.il.us/family-engagement/html/framework.htm

Public Schools of North Carolina
State Board of Education
Department of Public Instruction

This document was developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. However, the contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department, and you should not assume endorsement by the U.S. Federal Government.