



Session Titles:

A8: Reaching Out to *All* Families: Lessons Learned and Challenges - Discussion Among Grantees Implementing Family/Community Engagement Interventions

B8: Enhance Your Work with Families and Communities to Promote Achievement for *All* Students

Session presenters/facilitators:

Grantees

- Maryam Diaab Hall, California League of Middle Schools
- Patricia Martinez, Central Falls School District
- Aurelio Montemayor, Intercultural Development Research Association (Session A)
- Maria S. Quezada, California Association for Bilingual Education (Session B)

i3 TA moderators

- Eden Segal, Annette Zehler, Westat, and Julie Hirschler, EDC

Overall summary of the sessions:

Session A8:

This session offered a structured discussion among i3 grantees who are currently implementing parent and family/community engagement innovations as a focus of their projects, including many for whom it is their absolute priority. A few of those who had identified the topic as an emerging issue on their grant projects were also present. A panel of three project representatives briefly discussed their work, including the steps taken in recruiting, engaging, educating, and promoting leadership among all of a project's K-12 families and communities. Participants in the session engaged in rich discussion of project experiences to identify commonalities across projects in successes, challenges, and lessons learned. Grantee discussions included working with a range of types of families, including English learners, low-income, single-parent, and grandparent-headed. Grantees and moderators noted a few commonalities across projects and other key points.

Session B8:

This session offered a structured discussion among i3 grantees who wish to enhance family/community engagement components of their projects. i3 grantees who are focused on implementing family/community engagement efforts will outline steps in recruiting, engaging, educating, and promoting leadership among K-12 families and communities, including families with English learners and other needs. Participants in the session shared their experiences, and the discussion addressed questions, common challenges, successful practices and lessons learned. Discussions at two of the four tables became opportunities for grantee representatives who are experienced at family engagement, education, and leadership development to help other grantees "solve their problems" in implementing their family/community engagement plans or addressing challenges. The session ended with a summary of a few key points for further discussion/exploration.



Key issues or questions discussed:

Recruit & Engage

- "In reality, we are all doing family engagement"
- Need to take a systemic approach: Importance of involving/recruiting the support of district leaders, the school principal, and teachers - Or, families may show up at school wanting to become involved and "face a brick wall"
- Start small. "Early adopter" parents can become leaders and help to engage others by example and by word of mouth, parent "peer pressure," and being examples to others of what is possible works in more densely populated areas. Use parents' energy.
- Try approaches others have used and find ways to enhance it
- Try several small-scale approaches in terms of time/space/place – home visits, "pop ups" – tents outside the grocery store, laundry. They don't need to be "fancy." Consider working through teachers.
- Challenges and importance of getting families involved for the first time; challenges of retention, including for documenting results
- How to keep families involved as students grow older
- Who ARE the parents/families? - geography, population density, poverty, language, common family structures, history adults have with schooling in the U.S. and/or other countries
- Invite families to be partners; what do they value most?
- Give families opportunities to socialize and become comfortable – a place for parent coffee and network events, family rooms in schools
- Promote the program within services the community uses, e.g., medical, adult ESL, GED
- Engaging is not simply obtaining attendance at a parent workshop
- Use adult learning/facilitation techniques
- Treat families with respect and dignity
- Consider "customer service" mentality when interacting with families – how can we help you?
- Consider the relevance/accessibility of existing organizations/resources to all families and modify as needed

Educate

- Consider the skills teachers need to engage with families. Provide PD to teachers, e.g., summer learning academies – consider even small amounts of extra pay when possible
- Focus on parent learning about student academics at various stages of child/adolescent development, e.g., early learning, what is needed for school readiness, transitions from elementary to middle, middle to high school, testing and what it means
- Demystify educational jargon—inform parents about key education-related terms and acronyms, such as "cums" (cumulative averages), IEPs (individualized education program mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act), EL (English learner), and names of state-based tests, so that they have the language to discuss education with teachers, principal, staff, and other families
- Share what families can be doing with their children educationally during out of school time – especially weekends and vacations
- Focus on parent education if they are interested, e.g., GED, adult ESL
- Remember where YOU started. Don't assume parents have spent a career in schools.
- Don't assume that there is something wrong with their parenting or start with parenting classes
- Don't think of/call it an intervention



Promote Leadership/Power

- Leadership has multiple definitions
- Create school-based family advisory board for school/programming
- Support parent-led activities – go beyond bake sales; parents WILL volunteer; provide opportunities for parents to determine what they will do and to take the lead in activities with appropriate support from education professionals
- Focus on bringing leadership out of parents, not talking down to them

Related resources that may be useful:

- Resources/tip sheets from organizations with clear family and community engagement plans in place (see above)
- The Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships launched as part of U.S. Department of Education's Model Framework in April 2014 - <http://www.ed.gov/family-and-community-engagement>
- <http://www.fcenetwork.iel.org/main>
- <http://www.migrationpolicy.org>. Recent MPI report: *Immigrant Parents and Early Childhood Programs: Addressing Barriers of Literacy, Culture, and Systems* (<http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/immigrant-parents-early-childhood-programs-barriers>)
- National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement to launch September 2014; see <http://www.maec.org/nafsce/NAFSCE-description.pdf>
- Henderson, A., Mapp, K., Johnson, V., & Davies, D. (2007). *Beyond the bake sale: The essential guide to family/school partnerships*. New York: The New Press.