

Chapter 1 : Power Up Your Parent-Teacher Communication | Common Sense Education

English language learners (ELLs) benefit just as much from their parents' involvement in their education as other students. Some Hispanic parents may feel apprehensive about getting involved because of their limited English skills, lack of familiarity with mainstream culture and the public school system in the United States, and other reasons.

Regardless of family income or background, students with engaged parents are more likely to: Earn higher grades and test scores, and enroll in higher-level programs. Be promoted, pass their classes and earn credits. Have better social skills, show improved behavior and adapt well to school. Graduate and go on to postsecondary education. This statistic reminds us how critical it is to redouble efforts to ensure the success of all our students and to think creatively about ways to collaborate with all parents. For educators, engagement with parents of English language learners may look different than it does in traditional classroom settings because of perceptions around language and cultural differences. Adopt a growth mindset Rethinking your own mindset and the ways you view the circumstances of English language learners and their families is an important start. Their commitment is to growth, and growth takes plenty of time, effort and mutual support. Adopting a growth mindset is key to achieving this goal. Honor cultural differences When you get to know the parents of students and learn about and invite cultural diversity into your classroom, you send the powerful message to both students and their families that they are in a safe space in which their cultures are respected and valued. At the same time, however, cultural differences can pose challenges. Honor these differences and forge strong relationships with the families of English language learners by: Learning about the different cultural norms of your students. Directly communicating to parents your support for their children and respect for their cultures. Address that challenge to communicate effectively with parents by: Using straightforward language and avoiding jargon. Inviting native-language speakers to join discussions on grading, testing and report cards. Using community or school resources to support translation needs. Giving hands-on demos at back-to-school nights. Encouraging L1 reading in home settings to promote first language literacy and second language acquisition. Be creative about logistics Child care issues, transportation challenges and work schedules can all get in the way of arranging meetings with the parents of English language learners. A little flexibility and creativity will help in finding ways to connect with parents in person or virtually. Some ideas for solving logistical issues include: Planning ahead when possible. Meeting parents at their home or workplace. Engaging parents virtually through Skype, Twitter or WhatsApp. Arranging for child care at school events. It takes time and effort to nurture relationships with the families of English language learners. This post is part of a blog series on global education and equitable preparation in the classroom produced in partnership with VIF International Education. Join the conversation on Twitter using [gloaled](#). For more, check out [Global Education and Equitable Preparation](#) , and:

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Chapter 2 : A Guide for Engaging ELL Families: Twenty Strategies for School Leaders | ColorÃ-n Colorado

Engaging with the parents of ELL students, also known as English Language Learners, is vital to helping these pupils succeed. Parental involvement is the backbone of a child's education, and this is especially true of ELL students who are challenged by language barriers. These five suggestions.

Judie Haynes Hold a meeting for the parents of your English language learners to help them learn about your school. As ESL professionals we believe in acculturation, not assimilation. Although we advocate for our students and their parents, we also want them to do things our way. Parents of our English language learners must make some modifications to their own practices and perspectives in order to fit into our culture. This is especially true in elementary schools. An essential part of our role as advocates is to reach out to those parents. One way to do this is to hold an ESL parent meeting. What is involved in this kind of meeting? Here are some of the reasons to hold a meeting: This is all new and unknown to them. Reaching out to our ESL parents can accomplish this. First, letters should be sent to teachers asking them to explain the areas of difficulty they have when communicating with the parents. You also want to know what behaviors ELLs exhibit in class that teachers believe are particular to a population. Second, letters are sent to the parents of the ESL students. If you have someone who can translate this letter, maybe a parent volunteer or and aide, you should send the letter in both languages. You will also send a reminder letter the day before the meeting. For the meeting, you should have handouts in English and translations, if possible , of the gist you are going to cover so the parents have something to take back home with them, just like we do here because you know this works! Topics to cover Here are some of the topics to cover at a meeting. Include also the school nurse and your principal. It always gives greater weight and validity to your presentation if a principal or superintendent of schools speaks. You can also ask the community liaison from the police to explain traffic and other safety issues. You might want to stress that the police are trustworthy and are here to help us. After the presentation, which is supported with overheads, the parents are divided into groups, with a translator. This translator could be hired or could be a parent. Parents are given pen and paper so they can write their questions and concerns. The written responses are great feedback for you to share with other teachers. We are the cultural brokers, the facilitators between these families and our school community. To view the classroom activities, you must have Acrobat Reader intalled. Acrobat is a free application available from Adobe Systems.

Chapter 3 : Holding an Effective ESL Parent Meeting - Teachingcom

American schools are becoming more culturally and linguistically diverse. While many students quickly attain proficiency in English, there's often a language barrier when communicating with parents.

Some Hispanic parents may feel apprehensive about getting involved because of their limited English skills, lack of familiarity with mainstream culture and the public school system in the United States, and other reasons. Below are some ways to reach out to parents of ELLs and increase the likelihood of their participation. Use their preferred language This is an essential place to start. Without a common language, very little communication can take place. Here are some ways to build an ongoing relationship with parents by reaching out through their native language. Find a fully bilingual interpreter. Whether a school employee, parent liaison, family member, friend, or community member, this person can translate for parent-teacher conferences, back-to-school nights, PTA meetings, and regular communication. It is best to find an adult and not rely on the student as the translator, as this practice can disempower the parent. Translate the written communications that you send home. Find a way to send home personal notes and materials in Spanish. This will keep parents in the loop on issues such as report cards, school events, and homework. Try to offer complete translations in a straightforward Spanish that parents can understand. Learn some Spanish yourself. Even if it is just some common words and greetings, using Spanish with parents will make them feel welcome. For starters, here are a few common classroom words and phrases in Spanish. Put parents in touch with bilingual staff. Give parents a list of names and phone numbers of bilingual staff in the school and district who they can contact to deal with educational concerns. Also encourage them to reach out to other parents who are bilingual or monolingual so they can share experiences and help one another. Educate parents on the U. Make sure that they understand things like: Your school curriculum, standards, benchmarks, and materials Consider that in many Latin American countries, the curriculum is very centralized. There is often one set of books. Uniforms are usually required. And rules tend to be the same for all schools across an entire country. If your school receives federal funds, provide information on the No Child Left Behind requirements of schools and the rights of parents. Language programs Work in collaboration with your school social service worker or guidance counselor, and explain the different language program options that your school has, why they work the way they do, and why the chosen program may be most suitable for their children. If parents have doubts, discuss their options and invite them to visit and observe the class. Arrange home and community visits Visiting homes and communities is a way to establish a relationship with parents who are working during school and after-school hours or who may feel intimidated by the school setting. Before doing this, however, make sure that parents are receptive to the idea and that your school district and union allow home visits by teachers. It is often easier to resolve difficult issues face to face as opposed to over the telephone or through written communication. This way, you and the parents can anticipate problems and agree on how to solve them. When organizing home and community visits, try to: Arrange for an interpreter to be present. Welcome parents into your school Here are some ways to involve Hispanic parents at school: Host a Spanish-language back-to-school night Host an evening event at the beginning of the school year for Spanish-speaking parents. Make sure ahead of time that a good interpreter will be in attendance. Take this time to get to know them, communicate your expectations, and answer questions. Also find out the best way to maintain regular communication with each of these parents. Arrange for a "tour" of the school Within the first semester, organize a general school orientation session for parents of English language learners. With a bilingual facilitator, explain and answer any questions about things such as state standards, assessments, school expectations, language program options, etc. It would be helpful to actually walk parents around the school and introduce them to key people on staff. Some states, districts, and schools already do this. This video is also available on YouTube. Recruit volunteers If parents are willing to volunteer their time, find out what their interests and skills are. ELL parents may be able to help with a variety of activities, such as cooking food for

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school-wide holidays, telling stories, teaching a dance, teaching a craft, or making a presentation. Adult learning opportunities Immigrant families may be unaware of the opportunities available to them. Another way to reach out to parents is to make them aware of learning opportunities for themselves. If your school has not compiled a list of these resources, ask your school administrators to do so. They should call your school district, city, county, library, park and recreation center, community college, and community-based organizations. Be sure to verify that families are eligible to receive the services offered regardless of immigration status. To be most effective, this list should be made available in Spanish and English and updated regularly. Back to Top References Adapted from: Designing and implementing two-way bilingual programs. A step-by step guide for administrators, teachers and parents. For commercial use, please contact info colorincolorado.

Chapter 4 : 4 Parent Engagement Strategies for English Language Learners

BACKGROUND Over the course of four months, interviews were conducted with parents, English Language Development (ELD) teachers and special-ists, principals, counselors, and administrators from the Beaverton.

Creating a Plan Imagine that a new immigrant family has moved into the neighborhood your school serves. What services does your school and district offer that would make this family feel welcome? What programs do you have that will challenge their children? What aspects are you still working on to make your district more appealing for this family? Numerous school leaders around the country are serving districts with new English language learner ELL populations and are, as Buffalo principal Kevin Eberle puts it, "flying the plane while building it. As a school leader, you are in a unique position to make ELL success a priority; to create a culture of respect for ELLs and their families; to allocate resources – even if limited – on behalf of ELLs; to mobilize and empower your staff to become teacher leaders; to encourage the staff to keep trying creative approaches until they find what works; and to lead the community in creating a school-wide action plan for engaging ELL families. And once you do find what works, you will feel as though you have won the lottery. Engaged ELL parents bring a level of dedication and wisdom regarding their children to the school community that will take your breath away. The most important thing is to start with an open mind and to keep reminding yourself to think outside the box. Here are some big ideas to get you started. A list of specific strategies related to each idea is available in the accompanying document, Engaging ELL Families: Questions for Reflection and Strategy Checklist. A note on "parent engagement" In their book Building Parent Engagement in Schools, Larry Ferlazzo and Lorie Hammond explore a distinction between parent engagement and parent involvement. Parent involvement, as they define it, is a top-down model: School staff and public institutions might feel they know what the problems are and how to fix them, and determine the criteria to use in evaluating success. More parent energy drives the efforts" 6. Many of the strategies listed below complement this model and offer ways in which parents can take the lead in school-wide activities. Learn about your ELL population Learning about ELL students and families provides an important foundation on which to build everything else you do at the school. This kind of background may even help avoid serious discipline situations, as described by Dr. Cynthia Lundgren in the " Understanding Student Background " clip of her video interview for administrators. The school district may also have some resources in place, and local community organizations may be able provide essential background information as well as a network of interpreters. You may want to include some of these questions in the home language survey or a very basic questionnaire that the parents fill out with the help of an interpreter. Remember that your ELL population is not homogenous. Even families from the same country may have vastly different educational and socioeconomic backgrounds. Integrate cultural traditions of your ELL families throughout the school community Becoming familiar with and including the cultural tradition of your ELL families within the larger school community not only enhances your ability to create a welcoming and respectful school environment – it has practical considerations as well: Staff may be uncomfortable discussing these topics at first, and may even resent the changes happening around them, but having an open dialogue about the " cultural shifts " that are taking place as Dr. Lundgren describes them will make it easier for everyone to help create a more positive and accepting environment. Create a welcoming environment for families A welcoming school environment can make a tremendous difference for all families and especially for ELL families. At Options at Lincoln School, in Olympia, WA, for example, the entire school is there to greet you in the front hallway – the school has posted photos of all of its the families in the school entryway Houk, 9. Other things you might try include: Creating a special area for families to gather such as an extra classroom or lounge Encouraging teachers to create a welcoming classroom environment Another way to think of this is by keeping your ELLs visible. Entering a friendly, vibrant atmosphere lets families know that the school is an integral part of the community and that they and more importantly, their children are valued members of that community Houk,

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This can be especially important for immigrant families who may be intimidated by the formal school environment and the English language needed to understand it. Make a personal connection with families. Getting to know ELL families helps build an important relationship based on trust, which in turn can pave the way to student success. This approach is most effective when the communication is personal and face-to-face.

Mori, 40, Alford In Guatemala we all knew the teachers and the teachers knew the parents We do not know anyone here nor does anyone know us we would have liked to tell Mrs. Gibbons how much we value education" Amaya, In this case, the parent finally did meet Mrs. Gibbons and a good relationship developed over time " but imagine the additional benefit for Lupe had the meeting taken place earlier in the year! One can also imagine that Mrs. A better life 5. Do you see those languages as a barrier or an asset? Do you see native language literacy and instruction as a crutch or a tool? What can you do to navigate this tricky terrain? Encourage native language use at home: Understandably, many teachers still feel that the best way to help ELLs is to forbid native language use in the classroom. The best way to address these concerns and questions is through good professional development with an expert. Not only will the staff learn strategies that will help them and their students " it will give them the information they need to answer parents questions about this topic with confidence as well! Communicating Important Information 6. Create a good translation process: Houk underscores the importance of establishing two-way communication on both sides, as well as the necessity for a translation process that is "formal, steady, and reliable. She also underscores the importance of written and oral options as alternatives for families of varying educational backgrounds. Houk offers a number of strategies for creating a strong communication framework, detailed in the checklist. Encourage phone calls home: Offer staff training on how to communicate in simplified English on the phone when necessary. It is possible for each person to call home and try to communicate, whether by speaking with someone about the basics, leaving a message, or leaving a number and getting a call back from an English-speaking relative. Make the enrollment process manageable for ELL parents Enrolling children in school is a complicated process for any family. There are forms to be filled out, decisions to be made, policies to read, programs to learn about, and questions to be answered. For ELL families, a number of other obstacles arise: There are, however, a number of ways to approach the enrollment process for ELL families. Bilingual staff " When possible, bilingual staff in the main office who are available to help families any time they come in. Enrollment night " Schedule an "enrollment night" in which families can learn about the enrollment process and school policies with interpreters on hand. School liaisons " Assign each family a school contact who speaks their language and guides them through the enrollment process Houk, Your ELL families may be coming from entirely different school systems, or from a situation without any schooling. Young-Chan Han of the Maryland Department of Education discusses a number of lessons learned from immigrant families that she has worked with over the years, including the family who thought they could take the school bus with their child, or the child who stood outside in the cold for an hour on the morning of his first day of school before a janitor let him into the school " on the morning of a snow delay. Make the enrollment process accessible all year long Keep in mind that schools must be prepared to enroll ELLs throughout the school year. Many schools are prepared to register and enroll new students only at the beginning of the school year, and anyone who enrolls after that gets a short-cut "fill and drill," especially if no interpreters are available. Administrative assistants or ELL teachers may be pulled from their regular duties to translate and help families fill out forms; this is not an acceptable solution. Instead, consider ways that your school can establish an on-going, welcoming enrollment process for ELLs throughout the year by soliciting ideas from those who are most involved in the enrollment and intake process: Provide opportunities for parents to learn more about important topics For parents who are not familiar with the U. Consider offering parent workshops that inform families about the U. This is another area in which enlisting other staff members, parent volunteers, or community members to help run some parent workshops could prove to be effective! This is also a good time to remind parents about the benefits of reading and telling stories in their native language, as well as all of the great homework resources at the public library! Look for ways that ELL parents can participate and volunteer As

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you start to develop a relationship with parents, there are a number of ways to help it grow. The parents follow along with their children and they learn about more about read-alouds and how to interact with text. This helps them work together at home to increase reading comprehension. Encourage parents to volunteer in the classroom, main office, lunchroom, or library; during parent or school events; or in a student club or after-school program Meyer, Look for ways to bring ELL and non-ELL families together through student performances, a "student cultures" night, storytelling, workshops, and exhibits Meyer, Your families might just realize that they have more in common than you " and they " originally thought! Think outside the box about parent involvement One of the most important steps in engaging ELL parents is to realize that their experiences may in fact look very different than what we are used too Houk, Some excellent examples of these different perspectives are included in Understanding Latino Parental Involvement in Education: Deep respect for teachers: The teachers were disappointed when few parents had attended the meeting, but on garden day, eighty family members arrived with hoes and dug up the garden in a single day. We do gardens" Ferlazzo, Meeting families in other settings such as community centers or churches can provide an informal way to start building a relationship, especially if ELL parents feel shy or nervous about going to the school. In addition, going into the community indicates a strong level of commitment on the part of the school to the families Alford, Another alternative may be to plan parent or family events around the schedules of the families, especially if they are working a couple of jobs or shifts. In Philadelphia, for example, an early childhood center held a parent meeting in the afternoon for parents who worked in the food service industry in the evening, and of the many parents that came, most were dads! Parent Leadership and Community Partnerships Encourage ELL parents to take on leadership roles While ELL parents may be underrepresented in leadership roles, some guidance and encouragement from school leaders can go a long way in building their confidence to get more involved. It may be something small, such as soliciting ideas for school events, or it may be something bigger such as asking them to serve on a parent advisory council or speaking at a school board meeting Meyers, One district has started a program called "Bridge Parents," in which one or two parents are enlisted from each language group to serve as leaders in engaging other parents around school Hori, When engaging parents, be sure to have qualified interpreters available so that parents can feel comfortable communicating their ideas and to avoid negative encounters such as that faced by a gentleman speaking in front of a recent legislative hearing in Texas. Look for ways to make parent leadership more sustainable Once you have a few bilingual leaders, brainstorm with your leaders about ways that the school can continue to recruit and mentor new bilingual parents. Leadership can be lost easily as students get older and transition to new schools. The mentorship piece is essential because, in these roles, you are asking bilingual parents to step up and speak up and make decisions in a cultural environment they may not fully understand " and the cycle of building trust and respect must begin again. Consider offering local organizations free space in your school as a way to encourage them to bring their services closer to your families Rodriguez, 45 , and ask your families which organizations they think would make good partners for the school community. Collaborate with the district:

Chapter 5 : How to Reach Out to Parents of ELLs | ColorÃ-n Colorado

Communicating Effectively with Parents of ELLs Ms. Ramon, a 3rd grade teacher, was concerned about the progress of one of her ELLs, Yuki, so she held a conference with Yuki's parents in October. Yuki had moved to the United States from Japan 18 months ago, and although she was able to complete some of her science and social studies work, she.

Chapter 6 : Teaching English Language Learners Across the Content Areas

Conference time is coming up and that gnawing worry about how you can effectively communicate with parents of your English Language Learner (ELL) students may be taking hold.

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Chapter 7 : Communication Tips for Working with Non-Verbal and ELL Students

Parent Benefits. Positive parent-school communications benefit parents. The manner in which schools communicate and interact with parents affects the extent and quality of parents' home involvement with their children's learning.

Chapter 8 : Communicating Effectively with Parents of ELLs

Administrators: ELL Parent Outreach Home Visits: Getting to Know Families' Homes and Neighborhoods ColorÃn Colorado is a national multimedia project that offers a wealth of bilingual, research-based information, activities, and advice for educators and families of English language learners (ELLs).