Aren’t You on the Parent Listserv?

Equitable Family Involvement in Dual-Language Programs
Introductions

- Presenter intro.

- Participant intros: Share your name and your connection to education. If you are a teacher, share what grade level(s) and language(s).
Discussion Questions (Groups of 3)

What are the benefits of parent involvement to our students?

What are the specific benefits in a dual-language program?

*Share Out*
Think-Pair-Share

Find someone with the same shape you have.

Who are your families?
  ■ Home language
  ■ Socio-economic status
  ■ Immigration stories
  ■ Family composition
Think-Pair-Share

Find someone with the same color you have.

What are the avenues that they have for participation?

- In-class volunteers
- Room parents
- Field trip chaperones
- PTA or other all-school parent groups
- Parent meetings
- Back to school night/open house
- Events and celebrations
Think-Pair-Share

If you have a dot, find someone else with a dot. If you have no dot, find someone else with no dot.

How do you communicate with your parents?

- Notes home
- Emails
- Calls home
- Texts
- Sign up sheets
- Home visits
Think-Pair-Share

Find someone with the **same shape** you have.

Who is very involved in your classroom? What do you feel is going well in terms of parent participation? (Same shape)
Think-Pair-Share

Find someone with the same color you have.

What parents or groups of parents would you like to involve more?
“When I visited my current school in San Francisco to do a demo lesson in a dual-immersion classroom, I was excited by the diversity that I saw. The bilingual Oakland school I had worked in before had been anything but diverse, either racially or socio-economically—98 percent of the students identified as Latina/o, 95 percent were eligible for free or reduced lunch, and about 86 percent were classified as English language learners. Everywhere it seemed that segregation in public schools was becoming more entrenched. Yet here I was, awkwardly clutching my bag of demo lesson materials, facing a sea of kindergarten faces that seemed to buck this trend. There were Latina/o students, African American students, white students, all chattering away in Spanish. I was elated. Could I have found a place where the interests and needs of many different populations converged—a public school that worked for everyone?”
“Then, in September, after starting my new job as a kindergarten teacher, I went to a PTA meeting. The parents at the meeting were excited to be there and dedicated to making the school a place that would serve their children. They were also almost entirely white, and—as I would learn as I got to know parents personally in our small school community—almost entirely middle- or upper-middle-class native English speakers. On paper, our school was about 50 percent Latina/o and 20 percent African American. Yet, in that first PTA meeting, with about 40 people in attendance, I saw only a handful of Latina/o parents. There were no African American families present. Later in the year, one African American family did frequently attend, but the number of Latina/o parents who came and used the interpretation services quickly dropped to zero. In addition, most of the parents involved came from the Spanish immersion track. The general education track, composed largely of students of color, was essentially unrepresented...”
“As I watched the PTA set fundraising goals, choose art enrichment programs, fund teaching positions, allocate money for books, determine what technology would be purchased, and select what types of paraprofessionals to hire, I became more and more concerned about whose voices were being heard and whose children were being advocated for.

I quickly began to see these inequities play out in my own classroom. The three mothers who signed up to be room parents were middle-class professionals, all white native English speakers. They all knew each other because their children had gone to the same bilingual preschool. The majority of families at Back to School Night were also white and English speaking. In the first two weeks, emails were sent, Google docs created, and listservs were joined, all in English. One half of the classroom parent community got to work, humming right along on rails that missed the other half by miles.”
First Steps

- All communication must be bilingual, and Spanish always comes first. Consider additional home languages.
- Important communication can’t just be through email.
- Sign-up opportunities have to be fair.
- Teacher/parent communication needs to fit the family.
- Determine which families require more concerted effort and target them specifically.
- Consider home visits if this isn’t already part of your practice.
Next Steps

- Room parents or other parent leaders must reflect cultural and linguistic diversity.
- Bring parents into the classroom as much as possible, especially when they can be language models and teach about their culture/traditions.
- Talk to parents about equity and involvement in the classroom/school.
- Look at whole school dynamics and talk with administrators.
Sharing Successes in Triads

In groups of three, participants will share some of their successes at their school. What strategies are already in place that are working to involve more parents? What are the positive results you’ve seen with your students and with the school community?
Action Plans

(Your partner scribes)

- **Big picture**: What overarching problems do you see in your classroom/school with parent participation?

- **Focus**: Specify a parent/family or a group of families that you’d like to involve more.

- **What is your goal for involving them?**

- **What are three strategies you could use to facilitate that goal?**

- **When can you begin to implement these strategies?**
Share Out
“It’s not easy, but I think that substantive change is possible if we begin to talk about these issues instead of leaving them unexplored. At the beginning of the year, a friend of mine who is also a public school parent reminded me that, especially in elementary school, teachers train parents what to expect when it comes to how they should and should not be involved in their children’s schools. Those lessons shape how parents interact with future teachers and future school communities. This serves as a constant reminder to me that we are always communicating, through the phrasing of every note home, through the positioning of every sign-up sheet. We are communicating about who we expect to be involved and how. We are either opening up dialogues with parents or closing them off. And all of those decisions, both the small ones and the large ones, reach beyond our classrooms. If we want equitable schools, we need to be as intentional about how we involve parents as we are about how we educate their children.”
Thanks for coming!

If you have any questions or want to talk more about these themes, email me at:

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