

Teacher Capacity Building for Meaningful Family Partnerships: Let's Share Knowledge

IEL National Family and Community Engagement Conference
June 2016 | Pittsburgh, PA

Presenters

Collaborative team supported by USDE's Investing in Innovation (i3) Fund

Jessie B. Lavorgna, School, Family, & Community Partnership Specialist, Education Development Center, Inc. jlavorgna@edc.org

Joanna Geller, Senior Research Associate, Annenberg Institute for School Reform, joanna_geller@brown.edu

Eden Segal, Research Associate, Westat, edensegal@westat.com

Definitions & References

Culture

- Culture is often described as the beliefs and practices of a certain group of people.
- According to Gonzalez-Mena (2008), "culture is extremely complex, and people of the same culture are quite different, depending on their individuality, their family, their gender, age, race, ethnicity, abilities, religion, economic level, social status, where they live and where they came from, sexual orientation, education level, and even appearance, size, and shape!" (p. 5)
- Instead of interpreting culture as the beliefs and practices of a certain group of people, it may be more helpful to think of culture as the lens through which people see the based on their backgrounds and experiences.

Cultural Transmission

- "The transmission of preferences, beliefs, and norms of behavior which is the result of social interactions across and within generations is called cultural transmission." (Bisin, 2008)
- Cultural Transmission is the process of learning new information through socializing and engaging with those around you.
- One cannot isolate oneself from one's home, community, and/or cultural settings (i.e. that which one has learned through cultural transmissions), these influences ought to be understood when examining one's lens and how one's lens may be different than another person's.

Culturally Responsive Family Engagement Approach

- According to Grant and Ray (2016), the culturally responsive family engagement "approach involves practices that respect and acknowledge the cultural uniqueness, life experiences, and viewpoints of classroom families and draw on those experiences to enrich and energize the classroom curriculum and teaching activities, leading to respectful partnerships with students' families" (p. 5).

References

- Bisin, A., & Verdier, T. (2008). Cultural Transmission. In *The New Palgrave Dictionary of Economics*. Retrieved March 31, 2016, from http://www.dictionaryofeconomics.com/article?id=pde2008_C000549
- Caspe, M., Lopez, M. N., Chu, A., & Weiss, H.B. (2011). *UPDATE: New skills for new schools*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard College. Retrieved from <http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/update-new-skills-for-new-schools>.
- Epstein, J. L., & Sanders, M. G. (2006). Prospects for change: Preparing educators for school, family, and community partnerships. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 81, 81-120.
- Geller, J. (2015). *Re-imagining school communities: An exploration of the factors influencing teachers' trust in parents*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Retrieved from <http://etd.library.vanderbilt.edu/available/etd-11162014-143405/unrestricted/FinalDissertationGeller.pdf>
- Gonzalez-Mena, J. (2008) *Diversity in early care and education: Honoring differences* (5th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Grant, K. B., & Ray, J. (2016). *Home, school, and community collaboration: Culturally responsive family engagement* (Third ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- López, M. E. (2005). Intermediary organizations as capacity builders in family educational involvement. *Urban Education*, 40(1), 78-105
- SEDL. (2013). *Partners in education: A dual capacity-building framework for family-school partnerships*. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/documents/family-community/partnerseducation.pdf>
- Shartrand, A. M., Weiss, H. B., Kreider, H. M., & Lopez, M. E. (1997). *New skills for new schools: Preparing teachers in family involvement*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard College. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED414254.pdf>.

Who am I: Who are you?

Self Awareness and Bridge Building Tool

In order to build bridges to cultures that differ from our own, we must first know who we are. You only know what you know, which is to say: you will only ever know your own experiences and only deeply know those upon which you reflect. By examining that which you know, it allows you to recognize that which you don't know (the experiences of others, in this case).

This self-awareness and bridge building tool is simple. First, it acts as a tool for self-reflection and, then, as an entry point into what are deep, often difficult conversations. We cannot gain a fuller understanding of one another if we keep our conversations superficial. Let's dive deep.

Step 1: Who am I? Building self-awareness

Enculturation is the process by which people learn the requirements of their surrounding culture and acquire values and behaviors appropriate or necessary in that culture. How was I enculturated?

Begin your self-awareness: While growing up...

- ... who did I live with?
- ... what is my racial identity?
- ... what was my socioeconomic status?
- ... where did I grow up – in an urban, suburban, or rural area?
- ... was I raised with a particular religion?
- ... was I raised with conservative, liberal, or other values?

Expand your self-awareness: Reflect on your answers to the above questions. How do I think these things affected...

- ... me in school?
- ... me outside of school?
- ... how my teachers interacted with me?
- ... how my teachers and parents/guardians interacted with one another?
- ... how my parents/guardians were involved with my academic/school life?

Step 2: Who are you? Building bridges

After answering and reflecting on the questions in Step 1, share your findings with a colleague, who has also completed Step 1. Approach this step with two things in mind: You are here to listen and to share your story.

Remember, you only know what you know. Your experiences are yours and no one else's. By sharing, we build understanding. Be comfortable with being uncomfortable.

Some questions you may want to explore with your colleague:

How are my experiences similar to yours? How are my experiences different from yours?

While growing up, what are the messages that you received at home and at school about those who were "different"? Have your views changed considerably since then? Why or why not?

Recall an experience in which your own difference put you in an uncomfortable position with the people around you. How were you different? How has this experience affect you?

How do your memories of your differences and the differences of others affect you today? How do they (or might they) affect how you interact with colleagues, students, and students' families?

What of these experiences have you chosen not to share in a professional context before? Why?

Step 3: Dive deeper – Extension ideas

Step 1 covers only a small portion of one's culture. Dive deeper. Follow the same format of self-reflection, followed by sharing, as you consider the following topics:

Family	Friends
Gender	Religion
Racial Identity	Schooling
Ethnicity	Geography
Nationality	Socioeconomic Status
Age	Political Views
Sexual Orientation	Social Life
Language	Others?

Rules to Consider - "ROPES": The Ground Rules

Always remember to acknowledge that you are examining issues that make us think deeply and respond honestly. Agree on ground rules before entering into these conversations with your colleagues. Suggested ground rules below:

R : Respect/Risk

Treat one another with respect, even if you disagree. No putdowns.

One person speaks at a time. Listen carefully to one another without interruptions.

O : Openness/Ouch

Speak honestly. The most respectful thing we can do is to be real. Be willing to say what you really think about each topic. If you hold back, we cannot learn from one another.

If something offends you, it is your responsibility to say "Ouch." Let the speaker finish, and then express how you were hurt or angered and why.

P : Participation/Pass

Speak briefly, so everyone has a chance to participate. Stay on topic.

E : Education/Escuchar (Spanish: to listen)

Everyone has come to the table to learn, grow, and share.

S : Sensitivity/Safety

Use "I" Statements. Speak only for yourself, rather than as a representative for any group. Remember we can only share our personal experiences.

Confidentiality is important. Speak about what is happening, not who said it.