

## Lesson Plan: Family Engagement

This set of activities is designed to introduce teachers to the work of regularly engaging with families. It could be integrated into courses on elementary or early literacy methods or teaching Multilingual Learners (MLs), or used for professional development.

In this two-hour sequence of activities, teachers:

- Reflect on the diversity within a classroom to help identify ways to create partnerships and support children's learning with families.
  - Observe a video of a teacher-parent interview to analyze and engage in a shared family engagement experience.
- Review and collect specific information that you might choose to include in conversations to inform and connect with family members.

In an optional extension activity, teachers participate in a gallery walk of resources related to family engagement on the [Multilingual Learning Toolkit](#), and share learnings with colleagues.

<p><b>Learning Goals</b></p>	<p>Teachers will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand strategies for engaging with families of MLs.</li> <li>• Determine types of information to gather from and share with families.</li> <li>• Practice crafting questions to ask families.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Pre-Work</b></p>	<p>Before the session, teachers can build background knowledge about engaging with families by reading "<a href="#">Tip Sheet: Communication with Parents</a>" from Sobrato Early Academic Language (SEAL).</p>
<p><b>Materials</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Copies of the <a href="#">Note Catcher</a> (see template below) and the "<a href="#">Checklist: Diversity of Experiences</a>"</li> <li>• Language Learning Project's "<a href="#">Family Languages and Interests Interview</a>" video</li> <li>• Copies of "<a href="#">Observation Form: Family Languages and Interests Interview</a>" (see template below)</li> </ul>

## Suggested Activities

Time & Activity	Notes
<p><b>Introduction to Engaging with Families</b></p> <p><b>(15 mins)</b></p>	<p>Tell teachers: Today's session will focus on engaging with families of Multilingual Learners (MLs).</p> <p>Remind teachers that they have been introduced to engaging with families via the "<a href="#">Tip Sheet: Communication with Parents</a>". To begin discussion and further activate teachers' prior knowledge about the topic, distribute the attached <a href="#">Note Catcher</a>, and invite teachers to work in pairs to generate responses to the prompts. Let teachers know that they'll be using the Note Catcher to capture learnings throughout today's session (so they should leave room for notes).</p> <p>Then, give teachers a brief introduction to the practice of engaging with families, highlighting key points from the <a href="#">Starter Guide</a> and inviting teachers to add to their Note Catcher as they go. (If helpful, teachers can reference the paragraph following "How can I welcome and engage families as active partners in their child's learning?" on the <a href="#">Multilingual Learning Toolkit</a>.) Suggested points to highlight:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Families have a wealth of information to share about their language, culture, home and community life, and child.</li> <li>• Frequent and consistent home-school communication supports positive outcomes for children from culturally- and linguistically-diverse backgrounds.</li> <li>• Families play a critical role in the support of home language development and the cultural identity of their child.</li> <li>• Teachers can help families understand the advantages of bilingualism and suggest learning activities that families can do with their child at home.</li> <li>• By partnering with families through consistent two-way communication, teachers and families share information and learn from each other.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Checklist Reflection: Diversity of Experiences</b></p> <p><b>(15 mins)</b></p>	<p>Tell teachers: Knowing families' personal, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds helps teachers engage with families and design lessons and classroom environments that reflect students' diverse identities and abilities.</p> <p>Think about the classroom of children with whom you are familiar or teaching right now. What do you already know about the diversity within the classroom? What more might you want to know about them?</p> <p>Pass out the "<a href="#">Checklist: Diversity of Experiences</a>" from SEAL and allow teachers to reflect and take some quick notes.</p> <p>Ask teachers to turn and talk: Which portions of the checklist were easy/difficult to fill out? What family-based knowledge (often referred to as funds of knowledge) are already apparent across the familial groups in your classroom? Why does gathering this type of information matter in the teaching and learning of children?</p> <p>Debrief information shared during the turn and talk.</p>

	<p>Transition by saying: This activity has hopefully demonstrated that there is always more information to learn about and gather from families. Because they possess tremendous expertise about their own children, partnering with families is a powerful practice.</p> <p>(Note: If working with pre-service teachers that are not in classrooms or working with children, pass out the checklist as an example tool which helps teachers determine information to be gathered from students and families. Ask them to turn and talk about the benefits of using a checklist and to comment on how they can partner with families to gather this type of information in the future.)</p>
<p><b>Video: Family Languages and Interests Interview</b></p> <p><b>(30 mins)</b></p>	<p>Tell teachers: We are now going to experience one way to engage with families—through a brief teacher-parent interview. You will see a video of a PreK teacher interviewing the mother of a student. You will take observation notes with a partner. Pass out the "<a href="#">Observation Form: Family Languages and Interests Interview.</a>"</p> <p>As we watch the 11 minute video:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Partner A will carefully listen to and observe the teacher.</b> Take notes on the left side of the form. Note the productive questions, comments, and other verbal and non-verbal actions the teacher makes to connect and engage with the child’s mother.</li> <li>• <b>Partner B will carefully listen to and observe the mother.</b> Take notes on the right side of the form. Note the meaningful information that the teacher learns about the child and her family during the interview.</li> </ul> <p>Show the video from Language Learning Project, "<a href="#">Family Languages and Interests Interview.</a>" Note: If working in a Spanish dual language context, this same activity can be done using the video, "<a href="#">Family Languages and Interests Interview (Spanish).</a>" When the video is over, ask pairs to review their notes in preparation to share.</p> <p>Tell them:</p> <p>Partner A, you will share with your partner the best questions, comments, or productive actions that the teacher made during the video. Consider what you think went well in the interview and/or any additional questions you might have asked as the teacher.</p> <p>Partner B, you will share with your partner everything that you learned about the child and her family. Consider what information is most helpful and/or what information is still unknown that you would want to determine in the future.</p> <p>Partners, now turn and talk. The video example was with a PreK teacher. If you are an elementary teacher, feel free to discuss how you might adapt the interview to better fit the age level of the students with whom you work.</p> <p>Elicit responses from the whole group. Summarize key takeaways from the interview observation experience.</p>

	<p>Note that this type of one-on-one interview can take time, but spread out over an academic year, the teacher can typically meet with the family of each student.</p> <p>Optional Extension (10 min): Some teachers may comment that they cannot communicate with parents that speak languages other than English. You may choose to brainstorm as a group what teachers can do, or what resources exist in your setting to support teachers to communicate better with non-English-speaking families. Two resources that are helpful to support this conversation are: "<a href="#">6 Ways Educators Can Overcome Language Barriers with Parents</a>" from Baylor University, or "<a href="#">Tips for Communicating with Non-English-Speaking Parents</a>" from EdWeek.</p>
<p><b>Practice: Developing a Repertoire of Questions to Ask of Families</b> <b>(15 mins)</b></p>	<p>Tell teachers: The bottom section of the "<a href="#">Observation Form: Family Languages and Interests Interview</a>" provides you space to craft questions you would like to ask of families in the future.</p> <p>You used the "<a href="#">Checklist: Diversity of Experiences</a>" to determine the type of information that is valuable to know about families. You identified questions in the video that you may have liked or decided were productive. Use what you noticed during these two experiences to now write 3-5 questions that you can build into your repertoire of questions to ask of families.</p> <p>Turn and Talk: Practice asking these questions with a partner and/or offer feedback about the likely information it will surface, and the value of learning that information for the teaching and learning of children.</p>
<p><b>Jigsaw: Analyzing Strategies in Action</b> <b>(30 mins)</b></p>	<p>Transition by saying: We have spent time considering how the teacher can gather information from families. Family engagement is described as consistent two-way communication. Another key part of family engagement is to share information with families about language and learning goals, and to introduce activities which can be done at home to support those goals. Families can also be invited into the classroom as language experts and partners in learning. You already read about some ideas in the "<a href="#">Tip Sheet: Communication with Parents</a>" from SEAL. Now you will examine more about what these strategies look like in action in particular teachers' classrooms.</p> <p>Break the class into trios and assign each group to read and discuss one of the "Strategies in Action": PreK-TK, K-1, or 2-3 (or choose just the ones that best fit the focus of your session).</p> <p>Within groups, ask each group to identify a:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reader—to read the strategy out loud to the group</li> <li>• Facilitator—to ask the discussion questions</li> <li>• Recorder/reporter—to share out highlights from the group's discussion at the end</li> </ul> <p>Give groups about 15 minutes to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read their assigned text</li> <li>• Have a discussion using the included questions as prompts</li> <li>• Add any new strategies they learned to their <a href="#">Note Catcher</a></li> </ul>

	<p>Then, invite groups to share out, charting responses on the board. Suggested prompt for share out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What strategies did the teacher you read about use to intentionally engage with families in two-way communication?</li> <li>• (You have the option to create a T-chart to track what the teacher can <b>gather</b> from families and what the teacher can <b>share</b> with families, similar to the bottom portion of the Note Catcher.)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Optional Extension: Resource Gallery Walk</b> <b>(60 mins)</b></p>	<p>If you have time, engage teachers in a <a href="#">Resource Walk</a> to give them a chance to explore resources on the Multilingual Learning Toolkit focused on family engagement.</p>
<p><b>Conclusion</b> <b>(15 mins)</b></p>	<p>Invite teachers to reflect on and consolidate their learning by engaging in a 10 minute quick write in response to the following prompt, using their <a href="#">Note Catcher</a> as reference:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Why is it important for me to engage with families? What are three strategies I can try out this month?</i></li> <li>• <i>What are some strategies that I should continue doing to engage with families?</i></li> </ul> <p>Then summarize key learnings about family engagement and close the session. Key learnings to highlight might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Families have a wealth of information to share about their language, culture, home life, and child.</li> <li>• Frequent and consistent home-school communication supports positive outcomes for children from culturally- and linguistically-diverse backgrounds.</li> <li>• Families play a critical role in the support of home language development and the cultural identity of their child.</li> <li>• Teachers can help families understand the advantages of bilingualism and suggest learning activities that families can do with their child at home.</li> <li>• By partnering with families through two-way consistent communication, teachers and families share information and learn from each other.</li> </ul>

## Note Catcher

How does engagement with families support the teaching and learning of Multilingual Learners?

What strategies do teachers use to engage with families of Multilingual Learners?

Family engagement is described as consistent two-way communication:

What are examples of how the teacher can gather valuable information from families, and tap their expertise and family-based knowledge?

What are examples of valuable information that a teacher can share with families to highlight the brilliance of their child and help them best navigate school environments?

## Observation Form: Family Languages and Interests Interview

### Partner A: Eyes on the Teacher

Note the productive questions, comments, and other verbal and non-verbal actions the teacher makes to connect and engage with the child's mother. Try to write down exactly what the teacher says.

### Partner B: Eyes on the Mother

Note the meaningful information that is learned about the child and her family during the interview. Try to write down exactly what the mother says.

### Questions to ask families in the future:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.