

## Strategies in Action: Family Engagement

**Author:** Dr. Laurie Olsen | **Contributors:** Jennifer Diehl, Heather Skibbins | **Grade level:** K–1

**Kindergarten: English-instructed class with numerous Multilingual Learners who have a variety of home language and cultural backgrounds.**

### Setting:

The door to Mr. Cohen's Kindergarten class says "Welcome" in 12 languages—all of the languages spoken by families in his class. But today, as parents drop off their children, they do not enter the classroom door but head to the school library where two parents who have completed a previous class are holding a short 15-minute strategy workshop on interactive read-alouds. This is one of the [once-a-month strategy workshops](#) for parents that lead to parents coming to the classroom and working with a small group of children to do a literacy activity or a math game in their home language. A bilingual Farsi-English speaking parent (a regular volunteer in the classroom) sits down with the Farsi speaking parent. Similar groupings of Vietnamese-speaking parents and Spanish-speaking parents gather around tables. All follow the same basic format of explaining (in the parent's language) how important interaction is while reading books; reviewing various types of questions to elicit children's thoughts and predictions in response to the book; and, thinking about where to pause in a story for children to make connections. The short workshop ends with each parent selecting one of the books in their home language that the school librarian has collected for them. And then it is time to join the class.

### Lesson:

#### Parent volunteers lead interactive read-alouds in their home languages

The Kindergarten children can barely contain their excitement as they see the parent volunteers enter the classroom. As the parents fan out across the room and select a table or comfortable corner of the room where they will read their books, the teacher, Mr. Cohen, allows children to self-select which small group to join. The children whose parents are volunteering always rush to their parents, but it no longer surprises Mr. Cohen that, while most children gravitate to the parent who is reading in their home language, some children elect to join a group reading aloud in a language they don't speak. The reasons might vary (attracted by the book, to be with a friend, curious about the language, wanting to be close to that adult)—but all lead to engagement with books while the parent volunteers get the opportunity to practice their newly-learned interactive read-aloud strategies.

For the next half hour, the classroom is abuzz as books are being read in three different languages. Children press close to the parents to see the pictures and breathe in the warmth of having family in the classroom. They are excitedly engaged in responding to the prompts, predicting what will happen next, and reacting to the plights and victories of the characters in the stories. They are learning to enjoy time spent with books.

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## Reflection questions

1. What is the benefit for all the learners in Mr. Cohen's class—not just the Multilingual Learners—when they interact with diverse members of the school's community, and read text in many different languages? How might Mr. Cohen have facilitated communication about the Interactive Read Aloud workshop with multilingual families who may not speak English?
2. If you were a teacher in Mr. Cohen's school, what are some other activities you'd suggest they implement to continue fostering home-school connections?
3. What is one takeaway that you can apply to your own practice of welcoming and engaging multilingual families?