

# Linking Home, School, and Community for Families of English Language Learners

## Why go this route?

- Because diverse cultural backgrounds of families demand new strategies to encourage parental involvement.
- Because meaningful parental involvement can enhance student achievement.
- Because traditional parents who are involved may not represent the views and needs of linguistically and culturally diverse parents.
- Because changing demographics demand that educators alter preconceived notions about the lack of involvement of bilingual families.

## You'll know you've arrived when...

- Linguistically and culturally diverse parents and community members are involved in the design and implementation of school improvement efforts.
- Student expectations are clearly defined and accessible to the multilingual, multicultural parent body.
- Communication with families is strong and the school has strategies for communicating across languages and cultures.
- The school has strategies for enhancing learning in the homes of English Language Learners (ELLs) that do not assume or rely upon parents' English proficiency.

## Construction Zone

There has to be a genuine belief that regardless of language ability, educational attainment, or socio-economic status, all families have strengths and have a right to a quality educational experience.

The school leadership has a moral responsibility to bridge and close the language and cultural gap that exists between the home of ELLs and the school.



## It's about TIME

- Set aside meaningful time to meet regularly with the families of ELLs to discuss student achievement, literacy development, and appropriate school behaviors.
- Include time for staff to meet with parents to discuss student progress.




## Potential COSTS

- Costs will depend on the size of the school. Title I funds can be used to cover any financial costs associated with the parent workshops.
- Costs may include interpretation/ translation services.



## The Process

*A step-by-step guide to organize opportunities to communicate with and involve parents of English language learners in their schools.*

**NOTE:** Steps marked with a  are accompanied by one or more inserts, included in this packet.

**1 Do a needs assessment** of the school environment and responsiveness to the inclusion of bilingual families. (See INSERT for Step 1 for ideas.)

**2 Identify barriers that hinder communication and active participation** of bilingual families in all facets of the educational experience of their children. (See INSERTS A-C for Step 2.)

**3 Ensure that the School Improvement Plan incorporates a parental involvement component** that addresses the specific needs of bilingual families, what actions will be taken, and who will assume responsibility for implementation. (See INSERTS A – E for Step 3.)

This plan must address the following parental involvement topics:


- Family Literacy and Parenting Skills
- Vehicles to Communicate with Bilingual Families and the Community
- Bilingual Parent Informational Sessions
- Translation of all Documents
- Cultural Competence and Sensitivity Workshop
- Cultural Exchange School Supported Activities
- Bilingual Parent and Community Involvement in School Governance

**4 Create meaningful partnerships and be proactive** with local community based organizations and cultural association that can serve as support.

**5 Seek to hire personnel that culturally and linguistically can relate** to the families of ELLs.

**6 Evaluate the parental involvement component** throughout the school year; specifically the inclusion of bilingual parents in all facets of school activities. (See INSERTS A and B for Step 6 for ideas)

**7 Celebrate.** Ask parents for suggestions for the next year. Bring all parents together and build community!



## **Getting more mileage from increasing the involvement of families of ELLs**

How linking home, school, and community for families of English Language Learners benefits your school in regards to the following initiatives:

### ***No Child Left Behind (NCLB)***

- NCLB requires the involvement of families of ELLs in the writing of reform plans, in developing a school-parent compact, in identifying how parents of ELLs will be responsible to support their children's learning and in participating in decision-making about their children's education.
- Title III mandates that all parents of ELLs be notified of the type of services that will be rendered to their children during the academic year.
- The NCLB "Declaration of Rights for Parents of English Language Learners" outlines clear expectations for parents.

### ***Education YES!***

- Schools are required to report explicitly on their efforts to involve and engage parents of ELLs in the educational activities of the school. Steps such as those outlined in this packet will contribute directly to that reportable activity.



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## Resources

### Books

***Building Successful Partnerships:  
a Guide for Developing Parent and  
Family Involvement Programs***

Dr. James P. Comer (2000).

***Involving Latino Families in  
Schools: Raising Student  
Achievement Through Home-  
School Partnerships***

Concha Delgado Gaitan (2004).

***Claiming Opportunities:  
A Handbook for Improving  
Education for English  
Language Learners Through  
Comprehensive School Reform***

The Education Alliance (2003).

***Culturally Responsive Parental  
Involvement: Concrete  
Understandings and Basic  
Strategies***

Sabrina Hope-King and Lin Goodwin  
(2002).

### People

#### Specialists

- Local Community Based Organizations in your area.
- Cultural Associations that represent the diversity of the school.
- School Personnel that work and live in the community.

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#### For more information, contact

Office of School Improvement  
Michigan Department of Education  
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### Websites

**Clearinghouse on Adult  
Education and Literacy  
(CAEL)**

U.S. Department of Education  
Division of Adult Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW,  
Room 4414  
Washington, DC 20202-7240  
(202) 732-2396

**National Center for Family  
Literacy**

325 W. Main Street, Suite 200  
Louisville, KY 40202  
(502) 584-1133

**National Clearinghouse on  
Literacy Education (NCLE)**

Center for Applied Linguistics  
1118 22nd Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20037  
(202) 429-9292, ext. 200

**National Clearinghouse for  
Bilingual Education (NCELA)**

(202) 467-0867  
Fax: (800) 531-9347

**The Office of English  
Language Acquisition**

[www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/  
index.html](http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/index.html)

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