

August 2016

Thank you for your request to our REL Reference Desk regarding **assistance in finding resources that might help you develop a parent mentor/ambassador program for English Learner (EL) families in your school district.** Ask REL Southwest is part of a collaborative Ask A REL reference desk service provided by the 10 regional educational laboratories (RELs). By design, this service functions much in the same way as a technical reference library, by providing references, referrals, and brief responses in the form of citations for research-based education questions.

**Please note that REL Southwest has not done an evaluation of the resources themselves but offers this list to you for your information only.**

## BACKGROUND

English learners (ELs) are the fastest growing subgroup of the U.S. public school population, comprising an estimated 4.4 million students.<sup>1</sup> “The five REL Southwest states serve some 18 percent of the ELs in the nation... The English Learners Research Alliance seeks to understand the education problems of practice related to the diversity of English learners and to explore the programs and services that best meet their needs.”<sup>2</sup>

Following an established REL Southwest protocol, we conducted a search for research reports, websites, as well as descriptive briefs on parent mentor/ambassador program for EL families. The sources included federally funded organizations, additional research institutions, educational databases, and general Internet searches using Google and Bing. See the methods section at the end of this Ask A REL for additional information on how we identified the following sources.

## QUESTION

**What resources might be used by a school district to help develop a parent mentor/ambassador program for EL families?**

Arias, M. B. and Morillo-Campbell, M. (2008). Promoting ELL parental involvement: Challenges in contested times. *The Great Lakes Center for Education Research & Practice*. [http://www.greatlakescenter.org/docs/Policy\\_Briefs/Arias\\_ELL.pdf](http://www.greatlakescenter.org/docs/Policy_Briefs/Arias_ELL.pdf).

*From the executive summary:* “This policy brief analyzes factors related to the implementation of effective parental involvement with English Language Learners

<sup>1</sup> Kena, G., Musu-Gillette, L., Robinson, J., Wang, X., Rathbun, A., Zhang, J., Wilkinson-Flicker, S., Barmer, A., and Dunlop Velez, E. (2015). The Condition of Education 2015 (NCES 2015-144). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC. Retrieved June 6, 2016 from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch>. (See p. 84 of <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2015/2015144.pdf>)

<sup>2</sup> From the REL Southwest website [http://relsouthwest.sedl.org/research-alliances/english\\_learners.html](http://relsouthwest.sedl.org/research-alliances/english_learners.html).

(ELLs). As the largest growing segment of the student population, ELLs have increased in all states over the last twenty years. At the same time, parents of ELLs face daunting barriers as they try to become informed or involved in their child's school. These barriers, which include the inability to understand English, unfamiliarity with the school system, and differences in cultural norms and cultural capital, can limit parents' communication and school participation. Research supports the importance of parental involvement for improved student achievement, better school attendance, and reduced dropout rates regardless of socioeconomic background or ethnicity. Accordingly, and given the achievement gap between ELLs and English proficient students, it is very important to identify practices that may improve ELL parental involvement and thus student achievement. Yet many programs make little effort to promote ELL parental involvement, defining parental involvement only in terms of the schools' needs or in terms of a deficit-based perception of ELL families. This brief analyzes characteristics of the ELL student and parent population; barriers to ELL family engagement with schools; and characteristics of traditional and non-traditional parental involvement models. Diversity in ELL parents and their communities speaks to the need for both traditional and non-traditional models for ELL parental involvement. With a dual-model approach, variation in language proficiency is acknowledged, communication is facilitated and maintained, and communities are recognized and integrated within the school culture. Accordingly, it is recommended that policy makers:

- Support the implementation of traditional parental involvement programs that are culturally relevant and linguistically appropriate.
- Fund the implementation of non-traditional parental involvement programs that reflect a reciprocal involvement in the school/parent community.
- Support the professional preparation of teachers who can identify community funds of knowledge for curricular development and school outreach.
- Support community-based education programs that inform parents about school values and expectations and work with parents to help them become advocates for their children.”

*From the introduction:* “This policy brief analyzes factors related to the development of effective parental involvement for English Language Learners (ELLs). The authors explain that approaches to developing parental involvement in marginalized communities, including communities with ELL students, have often been based on deficit views of ELLs and have not recognized forms of social capital that exist in those communities. But these strengths can serve as a foundation for effective family and parental involvement.<sup>1</sup> In the current context of anti-immigrant and English-only policies in many jurisdictions, schools are doubly challenged to serve their communities in culturally and linguistically appropriate ways. This policy brief provides both an overview of the characteristics of the ELL population generally and a closer look at the Latino population specifically. It summarizes factors that inhibit parental involvement with schools, parents' views of their role, and innovative school efforts to promote parental involvement in ELL communities. Finally, it offers recommendations for policymakers.”

Baldwin, M., & Wade, S. M. (2012). Improving family and community engagement through sharing data [Briefing paper]. *SEDL an Affiliate of American Institute of Research*. <http://www.sedl.org/pubs/catalog/items/secc04.html>.

*From the website description:* “As data collection, analysis, and decision making expand at the state and local levels, so does the expectation for effectively communicating data to the families of school children and their communities. Data reporting can serve as a viable means of promoting family and community support and actions that increase student achievement. The authors identify literature on the topic of sharing data, discuss the significance of family and community engagement, and explain considerations and recommendations for sharing data with stakeholders. Three key points are outlined:

1. Maintaining close ties with family and community is recognized as one of five critical supports for school improvement.
2. Data sharing can help parents and families understand how their children are performing and where gaps exist in student achievement, as well as guide them in taking appropriate action to support academic success.
3. Decision-makers should consider taking steps to understand the needs, wants, barriers, and motivations of stakeholders; develop community or family action plans; create materials that are customized for recipients; and incorporate social marketing concepts into data dissemination practices.”

Berg, A. C., Melaville, A., & Blank, M. J. (2006). Community & family engagement: Principals share what works. *Coalition for Community Schools*. <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED494521>.

*From the ERIC abstract:* “This paper explores ways in which principals of community schools--and other principals who, though they may not yet identify their schools as community schools, are responding in a very similar manner--work successfully with community partners, families, and other key stakeholders to improve student outcomes. By reflecting on the topic from the perspective of principals, the text offers insights about why they engage community, why doing so is hard, and what strategies and approaches they find most effective. This information could be valuable to principals who devote their energy and passion to the education of America's children. It also will inform the work of school systems, which must support their principals in this work, and of those involved in developing the next generation of principals. (Contains 5 figures and 20 notes.) [This report sponsored by the MetLife Foundation.]”

Dretzke, B. J., & Rickers, S. R. (2014). The family liaison position in high-poverty, urban schools. *Education and Urban Society*, 4, 1–18. <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1096227>.

*From the abstract:* “This study examined the roles and responsibilities of family liaisons working in urban schools with enrollments characterized by high poverty, high mobility, and ethnic diversity. Results indicated that the major responsibilities of the liaisons were creating a trusting and welcoming environment, facilitating parent involvement in the school, keeping parents informed on school-related topics, and connecting parents with

resources. During job shadows, family liaisons were primarily observed coordinating parent involvement activities, interacting with students, performing routine office tasks, and carrying out other duties as assigned (e.g., cafeteria supervision). To increase their effectiveness, the liaisons requested greater job clarity, more flexibility in their formal work hours, and less time spent on other duties as assigned. In general, it appeared that the family liaisons investigated in this study placed a stronger emphasis on creating a welcoming environment and establishing trust than has been found in research on family liaisons in more affluent communities.”

Howland, A., Anderson, J. A., Smiley, A. D., & Abbott, D. J. (2008). School liaisons: Bridging the gap between home and school. *The School Community Journal*, 16(2), 47–68. <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ794797>.

*From the ERIC abstract:* “Involving families in their children’s education is not only a legal requirement in special education, it also predicts academic achievement, social and emotional development, and a variety of other positive school outcomes for all children. Unfortunately, school-home relationships often have been ignored or underdeveloped. Disconnections between home and school may be especially acute in urban areas where school personnel may not understand the culture of the students and families with whom they work. In the Indianapolis Public Schools, a large urban school district in the Midwest, efforts to better connect families and schools are occurring through the implementation of a school liaison program. The school district set out to deliberately create this program in order to bridge the gap between schools and families, with particular attention given to parents from diverse backgrounds with children who are receiving special education services. The initial intent was to allow participating families to drive the design of the program, and it appears that the district has been successful in achieving this objective. Program services and activities include conflict resolution, cultural brokering, direct support, and referral. The design of the school liaison program is described and the activities and skills of the liaisons are presented through the voices of the families that this program has served during its first year of operation.”

Martinez-Cosio, M., & Iannacone, R. M. (2007). The tenuous role of institutional agents: Parent liaisons as cultural brokers. *Education and Urban Society*, 39, 349–369. <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ759299>.

*From the ERIC abstract:* “This article reports on the contradictory role of parent involvement coordinators charged with increasing participation of low-income immigrant parents. This urban ethnographic study investigates the success of one program that engages Latino, Asian, and African American parents in the governance of their Southern California urban elementary school. It illustrates the dilemmas and tensions that arise as institutional agents serve as cultural brokers, as a bridge between the dominant culture and parents’ diverse cultures while also serving as institutional agents. The authors use theories of social and cultural capital to examine the strategies used by a school-based cultural broker to provide bridging social capital to underserved agents seeking an equal role in policy making at their school. They provide examples of three tensions that block bridging social capital, including tension over resources, power sharing, and institutional decision making.”

Sanders, M. G. (2008). How parent liaisons can help bridge the home–school gap. Columbia, MD: *Johns Hopkins University*. <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ794312>.

*From the ERIC abstract:* “In this qualitative case study, the author describes (a) how parent liaisons in a diverse suburban district have supported school, family, and community partnerships and (b) the role played by the district family and community involvement specialist. On the basis of analyses of interview, observation, survey, and document data, the author identifies 4 roles played by liaisons that enhanced home–school partnerships. The liaisons provided (a) direct services to families at risk, (b) support for teacher outreach, (c) support for school-based partnership teams, and (d) data for partnership program improvement. On the basis of these findings, the author offers practical recommendations for districts seeking to establish or improve liaison programs to build stronger ties between schools and the families of all students.”

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Innovation and Improvement. (2007). Engaging parents in education: Lessons from five parental information and resource centers. Washington, DC: Author.  
<http://www2.ed.gov/admins/comm/parents/parentinvolve/index.html>.

*An excerpt:* “Children benefit academically when parents and educators work together. For this reason, parents’ involvement in their children’s education is a priority of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. But a strong connection between parents and educators does not come about automatically. Both parties may need to learn new roles and skills and develop the confidence to use them, especially as parents move beyond traditional activities, like helping children with homework, and toward shared responsibility for school improvement. Intermediary organizations, like federally funded Parental Information and Resource Centers (PIRCs), can help. Drawing on lessons learned from five PIRCs across the country that have been meeting this challenge, this guide shares promising strategies for increasing effective parent involvement.”

❖ Families in Schools — Parent Ambassador Program — Los Angeles, CA  
<https://www.familiesinschools.org/what-we-do/advocacy/parent-ambassador-program/>.

*From the website:* “**What is the Parent Ambassador Program?**”

Through the Parent Ambassador Program, parents of current Los Angeles Unified School District students will have the opportunity to use their leadership skills in support of improving local educational policies and practices that benefit all students. The program enhances the skills, knowledge, and confidence of parents necessary to create meaningful change in their schools and community.

**The overall objectives of the program are to:**

- Increase parent knowledge about local and state educational issues
- Engage parents in coalition and partnership building efforts
- Activate the civic involvement of parents in advocating for all students

## What is the level of commitment to participate in the Parent Ambassador Program?

- Attend a one day orientation
- Participate in six training sessions
- Empower other parents with your knowledge, passion, and belief that together we can achieve academic success for all students

## The benefits of being a Families In Schools Parent Ambassador include:

- Opportunities to be engaged in state and district-wide advocacy campaigns
- Increased knowledge about current education policy and issues
- Participation in advocacy related activities and education conferences
- Networking opportunities with parent and community leaders
- Recognition at a culmination ceremony”

- ❖ Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA) — Chicago, IL  
<http://www.lsna.net/Issues-and-programs/Schools-and-Youth/Parent-Mentor-Program.html>.

*From the (LSNA) website:* “The **Parent Mentor Program** is a nationally recognized **parent engagement model** that builds deep and lasting relationships between students, teachers, and parents.

**HOW IT WORKS:** Community organizations partner with schools to recruit approximately 10 parents per school to assist teachers two hours every day. Before entering the classroom, parent mentors participate in a weeklong leadership training. Parents are then assigned to a classroom (not their own child’s) where they are mentored by a teacher and work one-on-one and in small groups with children. After reaching 100 volunteer hours, parent mentors receive a stipend.

**PROVEN TRACK RECORD:** Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA) and Southwest Organizing Project (SWOP) have 23 combined years of experience with parent mentors and run programs in 30 low-income neighborhood schools across Chicago. Together, LSNA and SWOP run the Parent Engagement Institute to guide new communities through the program.

## BENEFITS

**SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS IN EARLY GRADES:** Parent mentors specifically address the needs of primary students, many of whom need extra support in grades pre-K-3 because they are gaining literacy in two languages. Regular school budgets do not adequately provide such support.

**MUCH-NEEDED SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS:** Parent mentors provide extra eyes, ears, and hands in the classroom, and help connect teachers to the culture of the community.

**INTENSIVE PARENT TRAINING:** Parent mentors gain an insider’s understanding of the school system and strengthen skills they need to support their children throughout

school. In turn parent mentors become community resources and share these skills with neighbors. The program can also offer a pathway to bilingual teaching and other careers.

**STRONG RELATIONSHIPS FOR SCHOOL SUCCESS:** Parents, teachers, and administrators form strong working relationships and collaborate to improve low-income schools.

**STRONG FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES:** Schools draw on the strengths of families who otherwise might see the school as unfriendly. Schools become vibrant centers of community as families begin to use the school as a place to access adult education classes and multiple services.”

A related publication listed on the website can be accessed at [http://www.lsna.net/uploads/lsna/documents/education\\_brochure\\_2008-2009\\_for\\_web.pdf](http://www.lsna.net/uploads/lsna/documents/education_brochure_2008-2009_for_web.pdf).

❖ Parent Ambassadors — Nashville, TN <http://www.nashville.gov/Mayors-Office/Neighborhoods/New-Americans/Parent-Ambassadors.aspx>

*From the website:* “The Parent Ambassadors program serves as a bridge between Metro Schools and Nashville's New American community. [Twenty-five] volunteer Parent Ambassadors have been trained and paired with New American families new to Nashville schools who are from their same home country and/or speak their same native language.

As part of this free program, the Ambassadors provide families with information and guidance on navigating the school system. They also serve as advisers to Metro Schools, assisting school leaders on policies and practices that ease the transition into schools for new families and their students.

Parent Ambassadors is a collaborative effort between the Mayor’s Office and the MNPS Office of English Learners, and it grew, in part, out of the Mayor’s New Americans Advisory Council.

Parent leaders serving in the inaugural group of Parent Ambassadors come from 10 different countries and speak 9 different languages. The countries they represent include Burma, Congo, Egypt, Iraq, Mexico, Nepal, Nicaragua, Puerto Rico, Somalia and Sudan.

Over 15,000 students in Metro Schools - about 18% of the total student body - are enrolled in the programs for English Language Learners. They speak a total of 110 unique languages.”

More information about the Parent Ambassador program is provided in a video that can be accessed at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z7oNb9BEzXI>.

## ADDITIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND RESOURCES TO CONSULT

We also searched for appropriate organizations and resources that may be useful. We have not done an evaluation of these organizations or the resources themselves but offer this list for reference only.

Halgunseth, L. C., Peterson, A., Stark, D. R., & Moodie, S. (2009). Family engagement, diverse families, and early childhood education programs: An integrated review of the literature. *National Association for the Education of Young Children*. Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.<http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/research/FamEngage.pdf>.

*From the introduction:* “A growing body of research suggests that meaningful engagement of families in their children’s early learning supports school readiness and later academic success (Henrich & Gadaire, 2008; Weiss, Caspe, & Lopez, 2006). Family engagement is often considered in union with children’s participation in early childhood education programs. High rates of program enrollment among young children across several ethnic groups may be a possible reason for this trend. In 2005, 60 percent of children under age 6 spent some time in nonparental care arrangements: 62 percent of white children, 69 percent of black children, and 49 percent of Hispanic children were in such programs (Iruka & Carver, 2006).

As a means to supporting family engagement and children’s learning, it is crucial that programs implement strategies for developing partnerships with families (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). These strategies should be appropriate for the diverse population programs serve and reflect a commitment to outreach (Colombo, 2006; Crawford & Zygouris-Coe, 2006). To address these issues, we will review the literature on family engagement that pertains to all young children across ethnic backgrounds and early childhood education programs.

This review conceptualizes family engagement as essential for enhancing children’s learning and family well-being. Family engagement occurs when there is an on-going, reciprocal, strengths-based partnership between families and their children’s early childhood education programs.”

Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund & National Education Association of the United States. (2010). Minority parent and community engagement: Best practices and policy recommendations for closing the gaps in student achievement.  
[http://www.maldef.org/assets/pdf/mco\\_maldef%20report\\_final.pdf](http://www.maldef.org/assets/pdf/mco_maldef%20report_final.pdf).

*From the MALDEF.ORG’s report description:* “The report aims to increase the active involvement of minority parents in their children’s schools by identifying obstacles to such engagement and recommending strategies for parents, schools and communities to come together and overcome these obstacles.

The report is a direct result of a meeting held in October 2009 that involved over 70 parents and providers of national and community-based organizations sited across the



country. MALDEF and the NEA brought these leaders together in order to address the basic right of each child, regardless of background, race, ethnicity or immigration status, to obtain a quality education.

In addition to providing best practices taken from leading educational organizations from across the U.S., the report also includes policy recommendations submitted to Congress and the U.S. Department of Education during the 2010 reauthorization process of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Many of these recommendations can be applied on a state and local level.”

Small, C. J. (2015). Five ways to boost family engagement. *Principal*, 95(1), 44–45.  
[https://www.naesp.org/sites/default/files/JacksonSmall\\_SO15.pdf](https://www.naesp.org/sites/default/files/JacksonSmall_SO15.pdf).

This article offers the author's insights on ways to increase educational partnerships and family engagement in schools. Among the strategies that schools can adopt are promoting parenting skills, improving two-way communication, and recruiting families as school volunteers. It also references the importance of reinforcing learning at home and engaging family members in shared decisions at school.

Wood, L., Shankland, L., Jordan, C., & Pollard, J. (2014). How districts can lay the groundwork for lasting family engagement. *SEDL Insights*, 2(2).  
<http://www.sedl.org/insights/2-2/>.

*From SEDL's description:* “This issue of SEDL Insights outlines district supports that can lay the foundation for high-impact family engagement. Recommendations include the following:

1. Provide training and supports for both educators and families.
2. Integrate family engagement standards and measures into educator evaluation systems.
3. Leverage funds and resources from multiple sources.
4. Create staff positions dedicated to family engagement.
5. Focus on school improvement instead of procedural compliance.
6. Make student and school data accessible and meaningful to families.

A long-term study of rural Alaska schools examined effects of parent involvement on student outcomes in three parental-role typologies: trust-building activities to close the school-community gap, informal parent involvement, and parent participation in school governance. The influences of stability of school conditions and socioeconomic variables are discussed, as well as applications to other circumpolar regions.

- ❖ SEDL produced a series of briefs on family involvement, including ones on fostering family-school connections with diverse families, organizing family and community connections with schools, and engaging families at the secondary level. They can be obtained here: <http://www.sedl.org/connections/research-briefs.html#text>.

- ❖ ELL Parent Center — Niles Township Schools, Skokie, IL — [http://www.ellparentcenter.org/#!\\_pmp](http://www.ellparentcenter.org/#!_pmp).

*From the Parent Center's website:* “Based off the Logan Square Neighborhood Association's (LSNA) model, we partnered with Open Communities to bring the Parent Mentor Program to two schools, Madison & Devonshire, in the beginning of 2013. Last year, we had a total of 8 schools across 4 districts participating!

Each Parent Mentor is assigned to a classroom at their child's school (not their child's class) where they are matched with a teacher and work 1-on-1 and in small groups with students. Not only are teachers getting extra assistance, but children are learning skills from these individuals who have so much to offer. In addition, teachers get to learn about another culture and parents get extra training and experience for their future endeavors.”

- ❖ Exploring School Involvement in Parents of English Language Learners — A PowerPoint presentation from the CPELL Project, Loyola University Chicago <https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.luc.edu%2Fmedia%2Ffluclu%2Fcpell%2Fresearchpresentatio%2FSOEResearchSymposium4212012Lindsay.ppt>.

*From the PPT presentation:*

- “For ELL students, programs that engage family in the educational process, among other interventions, will *effectively improve academic achievement*
  - However, this population of parents often faces unique barriers, hindering them from being more actively involved in their children's academic lives:
  - School-based barriers, which may include a negative climate toward immigrant parents
  - Individual barriers such as a lack of dominant language proficiency
  - Logistical barriers such as childcare and work responsibilities which often make it difficult for parents to attend school functions
  - Parents can still be *involved in and supportive of* the educational experiences of their children
  - Part of an English Language Acquisition: National Professional Development program grant
  - Collaboration between Loyola University Chicago and four school districts in the Chicagoland area, all of which have a growing ELL population representing more than 40 countries. Districts include FSD72, HSD73, ATSD102, and NSSD112.
  - Developed strategies for encouraging participation of ELL parents that has taken current research-based literature into account
  - One goal of the CPELL project is to help partner school districts to increase the participation of their ELL parents in education-related activities.”
- ❖ Mid-Continent Comprehensive Center — Tips for ELL Parent Involvement <http://www.mc3edsupport.org/community/knowledgebases/tips-for-ell-parent-involvement-62.html>.

*From the website:* Involving parents of English language learner (ELL) students in school offers unique challenges for teachers, administrators, and other school staff members especially in a community receiving ELL students for the first time. However, the arrival of non-English speaking families impacts the whole community. School staff members should anticipate going beyond the traditional school to parent interactions. In addition to the traditional parent involvement activities, schools should be prepared to offer community support to the ELL families and develop an awareness of cultural differences between the home countries of ELL students and families and their new home.

### Parent Involvement

- At the start of school, hold an in school session to have parents complete forms. Translators should be available. This is a good opportunity to share information on school supplies and other expectations, and enlist parents and guardians as school/classroom volunteers.
- When dealing with family members with little or no English proficiency, providing forms and notes in their native language is very helpful. When translating, caution should be taken to ensure the correct phrases are used. In this regard, reliance on Internet-based translation sites or computer software programs should be avoided. When using district translators, accuracy, due to dialect, is sometimes an issue. Some translators do a great job of oral translations but their translation of written material may not be proficient. Additional information on working with translators is available in the document [Working with Translators](#).
- Arrange for parent teacher conferences at times that are convenient for parents. Some parents of ELL students may work evening shifts. Make sure to send home conference notices in the home language and tell parents translators will be on-hand.
- Schedule the parent teacher conferences so parents can make one trip to the school covering all their children's conferences.
- Parent nights are a useful way to engage family members in school activities. When organizing such events, it is helpful to keep the following in mind.
  - Involve ELL students as part of the program to encourage family member attendance.
  - Be sure to send home bilingual notes announcing parent nights. In addition, personal contact with the families is also beneficial. This might be a role home-school liaison staff members could fulfill, if available.
  - Individually greet and say goodbye to attending families.
  - Celebrate the achievements of outstanding ELL students.
  - Survey those attending, asking for input on student programming, adult programming, and satisfaction with the current programming efforts.
- To build rapport between the parents and teachers, parents could be asked if they would be willing to give the teachers lessons on ethnic dancing or music or cooking popular ethnic recipes.
- Community Support
- Gain an understanding of immigrant families' needs in the community.

- New non-English speaking families may need community support mechanisms. It is helpful to find someone within the community to mentor the new families. By default, this may fall on the school's ELL teacher. Initial support will involve basic living and survival tips.
- Community support involves being aware of the following: health services, shopping, basic living tips, migrant services, and translator services. Besides identifying service providers, school staff members can help families be familiar with these services as well.
- Schools may be able to share translators with other local agencies.
- A district with significant immigrant populations might involve other community organizations, such as a YMCA, in after school activities. When doing so, it is important the collaborating organization's staff members be aware of and have training in the cultural dynamics involved with the ELL students. Communication channels among the organization, the school staff members, and the students' community should be clearly defined and used.

#### Cultural Awareness

- It is useful to have written guidebooks available to staff covering relevant program policies and procedures and cultural issues related to the nationalities served.
- A district with significant immigrant populations might think of having designated liaison staff for such groups. When doing so, it is important to involve members of the ethnic communities in the selection process. Within each ethnic group, there are subgroups that may not interact well with each other. Selecting a person associated with one subgroup might unknowingly alienate members of another subgroup. The ultimate hiring decision is still up to the district staff. With concerted efforts, liaisons will usually win the confidence of the community.
- Students from other countries, including Mexico, may have varied educational experiences. Some may have gone to school regularly. Others may have limited attendance. This may be due to migrant/seasonal employment, war in their home countries, lack of available attendance centers or teachers, and other factors. Initially, their attendance pattern may reflect their prior educational experiences. Regular attendance may be an issue that should be addressed with ELL student families.
- Due to economic reasons some children may be expected to get a job and help support their family. This may prevent them from participating in extracurricular activities.
- In some cultures, parents going to school for parent/teacher conferences is not a common occurrence. As such, there may be a natural hesitancy by parents to attend conferences with the teacher or receive telephone calls from school personnel positively.
- For some cultures, there is a general reluctance to use mental health services. While American school officials may not hesitate to use mental health providers or school counselors to assist with behavioral or abusive situations, parents of ELL students may not feel comfortable allowing their children to receive such care.”

## METHODS

### Keywords and Search Strings Used in the Searches:

(ELL parent ambassador program; ELL parent ambassador program + school + Arkansas, or Louisiana, or New Mexico, or Oklahoma, or Texas; ELL parent mentor program, ELL parent mentor program + school + Arkansas, or Louisiana, or New Mexico, or Oklahoma, or Texas; Parent ambassador program, Parent ambassador program + school + Arkansas, or Louisiana, or New Mexico, or Oklahoma, or Texas; Parent mentor program, Parent mentor program + school + Arkansas, or Louisiana, or New Mexico, or Oklahoma, or Texas).

### Search of Databases and Websites

- Institute of Education Sciences (IES) website (<http://www.ies.ed.gov>) and IES sources: Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Program, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), National Center for Education Research (NCER), What Works Clearinghouse (WWC)
- ERIC database ([www.eric.ed.gov](http://www.eric.ed.gov))
- Google Scholar ([scholar.google.com](http://scholar.google.com))
- Google ([www.google.com](http://www.google.com))
- Bing ([www.bing.com](http://www.bing.com))

### Criteria for Inclusion

REL Southwest selected resources that provide research on parent mentor/ambassador program for EL families. When REL Southwest staff reviewed resources, we considered – among other things – three factors:

1. **Date of Publication:** The most current information (primarily published from 2011 to the present) is included.
2. **Source and Funder of the Report/Brief/Article:** Priority was given to publications written in relevant, peer-reviewed journals or reports or produced by well-known research organizations.
3. **Methodology:** Sources include reported studies, literature reviews and policy reports.

---

Ask A REL is a service provided by a collaborative of the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Program, funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES). This response was prepared by REL Southwest under contract ED-IES-12-C-0012 with IES. The content of this document does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IES or the U.S. Department of Education, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.