A Toolkit of Resources for Engaging Families and the Community as Partners in Education
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About REL Pacific

REL Pacific at McREL, one of 10 Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs) funded by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), serves educators in American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia (Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei, and Yap), Guam, Hawai‘i, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau.
About REL Pacific

Our work focuses on four priority areas:

• teacher effectiveness,
• family and community engagement,
• college and career readiness, and
• optimizing data systems.
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Background

REL Pacific staff developed a four-part toolkit to help the Guam Alliance for Family and Community Engagement in Education strengthen partnerships with families and community members to support student learning.
The Four Parts of the Toolkit

1. Building an Understanding of Family and Community Engagement
2. Building a Cultural Bridge
3. Building Trusting Relationships with Families and Community through Effective Communication
4. Engaging all in Data Conversations
How can the Toolkit be used?
Each part of the Toolkit is divided into sections.
Types of tools

• Chart
• Graphic organizer
• Handout
• Note-taking template
• Scenarios
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Part I: Building an Understanding of Family and Community Engagement
Building an Understanding of Family and Community Engagement

Family and community engagement is about building relationships.

- It is an on-going process of meaningful interaction and two-way communication between schools and families.
- It involves a purposeful focus on support of student learning.
# Summary of Tools in Part 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity number</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Tool type included in the activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1.1</td>
<td>Thinking about family engagement</td>
<td>Note-taking template</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.2</td>
<td>Exploring cultural influences</td>
<td>Graphic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.3</td>
<td>Understanding beliefs about family and community engagement</td>
<td>Handout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Investigating demographic data and other characteristics</td>
<td>Handout, Note-taking template</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3.1</td>
<td>Building cultural awareness</td>
<td>Note-taking template</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3.2</td>
<td>Understanding salient features of individualism and collectivism</td>
<td>Chart, Scenarios</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Exploring cultural influences on traditional family and community engagement</td>
<td>Graphic, Graphic organizer, Note-taking template</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Activities were developed by Regional Educational Laboratory Pacific for this toolkit using the sources listed in table A1 in appendix A.
Section 1.1: Reflecting on Beliefs and Assumptions

Key Points

• Understanding how a person’s cultural lens influences interactions can encourage family and community engagement.

• Viewing interactions from the families’ perspectives helps educators work more effectively with them.

• Educators’ beliefs about family and community engagement are critical to their success in working productively with families.
Example: Tool 1.1.2: Exploring Cultural Influences

The Iceberg Concept of Culture
Like an iceberg, the majority of culture is below the surface.

**Surface Culture**
Above sea level
Emotional load: relatively low

- food
- dress
- music
- visual arts
- drama
- crafts
- dance
- literature
- language
- celebrations
- games

**Deep Culture**

**Unspoken Rules:**
Partially below sea level
Emotional load: very high

- courtesy
- contextual conversational patterns
- concept of time
- personal space
- rules of conduct
- facial expressions
- nonverbal communication
- body language
- touching
- eye contact
- patterns of handling emotions
- notions of modesty
- concept of beauty
- courtship practices
- relationships to animals
- notions of leadership
- tempo of work
- concepts of food
- ideals of childrearing
- theory of disease
- social interaction rate
- nature of friendships
- tone of voice
- attitudes toward elders
- concept of cleanliness
- notions of adolescence
- patterns of group decision-making
- definition of insanity
- preference for competition or cooperation
- tolerance of physical pain
- concept of “self”
- concept of past and future
- definition of obscenity
- attitudes toward dependents
- problem-solving
- roles in relation to age, sex, class, occupation, kinship, and so forth

**Unconscious Rules:**
Completely below sea level
Emotional load: intense

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Section 1.2: Getting to Know Your Families

Key Points

• Examining demographic data helps us track patterns across subgroups, increases our understanding of who our families are, and helps illuminate key information to support intentional planning for strengthening family and community engagement.
Key Points

• Understanding cultural norms and beliefs can overcome challenges between people with differing backgrounds.

• Developing cultural competence helps educators ensure families have successful experiences with the education system.

• As families from different backgrounds enter a new school for the first time, they may need time for acculturation to the school system.
Section 1.4: Acknowledging Cultural Differences

Key Points

• There are positive effects on children’s learning when school staff understand and honor the attitudes, values, norms, and beliefs of their cultures and families.

• Effective family and community engagement rests on relational trust between families and school staff.

• Understanding how different cultures view education and schooling systems can promote family and community engagement.
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Part 2: Building a Cultural Bridge
Building a Cultural Bridge

Family and community engagement is about building a cultural bridge.

Important aspects are:

• developing trusting relationships
• tapping into and respecting families’ strengths
• helping families build their role as partners who share power or responsibilities
### Table 2.1. Summary of part 2 activities and tools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity number</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Tool type included in the activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Identifying family and community strengths 1-2-4-ALL</td>
<td>Note-taking template</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Planning for school, family, and community partnerships jigsaw</td>
<td>Note-taking template, Information sheet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Activities were developed by Regional Educational Laboratory Pacific for the toolkit, using sources listed in table A1 in appendix A.
Section 2.1: Tapping Into the Strengths of Families and Community Members

Key Points

• It is critical to identify family strengths in order to engage with families as partners in their children’s education.

• Collaborating with families based on strengths develops strong relationships between home, school, and community.

• Partnering with communities to promote family engagement helps schools and families support student learning.
Section 2.2: Establishing Roles for Building Family and Community Engagement

**Key Points**

- Parents and community can take on a variety of roles when they engage with schools.
- Connecting family and community engagement to school improvement helps focus roles.
- Bureaucracy can discourage engagement and limit the roles that parents and community members are willing to accept.
- One role doesn’t fit all.
Epstein’s six types of involvement

Parenting

Communicating

Volunteering

Decision Making

Learning at Home

Collaboration with Community
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Part 3: Building Trusting Relationships with Families and the Community Through Effective Communication
Building Relationships

Family and community engagement is about building relationships.

• On-going process of meaningful interaction and two-way communication between schools and families.
• Involves a purposeful focus on support of student learning.
### Table 3.1. Summary of part 3 activities and tools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity number</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Tool type included in the activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1.1</td>
<td>Reflecting on building trusting relationships with families</td>
<td>Information and note-taking sheet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.2</td>
<td>Understanding communication strategies to enhance family and community engagement</td>
<td>Note-taking template, Information sheet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Planning for two-way communication at parent–teacher conferences</td>
<td>Note-taking template, Information sheet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Activities were developed by Regional Educational Laboratory Pacific for the toolkit, using sources listed in table A1 in appendix A.
Section 3.1: Cross-Cultural Communication in a School Community

Key Points

• Communication is integrally tied to cultural backgrounds.
• Using communication practices that are sensitive to language and cultural backgrounds encourages family and community engagement.
• There are a variety of strategies that promote cross-cultural communication.
Definition of Trust

Trust is reliance on the goodwill of others and confidence that they will

• not do you any harm,
• do what they say they will do, and
• have the skills they need to meet your expectations.

(Hankin & Dee, 2001; Tschannen-Moran, 2004)
Five Facets of Trust

• **Benevolence**: the confidence that one’s well-being will be protected or not harmed
• **Reliability**: confidence that you can depend upon another party
• **Competence**: belief in another party’s ability to perform the tasks required
• **Honesty**: a person’s integrity, character, and authenticity
• **Openness**: the extent to which relevant information is not withheld

(Tschannen-Moran, 2004)
Section 3.2: Preparing Educators for Two-Way Communication with Families

Key Points

• Educators express the need for professional development in how to use basic communication skills (e.g., active listening, respecting other points of view, using non-verbal communication) to engage parents.

• Listening closely to “parent voice” helps educators understand the challenges that students face and rethink their practices.
Section 3.2 (continued)

- When teachers increase their capacity to engage parents in dialogue, there are benefits for parents, students, and teachers.
- There are a number of strategies for effective two-way communication when parents have limited English skills.
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Part 4: Engaging All in Data Conversations
Section 4.1: Determining What Student Data Are Important to Share With Families and Community Members

Key Points

• Understanding parents’ and families’ reasons for wanting data helps educators determine which data to share.
• Two-way sharing of student data enhances school-home collaboration.
### Table 4.1. Summary of part 4 activities and tools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity number</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Tool type included in the activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1.1</td>
<td>Reviewing data terms and their definitions</td>
<td>Activity sheet, Information sheet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.2</td>
<td>Conducting an inventory of current data sources and whether the data are meaningful to families</td>
<td>Worksheet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.3</td>
<td>Reflecting on data sharing with families</td>
<td>Worksheet, Note-taking template</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.1</td>
<td>Planning to help families understand data</td>
<td>Worksheet, Planning template</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.2</td>
<td>Role-playing data conversations with families</td>
<td>Information sheet, Worksheet, Sample report cards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Activities were developed by Regional Educational Laboratory Pacific for the toolkit, using sources listed in table A1 in appendix A.
Consider: What is your staff’s level of comfort and experience with regard to sharing data with families?
Consider Types of Data

- Outcome
- Demographic
- Program
- Perception
Section 4.2: Presenting Student Data in Meaningful Ways

Key Points
• There are a variety of avenues for sharing data with families.
• Staff awareness of the challenges to communicating meaningful student data to families and positive actions to address them encourage and support data sharing.
• The use of effective communication skills supports data sharing.
Three Purposes for Data Conversations with Families

• Gathering Information
• Guiding Improvement
• Finding Solutions
Techniques for Making Data Conversations More Productive

• Presuming Positive Intent
• Paraphrasing
• Asking Powerful Questions
Reflecting on the Toolkit
Parts 1, 2, 3, & 4

Integration
How does the Toolkit fit into your current work?

Alignment
How does family & community engagement align with the goals of your system?

Challenges
What implementation challenges do you foresee?

Positive
What are some potential positive outcomes of using the Toolkit?
Kalahngan
Kinisou
Faafetai
Mahalo
Thank you
Kii oosumu
Si yu’us ma’ase
Kulo