

## SUPPORTING ELL FAMILY PARTICIPATION AT THE SITE LEVEL

**Family and Student Engagement Office** curates the **OUSD Family Engagement Toolkit** resources organized by the five **OUSD Standards for Meaningful Family Engagement**. For a full list of principal tools for engaging families, please see the Google Drive folder **Family Engagement Technical Support for Principals**.

The school site is the backbone of parental involvement. Some parents of ELLs may feel apprehensive about getting involved because of their limited English skills or lack of familiarity with mainstream culture and the public school system in the United States. It is also important to note that parents of RFEP and IFEP students who are not proficient in English will also need some of these services. Below are some ways to reach out to and support parents of ELLs and increase the likelihood of their participation.

### A. Using the Parent's Preferred Language

A common understanding of problems and solutions depends on clear communication between people of different language backgrounds.

- **Hire staff that can interpret for each of the school's language groups:** Sites should hire staff that can interpret for most or all of their language groups, for example a secretary or TSA that speaks Spanish at a site with high concentrations of Spanish speakers. For District-provided translation services, use the [Office of Equity Translation Services form](#).
- **Keep up to date lists of translators and interpreters:** Schools should clearly identify staff that are available for translation of documents and interpretation at public meetings, for example IEP meetings.
- **Identify a preferred language and dedicated interpreters** for public meetings: Schools should identify what will be the main language of a meeting, and what interpretation should be provided routinely. This ensures a base of translation and interpretation will be consistently provided.
- **Put parents in touch with bilingual staff**  
Parents should be provided with a list of names and phone numbers of bilingual staff in the school and district who they can contact to deal with educational concerns. Also encourage them to reach out to other parents who are bilingual or monolingual so they can share experiences and help one another.
- **Translate the written communications that you send home**  
Personal notes and materials should be sent home in the home language. This will keep parents in the loop on issues such as report cards, school events, and homework. The translations should be completed and provided in simple but straightforward language that parents can understand.

### B. Educating Parents on the U.S. School System

To support their children's education, the parents of ELL students need to understand how the U.S. school system and culture work. Differences in the school system compared to that of the ELL parents' home country may be stark. For example, uniforms may be required, and rules may be the same for all schools across an entire country.

Sites should have an explicit and advertised practice of listening to concerns and answering questions promptly, both orally, and with appropriate printed materials in their language.

Sites should make sure that parents of ELLs understand:

- **How the school works:** If necessary, parents should be provided a review of school hours, school holidays, school rules, school trajectory from pre-kindergarten through high school, attendance and the school's administrative hierarchy.
  - Click Here for [Multilingual Family Orientation Videos](#)
- **The district and school curriculum, standards, benchmarks, and materials:** Site staff should bear in mind that in many countries, the curriculum is very centralized with one set of books used. For secondary, sites should explain the process of placement and monitoring to make sure ELLs are enrolled in classes that support a trajectory for college and career readiness including completing the A-G requirements.
- **Teacher/school expectations:** Parents should understand that teachers expect them to help with homework, find tutors, read books, tell stories, take their children to the library, visit the classroom, and become involved in the school.
- **Instructional program options and coursework:** Parents should understand the different language programs offered at the site (Structured English Immersion/English Language Mainstream, Dual Language, LTEL and newcomer support), why they work the way they do, and why a given program may be most suitable for their child.

For secondary, parents should understand the protocols for proper placement in the instructional program that sets their child on a track for A-G completion, college and career readiness, and graduation.

If parents have doubts about their child's placement, school staff (including counselors at the secondary level), should discuss their options for instructional programs and courses, college and career options and invite parents to visit and observe instruction. With LTELs and newcomers, these meetings should be scheduled a minimum of twice a year.

- **Goal Setting:** Full participation in the U.S. School system means parents have a role in envisioning successful outcomes for their children. Teachers should collaborate with ELLs and their parents to set clear and attainable goals that move students on the path towards reclassification, academic success, and graduation. Sites should share the [FAQ for Families ELL Reclassification](#) with parents.

### C. Informing Parents of their Rights and Connecting them with Useful Community Resources

Sites should make sure that ELL parents know about their rights regarding access to interpreters and translated materials from the school, free lunch programs, the school's curriculum, supplementary school services that may be available to their children, and anything else that parents at the site have a right to know. In addition, there are many resources available in the wider community that can support immigrant parents in important ways and thereby involve them more fully in the life of the school community.

#### D. OUSD Parent Teacher Home Visit Program

Community Schools Student Services provides funding to sites adopting home visits as a strategy to bring teachers and parents together as equal partners to build trust and form a relationship for student achievement. During home visits, parent and teacher share their dreams, expectations, experiences and resources. Once the relationship is formed, the partners are accountable to each other to act on behalf of the student's academic and developmental success. Parents gain a partnering relationship with their child's teacher, and new confidence in their involvement with their child's education. Teachers repeatedly say that home visits are worth the time because they:

- build teacher skills around improving instruction while meeting the needs of the whole child
- create cultural competence and connection
- lessen feelings of burnout while increasing meaningfulness

To join the home visit program, sites will:

- Attend an Informational Session
- Submit an application for funding
- Attend a Training Session

Teachers participate on an opt-in basis, and will be compensated for their time in training and out in the field doing visits, at the current hourly stipend rate.

Home visits are supported by a joint effort of the [Oakland Education Association](#), the [Parent Teacher Home Visit Program National Office](#), and the [OUSD Community Schools and Student Services Department](#).

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## E. Welcoming Parents into the School and Involving them in School Governance

- **Host a “language-other-than-English” back-to-school night:** For example, sites might host an evening event at the beginning of the school year for Spanish-speaking parents with an interpreter in attendance. This is a time to get to know parents, communicate expectations, answer questions and find out the best way to maintain regular communication with each of these parents. For this important first meeting, it is important to accommodate parents' requests for scheduling, transportation, and child care.
- **Arrange for a "tour" of the school:** Within the first semester, schools should organize a general school orientation session with an interpreter for parents of ELLs to explain and answer any questions about things such as state standards, assessments, school expectations, language program options, etc. It is helpful to actually walk parents around the school and introduce them to key people on staff.
- **Recruit volunteers:** Schools should strive to identify and leverage parent talents and strengths. ELL parents may be able to help with a variety of activities, such as cooking food for school-wide holidays, telling stories, teaching a dance, teaching a craft, or making a presentation.
- **Involve parents of ELLs in School Governance:** Sites should ensure they have a role in shaping powerful learning outcomes for children at the site in alignment with the SPSA and LCAP. Sites may recruit parents of ELLs to be members of:
  - The School Site Council
  - The School Site Council ELL Parent Subcommittee (SELLS)
  - The district-level English Language Learner Subcommittee to the PSAC (DELLS)
  - The district-level LCAP Parent and Student Advisory Committee, or PSAC