

Asset-Based Ideas for Addressing Barriers to Family and Community Engagement

Educators can use this resource to reflect on and identify common barriers to multilingual family and community engagement, corresponding multilingual family and community assets, and asset-based ideas for addressing these barriers. For more context on how to use this resource, refer to [Mapping and Addressing Barriers to Family and Community Engagement](#).

Barrier	Corresponding Multilingual Family and Community Asset	Asset-Based Ideas for Addressing the Barrier
Limited access to translation or interpretation	Families with rich bilingual and multilingual skills	Compensate bilingual family leaders to support outreach and interpretation. Create a multilingual ambassador program.
Unclear or jargon-heavy school communication	Families with strong informal communication networks	Include voice messages, videos, phone calls, and coffee chats in addition to written communication to families. Engage families in reviews to ensure communications are clear.
Limited access to technology that is responsive to multilingual families' languages and other needs	Families with strong oral traditions and relational communication styles	Learn about and use the communication channels families already rely on (text groups, community organizations, etc.).
Events held at times when families are unable to attend	Families who demonstrate interest in alternative forms of engagement (texts, notes, weekend communication, etc.)	Offer a variety of options for family engagement, including virtual sessions, flexible participation pathways, and recorded content.
Limited access to transportation or childcare	Families with strong extended family and neighbor support networks	Partner with trusted organizations to provide childcare and arrange carpools, hold events in community locations, and create neighborhood-based gatherings.

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Differences between U.S. schools that frame advocacy as openly questioning educators and schools, and cultural norms that might discourage this	Families who deeply respect educators and value education	Ensure that communication around advocacy encourages partnership and relationship-building. Create culturally and linguistically affirming opportunities for families to share expertise and contribute to decisions.
Limited opportunities for students and families to voice their ideas or concerns in welcoming ways	Students and families with deep knowledge of their own strengths, interests, and needs	Establish family advisory councils, listening sessions, community circles, and student-family focus groups where voices are actively sought and acted upon.
Implicit and explicit messaging from schools and educators that frame English as being more valuable or useful than other languages	Students and families whose multilingualism fosters cognitive flexibility and meaningful connections to diverse communities	Celebrate multilingualism publicly in the classroom and school, encourage home language use, and incorporate students' and their families' stories and experiences.
Immigration-related fears or distrust of institutions	Families with strong ties to their community and trusted cultural organizations	Partner with trusted community-based organizations to host events, share information, and serve as a bridge between families and schools. Emphasize confidentiality and welcoming practices.
Lack of funding and resources for multilingual family and community engagement	Families with connections to each other and to resources in their communities	Search for grants or other opportunities to support family and community engagement in your local context or state.
Limited opportunities for professional learning and advancement focused on multilingual family and community engagement	Family and community members willing to take on leadership roles	Invite families and community leaders to co-facilitate professional learning sessions.

Barrier	Corresponding Multilingual Family and Community Asset	Asset-Based Ideas for Addressing the Barrier
Past negative experiences or lack of trust in the school or district	Families with relational communication styles and trusted community connections	Invest in relationship-building activities, home visits, community walks, listening circles, and regular opportunities for dialogue.
Lack of family representation in decision-making	Family and community members willing to take on leadership roles	Recruit and support multilingual family leaders to serve on committees, advisory groups, school boards, and improvement teams. Provide interpretation services and leadership development.
Social isolation among families	Families with strong informal communication and support networks	Create family affinity groups, welcome networks for newcomers, buddy systems, and community-building events that foster connections among families.