

Navigating and Responding to Change as a School or District

Judy McGrath, a bilingual school therapist in Missouri, has collaborated with students, families, community organizations, and other educators to navigate and respond to changing contexts and needs within her school and district. Explore the considerations for practice below. They offer a starting place for reflection, exploration, and learning.

What school and district practices for navigating changing landscapes do you already have in place? What ideas can you and your team adapt for your school community?

If I would like to collaborate around changing landscapes with multilingual learners and their families and communities, I can . . .

- Create spaces where students and families feel heard, supported, and able to express concerns, questions, or emotions.
- Validate students' and families' experiences and connect them with counselors, social workers, or other support systems when needed.
- Reflect on how my own assumptions, experiences, and perspectives may shape interactions with students and families.
- Explore the variance in experience within our multilingual communities and recognize that
 - Students and families may have different migration experiences, relationships with institutions, or understandings of school systems.
 - Some students and families may be nervous or fearful about their own safety.
- Explore legislative and policy changes impacting families (for example, regularly connect with local legal aid organizations and the national [Immigrant Legal Resource Center](#) website).
- Reflect on and work to change school policies and practices that may unintentionally create barriers, exclusion, or disproportionate impacts for multilingual students and families.
- Work with families to clarify roles and responsibilities of school personnel, including school resource officers and student privacy protections.

If I would like to collaborate with families and community organizations to address shared challenges and support the needs of students and families, I can . . .

- Connect with or create a family-led group in my school or district, such as a Bilingual Parent Action Committee, that advocates for each other and in the community.
- Join an immigrant service providers network to connect with organizations and learn about what services are available.
- Host a presentation on a relevant topic led by a community organization and invite families.
- Refer families to local resources or organize a resource fair. Some interested partners may be adult education programs, local libraries, medical providers, mental health providers, parenting support, legal aid, food access, etc.

If there is a safety concern in our school or district, we can . . .

- Make a plan in advance. Decide on the answers to the following questions:
 - If officials appear at the school, who is responsible for responding on the school's behalf?
 - If a warrant is presented, who is the designated district representative responsible for reviewing it?
- Host Know Your Rights workshops (for example, [Know Your Rights: Immigrant Students and Schools](#)).

If families have a safety concern in the community, we can . . .

- Ensure that families are aware of the district safety line where any safety concerns can be reported.
- Contact local immigrant service providers and connect families with these providers (for example, an organization like the [Immigrant Service Providers Network](#) in St. Louis).

Notes

Record your ideas for navigating and responding to change in your school or district.