

Vignette: Building Trust Through Conversation and Action

Naira, a multilingual learner school-community liaison, believes that building trusting relationships is central to her work. In her role, she helps enroll multilingual students new to the United States for any school in the county, so she sees a wide range of families from different backgrounds, including refugees, unaccompanied minors, and families who arrive on work visas.

Directions: Read through the following vignette about how Naira builds trusting relationships with multilingual learners and their families and communities. As you read, reflect on how this connects to your own context. Record your thoughts and ideas in the notes section at the end of this document. Note that the educator's name, title, and image have been changed to respect personal privacy.



Naira describes how she develops and sustains relationships with multilingual families and communities starting with their first conversation:

When I am registering families, I try to make conversation with them and get to know them as well as I can without being nosy. One thing I always try to ask is what interests them and their children (sports, music, art, etc.). I try to show interest in who they are as people and not just as immigrants. I also expand on the registration questions we ask everyone. For example, when we talk about home language, I ask families about all the languages they use in the home and how they learned them.

When Naira reflects on how to build trust over time with multilingual families, she always tries to be responsive when a family asks a question or reaches out:

Building trust over time will look different for each family. I believe that by showing families that I am there for them, they have gradually opened up to me and we have built trusting relationships. I always respond to phone calls and messages from families in a timely manner. I also like to talk with multilingual families about the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) to let them know that their information is kept securely in our office.

"Engaging with the families of the multilingual children we serve means we treat them with care and respect. Family engagement means removing barriers and providing as many opportunities as possible for families to participate in their children's schools."

For Naira, students have been active participants in shaping the relationship between her, their family, and their community:

Some students reach out to me directly via email or text message on Talking Points (our communication platform). Some help take charge of the household, and some students are actually living on their own, so it's important to me that I connect with students as part of family engagement. I always encourage students to ask questions and talk to them directly to see how they feel about everything.

Partnering with community agencies is a core part of Naira's role, and she has grown these relationships over time:

Families often reach out to me with housing and food needs as well as clothing, medical, and legal needs. I regularly partner with agencies around our community and get our families connected to them. Now that I have formed partnerships in our community, I have a long list of available resources. I started with forming one-on-one relationships. Now I attend various meetings each month and serve on committees that focus on multilingual student needs.

"It will be increasingly important to establish trust with our multilingual families. We cannot just expect families to be okay and not need any support. We must let families know we are here for them and that we hear their concerns."

What ideas for building trusting relationships in your context do you have after reading through this vignette? Record your thoughts below.