

Collaborating in the District: Starting and Sustaining a Multilingual Family Leadership Committee

This resource offers guidance on how to start and sustain a multilingual family leadership committee. Educators can use the information provided to establish a committee in their district or to build on what they already do.

"Families' voices guide our work, helping us better understand what information is most needed. We've addressed all questions collaboratively. This builds confidence and clarity for families and strengthens the supports students receive daily." —Hannah Ramontal, Miami-Dade County Public Schools

Goals

A multilingual family leadership committee offers opportunities to

- Strengthen partnerships between families, communities, and schools to ensure students receive a high-quality education.
- Ensure that every multilingual family feels informed, empowered, and included.
- Ensure that every decision the district makes centers the needs of multilingual learners and their families.

Getting Started

- Work with a few families and community liaisons to create initial goals, communications, and committee structure.
- Plan for language access accommodations (for example, provide interpreters for in-person or virtual meetings, translate written material, and research apps that will support families across language groups in connecting with each other).
- Send district-wide communications to all multilingual families in the languages the families prefer. These communications should include the following:
 - One or two sentences that describe the purpose of the committee
 - A short survey to identify multilingual families interested in participating in the committee

Example Survey

1. Family member's name (first and last)

2. Child's name(s) (first and last)

3. Name of school(s) your child attends

4. Grade level(s)

5. Meeting preference

☐ In person (meal and childcare provided)

☐ Virtual

6. Roles you are interested in (check all that apply)

☐ Attending meetings

☐ Working on projects

☐ Connecting with other multilingual families

☐ Not sure yet

7. Name and email of community liaison(s) you recommend inviting

- Send a short staff survey to identify interested district- and school-based leaders (including formal and informal leaders). Be sure to include people who are multilingual learners themselves to ensure the voices at the table reflect the lived experiences of the families and students they serve.
- Encourage families and educators to spread the word. Personal invitations through text messages, phone calls, and community events are often more effective than email for engaging families.

Choosing Topics

- Choose topics based on questions families have or areas they would like to explore.

Example Agenda

1. Welcome, agenda, and goals
2. District Lau Plan
3. Academic progress of multilingual learners
4. Adoption of new materials
5. WIDA ACCESS assessment
6. Federal and state assessments
7. Graduation pathways
8. District parent academy
9. Community partnerships
10. Closing and review of action items

Sustaining the Committee: Actions and Reflections

- During meetings, provide opportunities for families to share and engage with one another and with district staff. Uplift families' knowledge, their role as experts, and their multilingualism and multiculturalism.
- Identify both themes and unique ideas that families share for follow-up. Make a plan of action that includes timelines and clearly defined responsibilities.
- Offer multiple entry points and committee roles, such as leadership roles, event planning, short-term projects, or mentoring other families.
- Share notes and action items with all attendees and in regular district and school communications to support accountability.
- Connect with individuals and families who wanted to attend but couldn't, and ask if they have feedback or ideas to share.

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