

Collaborating in the Classroom Video Transcript

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Natalie Lau-Chien: One of the ways that I've tried to build connections between multilingual learner families and the instruction in school is at the beginning of the school year, I would invite parents to write me a letter in their home language, sharing anything that they would like me to know about their child, whether it's their personal background, their culture, or just strengths and weaknesses. Really anything that they thought was important for me to know about their child. After that, my program assistant and I would read them. If they were in Spanish, you could translate them, or today we can just use Google Translate. And then I could use that information to give me ideas for seeing any connections between their background and any content that we're learning in class, and also just a way to initiate conversations about their interests. And then I could also use personal goals, um, that the parents had for their child to help me to influence the way that I guided my students to reach their own personal goals.

Yulia Akulshina-Prys: So Betsy and I have been, um, co-teaching and collaborating while teaching our kindergarten multilingual learners for about seven months, and, um, we have been supporting their families as well.

Betsy Lutch: We have a platform called ClassDojo, and everything is really transmitted that way, um, and the best part of it is it actually translates to the Arabic language as well. So we really have a kind of a strong and clear way to, uh, disseminate information. The fun part was inviting moms in. So of course they felt these centers were, um, made very simple, um, and to the point, and the mothers felt confident in being able to present it to the children and, you know, produce these things and help them, um, do that themselves. Of course, it was all kindergarten friendly.

Yulia Akulshina-Prys: Betsy and I have a few tips for you. So first of all, start with something really welcoming and simple so that families are comfortable participating. It can be something related to their culture. Let's say if it's around the time of Ramadan, it can be a Ramadan, um, read aloud activity, or Ramadan center activity, or maybe even, um, bringing some samples of iftar food and sharing with each other. It can be creating, um, an Arabic word wall or Ramadan word wall. Another idea that we had is show and tell.



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And show and tell can be, since our students are from basically the same culture, but some families travel back to Yemen or travel to Saudi Arabia for pilgrimage. If they bring something significant or they bring back an interesting story, they can come and share in their first language or in the English language, in their preferred language. And finally, since, um, Arab American Heritage Month is coming up and it's in April, that's a great idea to invite families and to run some centers around Yemeni culture and Arabic culture, when girls can have some henna done on their hands, and boys can probably participate in their traditional Yemeni dance, and maybe there can be some other crafts, um, or ideas that our moms will share with us first, and then we will try to implement that.

Betsy Lutch: And we even, adding one more thing, we even thought perhaps that we could include some of the older children. We have a unique situation here where we are kindergarten from to eighth grade. It's a very small school, only one grade level, um, one grade per, per grade level. But it's unique in that way, and we're thinking maybe we could to include some of the older kids as well.

Yulia Akulshina-Prys: That's a great idea. Thank you for collaborating with me, Betsy. You are a rock star.

Betsy Lutch: Oh, it's been delightful. We've had so much fun.

Voiceover: We would like to thank Yulia Akulshina-Prys, Betsy Lutch, and Natalie Lau-Chien for sharing their experiences and stories. We appreciate you uplifting ongoing collaboration and connections between multilingual learners, educators, and families.