

Pushpanjali's Advice

Video Transcript

Note: Transcripts from this event are machine generated. Please contact the WIDA Client Services Center at help@wida.wisc.edu for accommodation needs or questions.

My name is Pushpanjali Sengupta. I think a couple of things that, um, really helped me or might help someone else when they're thinking about, um, engaging families is, um, don't be afraid to start. What works for one building might not work for another one. So wherever you start, it might be the right spot for you. There's no, um, no particular, um, way or particular place where you have to start. I think it is helpful if you can collaborate with someone from your building because then you're not doing it alone and you can get their perspective and it really, um, opens up a lot of good conversation when you're collaborating with others and the parents also see that. So that's, um, I think a great positive.

Um, the other thing I would be mindful about is how I'm talking to or communicating with the families and the parents. So, um, I have to be mindful of not talking down to the parents or the families, not telling them, um, this is the right way of doing things. This is the right way, or this is how you can read to your, um, child at home or do it only in English. This is how we do it in America. Um, instead of that, maybe going in with an open mind and thinking about what can I learn from the families and parents? And that really helped me because, um, it also made me realize how much skills and knowledge our families were getting into the building, but also opened up, um, communication with the families because once they saw that I was asking them, or we were asking them for feedback or what works for them or to share what they do at home and how they do it, they were really eager to, um, share and talk to each other and help us build a better, um, community in our school building.

It's okay to start small, whether you have one family coming or whether you have a handful. Um, it's, it's absolutely okay to start small because when one family comes, what I have seen with my experience is, they go back and share. And when they share, it is more powerful than just hearing back from the teacher or the educators. When they hear from another family in the community that "I went to this event at school and this is how it went, this is, um, what I could, um, share with the educators. And I got to, um, share my knowledge and what we do. Our language is important" and things like that. Then you will see slowly more and more families are going to come and join. When you

start small, it is more manageable and then once the parents come and the families come, they also want to help. So you are not doing it alone and not, everything is not on you.

It's also important to reflect on the process. So once we have an event, my colleague and I, we um, go over what went well, what are the things that we could change, whether it's some technical where, you know, maybe the translation service was not working as well or whether we need to rethink the time or we need to rethink what topics are coming up or how to reach out in a better way with the families. Some other things that I think really helps once you have an event to sit down and not wait to do it last minute, but sit down right after, if you can, and, uh, collaborate with other, um, staff members and stakeholders to reflect on the process and see what could be, um, done differently or what could be improved.

What we do is early in the year, we make sure that we have all the dates that we need on the calendar, and I put it on the calendar from the front office, and we make sure the admins know so that we are not canceling it last minute. Um, because it's really, um, doesn't show well if last minute we are like, oh, something else is coming up. We need the space, so we need to cancel. So be very aware of it. I think that really helps and everyone knows ahead of time. I've seen that local community is pretty helpful, so asking for some donation from local restaurants or grocery stores always is a good idea.