

Home-School Partnership with ELL Families

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Dedication Page

I dedicate this capstone project to my sister Pamela R. (Linza) Conley for her endless support and selflessness. Her lifetime experience as an ELL has been an important source of my inspiration to work in the field of TESOL.

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Abstract

This capstone project will address the overarching question: What tools will effectively create and maintain positive connections between school and home for ELL families? Creating ways to link home and schools is important because general education teachers who teach ELLs have reported that they do not know how to connect with ELLs' families to support their academic progress (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Through my chapter 2 literature research there were three main challenges facing ELL families to have a connection with the school. The three barriers that were found were language barriers, sociocultural barriers, and assessment barriers. Chapter 3 presents the PD toolkit that provides the tools that educators need to effectively plan and implement a positive home-school partnership program. These tools will enable the teachers to engage with ELL families to help ELL students to succeed academically.

Keyterms: collaboration, family involvement, communication, Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)

Chapter 1: Introduction

Problem Statement

Home-school partnerships are important for a student's academic and social outcomes. I witnessed this powerful impact firsthand. I grew up in a household with a younger sister who was born deaf. Three years after her deafness was discovered, we had to move to a city from a rural area so that she could attend a school for the deaf. This school regularly reached out to my parents to help her develop academic and social skills. As a family, we encountered problems trying to support my sister's schoolwork. We were latch-key children; our mother and father had to work full time and we came home before they did. Our mother came home from work a bit early but was too busy making us supper. Also, our father and mother were often too tired to help us with homework. However, they made sure that we knew that it was important for us to finish our homework. They wanted to make sure that my deaf sister understood that she had to finish her homework, too. We all struggled in reinforcing this idea with her as she did not understand what we were trying to tell her.

The school recognized this communication challenge at home, so they taught us the most important skill: the manual alphabet. We learned it to help my sister acquire the English language, which is not an easy endeavor for an average deaf person. The whole family used the manual alphabet for communication with my sister. We made her feel involved in family activities and actively supported her homework learning. Due to our parents working full-time, the older siblings and I were responsible for checking in with our deaf sister daily to be sure that she understood her homework.

It is widely recognized that English language learner (ELL) teachers and ELL families need to work together to support ELL student's effective academic and social outcomes. In

this capstone project, I will be examining what the research says about home-school partnerships and its impact on ELLs' academic and social outcomes. Currently, a successful home-school partnership is crucial because in the Fall 2017 9.2% of public-school students in NYS were ELLs (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017).

In this capstone project, I will use ELLs for English Language Learners. Other four key terms in this project are Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), collaboration, and family involvement. BICS is conversational language and CALP is academic language (Cummins, 1979). Heineke and McTighe (2018) defined collaboration as: planning teams composed of educators to help support student learning. Family involvement will be defined in this capstone as family members monitoring the education of their family members (Mestry, 2004).

Through the lens of sociocultural theory, I will examine the issue of home-school partnerships. This capstone project will address the overarching question: What tools will effectively create and maintain positive connections between school and home for ELL families. Creating ways to link home and schools is important because general education teachers who teach ELLs have reported that they do not know how to connect with ELLs' families to support their academic progress (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013).

Significance of the Problem

Mapp and Kuttner (2014) showed direct correlations between ELL success and family involvement. The families may not be aware the opportunities available to the ELL student such as enrichment, career programs, and after school programs. Families may not know how to contact the school for general information such as scheduling and attendance and finding extra help for ELL students for academic success, state mandates, modifications, and

graduation requirements. ELL families may not be familiar with the American school system. The ELL families need to be able to understand that ELL students need to pass five Regents exams to obtain a high school diploma. Some ELLs may have not gone to school at all and not know how to pass or take these exams. This can also be a problem if the student cannot pass the Regents exam due to their low academic English language skills. As a result, some ELL students are likely to drop out of school or do not graduate (Plata-Potter & de Guzman, 2012).

Families face multiple issues when entering schools. These issues are magnified by linguistic, sociocultural and high-stake assessments. One issue that schools need to address is how to help ELL families navigate the school system, expectations of the classroom, and which classes are best for the ELL student. ELLs face challenges because they are not familiar with the official language of their new school. Families of the ELL students also need to give information about their children to the new school in English. What might seem like an easy task, for most, may be impossible if no one in the family speaks English.

Families also need to obtain information from the new school about what their children need to study there. The general lack of effective communication in conversational and academic English is a problem for students and families. Non-English-speaking families unable to communicate with teachers, administrators, counselors, and any other people who are indirectly and directly involved in their child's education.

Socioeconomic and Sociocultural Challenges

ELL students and their families face socioeconomic and sociocultural challenges when they arrive the United States. American Federation of Teachers (2002) noted that dropping out of school is a real problem for ELL families because these ELL students will not graduate.

Lovell (2016) noted one in five ELL students still drops out of school. As a result, students and their families can experience economic problems because they will not be able to get a job without a high school diploma. Therefore, not graduating with a diploma can produce unnecessary hardship for the ELL student's well-being in their future. According to Heineke and McTighe (2018), despite large numbers of ELL students in recent years, the U.S. educational institutions have largely failed to ensure their academic success. They further explained that ELL high school students still dropout at a significantly high rate as reflected in lower scores on standardized assessments.

Assessments

Another issue that ELLs face in school is passing high school state tests. ELLs in New York State need to pass their classes and high-stake assessments such as Regents Algebra and Science exams to be able to graduate. Maxwell (2014) indicated that ELL students are knowledgeable in the content areas, but they do not do well because they are not fluent in English, which is the language of these tests. ELL families need to be aware of these educational plans as part of the ELLs' education and the impact of these assessments on their future goals.

Purpose

The purpose of this capstone project is to empower general education teachers to understand and to have tools to support home-school relations. In addition, teachers will develop understandings about linguistic, sociocultural, and assessment challenges ELLs face in schools. In my capstone project, the overarching question will address what tools and strategies are effective for creating and maintaining positive connections between school and home for ELL students and families. There will be a professional development (PD)

workshop for general education teachers to help them understand the need for a home-school connection that will benefit the ELL students and families. The PD will first present the school personnel with tools and strategies that may help them alleviate the communication challenges of ELL families in their dealings with the school. The key words that will be introduced in the PD are collaboration and family involvement. The PD will also present activities to show the participants different ways of how they can best communicate with ELL families.

The PD will also inform general education teachers how important it is to have a tool kit with strategies in working with ELL families. The tool kit will become a mediating tool to help ELL families understand how to help their children and to understand how the school system works. ELL families need to have access to valuable school data and resources such as school clubs, sports, exam information, schedules, tutors, interpreters, counselors, and frequent updates in the families' home language. Additionally, they will need access to information about opportunities such as career training and pre-college programs available to ELL students after high school graduation. ELL families will need to know and help to advocate for their children to enter programs, to retake exam, to participate in school and after school activities, to contact the school and teachers, to find extra help for students' academic success and to find enrichment opportunities such as sports clubs, music, and others.

Good home-school connections can create and support academic and career opportunities for the ELL student. According to NYSUT Education and Learning Trust (2020), ELL students can get knowledge from several people, not just teachers. The benefit of having good communication between home and school is that ELL students and their families will be

able to express their concerns and get the help with academic work, assessments, and post-graduation plans that they may not have the knowledge about without this communication.

The PD facilitator will assist general education teachers in identifying family involvement tools that will be effective for creating and maintaining positive connections between school and home for ELL students and families. There will be a follow-up PD session for a reflection activity about the effectiveness of the developed toolkit.

Summary

All general education teachers are ELL teachers, but not all of them know how to connect with the families of ELLs who face sociocultural challenges of learning English, linguistic challenges especially when taking NYS assessments. In addition, educators may need help guiding ELLs to various programs available to them after they graduate from high school. The proposed PD will provide general teachers with a toolkit they can utilize to involve families to support the ELL's high school studies and endeavors.

In Chapter Two, I will conduct a general literature review on the impact of school-family connections on academic and social outcomes of ELLs. I will also review and assess various PD toolkits that promote positive school-family connections. Chapter 3 will offer detailed components of the PD, with an emphasis on how to make a tool kit that will help general education teachers inform parents about the school and to establish ways of regular communication between school and home. It will also offer various strategies and resources that I would put in a tool kit and what the general education teachers would like to see in a tool kit. This information will be shared in a second PD and the teachers will share what works and what does not work. In addition, I will include materials as appendices for the PD.

Chapter 4 will summarize the PD toolkit efficacy. General education teachers will be given the opportunity to assess the effectiveness of the PD home-school connection toolkit; they will determine whether it will have helped them communicate with the ELL families to be able to help their children work towards the goal of graduating from high school through the areas of academic work, assessments, and college/career readiness programs.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

ELL students can succeed in school if teachers take the right steps to help them and their families understand what is necessary for ELLs to graduate from high school. The literature has defined family as the primary caregiver of ELL students. Families ELL families consist of parents, sisters, brothers, aunts, uncles, grandparents, and other responsible adults, particularly community members. They may also include a foster parent, adopted parent, sibling, or multigenerational family members. Other supporters can also include friends and other social groups such as people from church. I have always heard the expression it takes a village to raise a child. While this expression may be cliché, literature review on home-school will show that this expression is true.

To help these ELLs achieve the goal of graduating from high school, school teachers can form a family-school partnership. Research has shown that teachers use various strategies to connect the ELL families to schools for supporting student academic achievement and success for graduation (Hornsby & LaFaele, 2011; Moll et al. 1992). Some important factors that ELL teachers have considered for partnering with ELL families are the barriers they face with language, sociocultural differences, and required assessments. The purpose of this chapter is to provide evidence-based data about home-school partnerships that help the ELL families overcome such barriers to facilitate the ELL student's school success. The following literature review will show the significance of this expression, It takes a village to raise a child. Research in home-school partnerships have found that it is important that teachers should be aware of the barriers facing ELLs and their families.

The following sections address common challenges ELL families typically face in the United States educational system as they relate to culture, language, and assessment. These

sections also offer a wide range of recommendations on how educators in different school districts can help ELL families overcome these barriers.

Language Barriers

Dealing with the English language is perhaps the most daunting task that ELL families encounter while navigating the complex educational system in America, regardless of their English proficiency levels. Much statistical and anecdotal data underscores this problem and have stated that ELL families benefit from school guidance through home languages to support ELL students (Tarasawa & Waggoner 2015).

Not only do many different people help ELL students, but ELL families also can help the ELL student. However, language barriers can make families feel secluded from the student's education. Teachers need find a way to bridge the gap between the ELL families and the school. Language barriers can be a hinderance for ELL students and their families to have a good school connection. Arias and Morillo-Campbell (2008) noted that schools find it difficult to connect with ELL families because of the linguistic differences. Their data collection on the nation's diverse ELL population looking primarily on the Latino population reported language as one of ELL families' struggles when working with schools. For example, Frankenberg and Lee (2002) found the lack of American English-speaking peers in the nation's schools districts that served ELL populations. They argued that "high levels of linguistic isolation highlight the dual challenges of teaching ELL students and involving ELL families in their children's education" (p. 6). Some ELL families are uncomfortable about meeting with the school staff because of their limited proficiency in English and, in some cases, in their native language.

Research by Soutullo et al. (2016) stated that teachers in a school district highly populated by immigrants reported that language was one of many barriers that makes home-school partnerships difficult. As a result, communication between home and school in that affected district was very low. For example, about 89 % of the ELL families did not attend school events and 72% of the families did not respond to correspondence sent from school. Also, 55.6% of the families felt awkward about working with schools because of the required screenings presented in English. To alleviate the language problem, the authors suggest enlisting the services of school psychologists to encourage meaningful home-school partnerships. School psychologists are specially trained to provide appropriate support for all students and families needing it, saying that “[t]he discipline of school psychology strongly advocates for the incorporation of respect for diversity, cultural responsiveness and social justice” (p. 226).

Having studied the 2001 longitudinal data prepared by the National Center for Statistics, Turney and Kao (2009) found that the amount of parental involvement at schools was strongly linked to the citizenship status of parents. They noticed that immigrant parents were generally less involved with their children’s education than non-immigrant parents because they reported feeling unwelcome and experiencing negative interactions with schools. One of the reasons provided by the authors is that immigrant parents did not have adequate English to be able to interact with school personnel comfortably. For example, a significant portion of Hispanic immigrant families reported language as a barrier in their dealings with schools. The researchers underscored the issue of language barriers as one of the biggest hurdles for parental engagement in schools.

In summary, ELL families are generally disconnected from schools because of their limited English proficiency levels. Schools can improve these circumstances by providing them with the right information via appropriate resources and accommodations, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Sociocultural Barriers

General research showed that ELL families who come from different cultures think and feel about education differently than American families do. Viewpoints of their children's schools are informed by their own beliefs and values. ELL families often do not see themselves having an active role in collaborating with schools as important team players in supporting their ELL children's academic needs (Mestry & Grobler 2007).

According to Lightbrown and Spada (2013), sociocultural theory is an explanation for knowledge and learning based on the assumption that all learning is first social then individual. Learning is viewed as a process that is socially mediated, that is, it is dependent on dialogue in face-to-face interaction. The claim is that "during communication, the learners jointly construct knowledge which is internalized by the individual" (p. 223). ELL students can learn from their family, school, and community. By having family and community involved, the home-school connection will have more advantages because teachers will be able to build lesson plans from the knowledge that the ELL students have gotten from the families and the community. It is important to know that getting to understand the ELL students' body language, gestures, and cultural differences can help families feel at ease to seek help and come to school activities and events.

Moll et. al (1992) explained that ELL households have home systems that do not bring into line with the traditional classroom routines. These families often interact with

individuals outside their household for frequent activities and outings that sometimes include learning experiences. Because of these networks, the ELL student is perceived at home as a “whole person, not merely as a student” (p. 133).

Zarate (2007) disclosed that Latino families believe that they are responsible for watching their ELL children’s personal and moral growth, so they can demonstrate appropriate classroom behavior necessary for academic success. One parent in Zarate’s study said: “The parent is obligated to check if the homework was done completely; the teacher is obligated to correct the homework” (p. 9).

Another example that clarifies the issue of sociocultural barriers is the story of another parent in Zarate’s study who said, “my children do their homework well, and I ask them questions about it — even if I don’t understand [the material]” (p. 9). These sociocultural disparities between homes and schools explain why Latino families felt challenged about their involvement in school.

King and Goodwin (2002) argued that teachers need to examine their own attitudes about parents, change negative attitudes about parents, and make a strong commitment to work with parents, so students will succeed. The authors continued to say that there is a common misconception that parents who are struggling are not able to help support the school. It is true that not all parents will respond to the same strategies used for parental engagement because each family has different needs. One example is the expectation of parents to join the Parent Teacher Association (PTA), but some families cannot join the PTA to help do things with school activities because both parents might be working two jobs and other family members are not available because of their caregiving duties for the ELL student. The authors said that families are unique, and all have their own cultural identity.

Here, cultural identity is the identity of belonging to a group. Another way to conceptualize cultural identity would be to consider people with the same cultural upbringing. King and Goodwin (date) explained that parent involvement is being active, consistent, and inclusive. In other words, the cultural resources and ELL families can be and should be tapped into for supporting schools; parents can contribute in other ways. For example, the grandmother collects and sends in bottle caps and the children discuss color, comparison, and symbols. King and Goodwin said that it is important to incorporate diverse teaching in the classroom.

On the other hand, King and Goodwin (date) stated that ELL parents also can have misconceptions about the teachers and school. For instance, parents noted that teachers do not discipline the child and do not expect much work from them. They also thought that teachers do not understand them. However, the authors stated that teachers and families need to work together to change stereotypical feelings, and instead, collaborate to come up with ways to establish and maintain two-way communications.

Research by Tarasawa and Waggoner (2015) explained that ELL families are not involved in schools due to cultural barriers. The authors cited the works of Lareau (2011) and Lee & Brown (2006) to clarify the lack of ELL parental involvement. They emphasized that the lack of traditional parental involvement in schools did not indicate lack of care. Rather, it was a product of various structural and cultural barriers.

To illustrate how ELL families have dealt with sociocultural barriers within American education, Tarasawa and Waggoner (2014) conducted a case study of Parkrose District. The study discusses the district's population. It has a high number of immigrants, refugees, and ELL students. The data also disclosed that more than 50 different languages are used in this

district. The study offered an example of sociocultural barriers that ELL families typically face. According to the study data, 88.5 of the district's students receive free or reduced-price lunch and one in four is an ELL (Oregon Department of Education 2020). Immigrant parents from Somalia, Vietnam, Mexico, and Ukraine were not involved in schools within the Parkrose School District, citing limited English proficiency, transportation problems, and feeling unwelcome.

In the study, the principal, Mr. Gray explained that the community leaders were contacted to help the schools in the district develop plans for building connections with parents and families from different cultures. For example, the district leaders collaborated with the leaders from Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization, Self Enhancement, Inc. (SEI), and Latino Network for outreaching to families from different sociocultural backgrounds. As a result of these partnerships, Parkrose made available free food, transportation, childcare, and translation services that made the school events accessible to these families.

Another example of home-school partnerships is that SEI recommended that one elementary school in the Parkrose district start hosting social events to support at-risk urban students. This school hosted its first annual student art show and high turnouts of families at this event were reported. Noted that the number of parents willing to participate in this school increased, Fischer Gray advised school districts seeking solutions for parental engagement to find out what is keeping your parents away. Do not assume it is because they are not interested. If you can galvanize parents and community members who speak the home languages to reach marginalized populations on their turf through home visits, churches, and community spaces, you will figure out how to best build school-home bridges for your district (p. 132).

According to Evans et al. (2020), around 30% of newly immigrated families' incomes falls below the federal poverty line. The authors also said that immigrant families face barriers in the following areas: getting acclimated to a new culture, not having enough English, having jobs that pay minimum wage, and living in subsidized housing and segregated neighborhoods (Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services [BRYCS], 2016; National Institutes of Health, 2016; Russo, 2013). The families of ELLs struggle with life in America because of their immigration status. They feel disoriented in their new surroundings and are unfamiliar with American cultural customs.

Evans et al. (2020) recommended school-wide advocacy to help immigrant families learn about community resources available to them. For example, parents should be advised of their right to provide alternative documentation such as a religious document or a doctor's note for school enrollment records (U. S. Department of Justice & U. S. Department of Education, n.d.).

The ELL families would benefit from teachers using the following communication strategies. First, have a system in place such as a phone call home with follow-up email or if needed a home visit to help ELL families get the communication they need to understand. Second, a classroom bilingual webpage, or a bilingual monthly newsletter. Having one of these in place will help families know where to get help if the ELL family needs emergency shelter, clothing donations, food pantries, and community resources. Lastly, it is important to include families by inviting the ELL families to cultural community events and making the classroom be warm and inviting to the ELL families. Try to involve them in the activities if they feel comfortable to do so.

Panferov (2010) did an ethnographic study of two ELL families to learn about the issues related to parent-school connections that support ELL student success. She noted the contrasting stances of ELL families about mandatory school attendance. The Pavlov children were eager to attend classes and behaved well. Conversely, the Omar children developed the habit of skipping school and missed school on some occasions because they got into fights in school and talked back to their teachers. Another difference noted in these homes was how parents and children interacted with each other and how the parents demonstrated their authority. Children of immigrant families tend to help their parents navigate living in America because of their better fluency in English. The Pavlov parents asked their children for help with understanding their bills, but made sure they had some control, whereas the mother of the Omar family was unable to secure her children's help in understanding their bills. The Omar mother struggled for control because women are regarded, in the Somali culture, as having no authority. Understanding cultural differences in relation to parental authority is important for home-school partnerships.

The interviews of these families also revealed another important point for consideration about home-school partnerships. On the one hand, the Pavlov family's communications with school were frequent and positive. On the other hand, the Omar family often got negative reports and the school's communications with them were spotty.

The above research about difficult sociocultural experiences that ELL families from different countries face provides educators with practical information that serves as guidance for supporting home-school partnerships. Whatever sociocultural challenge ELL families face, schools have the provisions for these families. These resources are discussed in more detail subsequently in this chapter.

Assessment Barriers

Assessment has been an important component of the American educational system. All students in the country are expected to take statewide tests to ensure that they make appropriate progress in obtaining competencies at appropriate levels as they move towards high school graduation. The research showed that a significant portion of ELL families did not know about typical assessment requirements and expectations (Colombo 2006). They came from educational systems that do not have them. Schools are doing everything they can to help these families understand that ELLs are not exempted from these testing mandates.

According to Heineke et al. (2018), despite large numbers of ELL students in recent years, the U.S. educational institutions have largely failed to ensure their academic success. Heinke's research team explained that there continues to be a significantly high rate of high school dropouts in this ELL population as reflected in lower scores on standardized assessments.

Colombo (2006) described a situation in a school district in Massachusetts where approximately 20% of ELL enrollment. These students scored low on the standardized tests. Noticing the increasing numbers of ELL students each year in the district since his arrival, the superintendent consulted the director of bilingual services, questioning the low test scores despite the extensive professional development training for the school personnel. The director suggested that the absence of ELL parental involvement was related to this problem. Many immigrant parents were unfamiliar with the district's requirements and expectations about state assessments. It was noted that a majority of the school district's personnel did not receive training on how to tap into the strengths and funds of knowledge of the ELL families. Colombo described funds of knowledge as the ways of knowing, learning, and acting,

suggesting that ELL families have a different understanding of America's education system. The author established that home-school partnerships assume that both schools and homes share a common culture, language, and background. In other words, although family involvement is important for school success, it is not an equal opportunity practice.

Experts have recommended that schools use various communication strategies that tap into the home languages of ELL families to notify them about assessment needs (Breiseth et. al 2015). These strategies will be discussed in the closing sections of this chapter.

Solutions for Problems Associated with Home-School Partnerships

To address the three different types of problems about home-school partnerships discussed above, educators turn to all kinds of resources provided by schools and professional organizations to support ELL students and families. For example, Coloring Colorado (n.d.) has a website that houses many guides, strategies, and videos from experienced professionals in the ELL field.

Legal Rights

Fenner et al. (2014) stated that schools are mandated to involve ELL families in supporting the educational needs of ELL students under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2001, also known as No Children Left Behind Act. For schools receiving Title I and/or Title III funds, ELL family engagement is required.

Research is needed here to show that some ELL families are not aware that their children have the right to obtain an education that meets their unique needs, so it is the school's responsibility to provide this information in their home language. For example, the Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBERN), that provides practical information for schools and educators who work with ELLs in New York State, mentions that the New York

State Education Department's Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages (OBEWL) has a guide that summarizes their legal rights related to public education available in 27 languages (New York State Department of Education, n.d.).

Respecting Diversity

Heinke et al. (2019) explained that linguistically responsive practice and scaffolding instruction development happens because of social interaction and are shaped by a variety of contextual factors. For educators, development occurs through active collaboration situated in diverse and complex classrooms, school, and communities. Therefore, educators who understand diversity do not view ELL families' cultures as "deficiencies to overcome" (Paris & Alim, 2014, p. 87). Instead, they view their cultures as sociocultural strengths and celebrate these differences in the classroom.

New York State Education Department (2019) has a publication that has useful information for home-school connections. The guidelines suggest that educators should evaluate the physical environment of the classroom and school to ensure that sociocultural diversities of ELL families are authentically represented and respected. According to the CR-SE guidelines, another best practice for overcoming sociocultural barriers is for teachers to reach out to ELL families to learn about their cultures and learning goals and styles of their children to understand their beliefs and values as they relate to supporting ELL students in the classroom. This publication further suggests that educators should make sure to build into their schedules for meetings in different ways for listening to concerns of ELL families. Examples include in-person or virtual meetings that can be formal or informal, class visits, phone conversations, texting or email. Teachers who employ sociocultural strategies use approaches and strategies that respect the values and cultural norms of ELL families.

Teachers host gatherings and activities to create an inclusive school community. Teachers also help ELL families whenever the families feel threatened in the school environment. Additionally, teachers are responsible for reviewing school and district policies to ensure that these guidelines are updated and appropriately address the needs of ELL families. These activities are recommended per the CR-SE handbook.

For a home-school partnership to work, Panferov (2010) suggested doing personal interviews with ELL families to find out the best methods of communication between the home and the school. Panferov said that school districts typically have shared important initiatives and information through television and radio, which are largely inaccessible to ELL families. The author recommended telephone call trees, listservs, texting, or Internet Web-communication systems for ELL families and encourages schools to pair new parents with experienced parents to help them understand how school operates. Schools are also recommended to use multilingual media outlets through the bilingual community to communicate with ELL parents.

Another strategy to increase ELL parental engagement is for school districts to offer workshops offered in their home language to teach parents how to help their children with their homework. These workshops need to be scheduled around the work schedules of ELL parents and childcare should be provided so they are able to attend. An additional aspect of a successful home-school partnership is to enable ELL families unlimited access to books, study materials, libraries, labs, to facilitate their help of their children's school progress.

Interpreters

Communication and language are other barriers directly or indirectly discussed in many of the studies presented here. A solution that can be proposed is access to interpreters.

Atkinson (2017) argued that interpreters can play a key role in the success of the home-school connection. Qualified interpreters would be beneficial for ELL families. Teachers should know that when looking for an interpreter, most interpreters should have a bachelor's degree. Interpreters should also have a proficiency language level consistent with the ELL family so the ELL family will be able to communicate with the school. The interpreter should also have good listening, reading, speaking, concentration skills, and writing skills (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). A qualified interpreter is a way to help the families feel the connection with the school.

Communication with ELL Families

Having a communication system set in place can help ELL families feel a sense of belonging. Breiseth et al. (2015) recommended that the ELL families would benefit from teachers using the following communication strategies. First, have a system in place such as a phone call home with follow-up email or a home visit, if needed, to help ELL families get the communication they need to understand. Second, run a classroom bilingual webpage, or a bilingual monthly newsletter. Having one of these in place will help families know where to get help if the ELL family needs emergency shelter, clothing donations, food pantries, and community resources. Last, it is important to include families by inviting the ELL families to cultural community events and making the classroom be warm and inviting to the ELL families. Educators should attempt to involve them in the activities if they feel comfortable to do so.

Borba (2009) indicated that having family involvement has a positive impact on the ELL students school achievement. It promotes interest in school community leading to increased involvement. Students and families feel appreciated and accepted into the school community

and are more likely to become involved whenever teachers establish a connection with the ELL students and their families (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Research has indicated that effective teachers consider the educational level, language, and culture, and the home situation of the families (Heineke et. al 2018). Teachers could use language that is comprehensible for the families. Teachers should be encouraged to attend workshops that help them understand how to collaborate and how to accommodate all families. Teachers know that it is important for families to feel accepted. Families have an abundance of knowledge about that can help the teachers know how the students can learn. Teachers can find ways to bridge communication gaps with the families to have a better connection.

Another recommendation to improve communication with ELL families is to train teachers. Rivera (2018) explained that teachers are not always educated on how to work with ELL families. Minority families struggle to understand the American educational system. These families feel ignored and marginalized because of limited understanding and language abilities. Inviting parents to lead and to participate in school activities makes families feel like part of the school community. Training for all teachers is an essential factor for helping the ELL families. Teachers should know the resources that would help families. Some things that were considered to help teachers know how to provide resources for communication for the ELL families. Teachers should be provided with a PD workshop that can help them to break down language barriers and miscommunication between schools and ELL homes.

Conclusion

The literature on home-school partnerships for ELL families discussed in this chapter shows various sorts of common disengagements between teachers and ELL families, which occur primarily due to language and sociocultural disparities. Another area of concern is that

ELL families need information about assessment, which is required for high school graduation. The purpose of home-school partnerships is to engage with ELL families to support ELL student learning at home and school. School educators must provide ELL families with important information about curriculum and ELL student progress that is linguistically, socially, and culturally accessible for supporting overall ELL student success. These challenges require that schools supporting ELLs implement appropriate professional and learning opportunities as well as available resources for teachers to reinforce and expand their understanding of the strategies used to work together with ELL families to support ELLs. The researched information discussed herein lays the foundation for a PD toolkit I will be presenting in Chapter 3. The goal is to present a PD with tools and strategies that will create and maintain positive connections between school and home for ELL families. This PD and toolkit will enable teachers to consider experiences, strengths, and needs of ELL families to increase their awareness of the challenges ELL families face. With this information, teachers will apply their skills and decide on which school resources that will foster positive home-school partnerships. The PD will also provide a follow-up for teachers to self-assess the efficacy of home-school connections with ELL families for supporting ELLs at home and in school.

Chapter 3: Capstone

As discussed in earlier chapters of this capstone project, the central goal of the two-day Professional Development is to strengthen teachers' ability to work collaboratively with ELL families to support ELL students' success in school. According to the literature review I presented in chapter 2, asking ELL parents' input is important. Borba (2009) and Henderson et al. (2002) state that ELL families' say is important for them to feel welcomed at school and for their involvement in their children's education. Therefore, prior to the first-day PD, ELL families will receive a questionnaire through their children. I will give these questionnaires to the ELL students the first week of school. This activity will occur before the first-day PD so that the questionnaire data will help shape the two-day PD.

Two-Day PD Goal

The main goal of the two-day PD of all TESOL and general education teachers is to present research about successful home-school partnerships as well as to assist PD participants to plan activities that will involve ELL families in home-school partnerships. The PD goals are to encourage participants to develop meaningful and organic interactions that will benefit ELL students in their school. For example, according to American Federation of Teachers (2007), research suggests surprising ELL families with phone calls to share positive comments about their children's academic performance.

Two-Day PD Activities

I will offer two-day PD activities based on research reviewed in chapter 2 that stresses the importance of involving ELL families in home school partnerships. Using a PowerPoint slideshow, I will delineate key elements of what a successful home-school partnership should include as recommended by Rivera (2008) and Arias et al. (2008) to create home-school

partnership programs developed in accordance with ELL families' sociocultural needs. Borba (2009) and Henderson et. al (2002) state that it is important to consider perspectives of ELL families for positive home-school connections. On the first day of the PD I will begin by sharing my personal experience and the reason for this PD. According to Duffy (2018), storytelling is a way for people to share their lived experiences to develop connections and appreciation for humanity. I will share my personal experiences that led me to design the two-day PD. My personal story, as described in Chapter 1, will help teachers develop a connection with me as their facilitator, which in turn can encourage participants to actively engage in the two-day PD activities. I will ask PD participants to view a few videos and give them handouts and materials. PD participants will use these handouts and materials brainstorm ideas for their own home-school partnerships that they will pilot after the first-day PD. The pilot program will run until the second-day PD. The second-day PD will allow teachers to share results of home-school partnerships developed during the first PD. Teachers will evaluate success and failures in order to develop a plan for the spring or the subsequent academic year.

Questionnaire Data - Pre-PD

To help shape the two-part PD that focuses on bolstering effective home-school partnerships, I will first present an agenda of Day 1 PD, (see Appendix, Figure 1), then develop open-ended questions about home-school connections based on the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 to find out what ELL families need to get involved with school and their classes. This will be a questionnaire for ELL parents. (see Appendix, Figure 2). I will request translators, hired by the school district, to translate the developed questionnaire into the home languages of all ELL families of enrolled ELLs. Tarawawa and Waggoner (2014) show that it is important to involve community leaders, so I will also ask translators serve as

liaison between the school and the home to help me coordinate the drafting and delivery of this questionnaire which will be sent to the families through ELL students. Additionally, I will organize and analyze the data to identify common themes. I will provide the results of ELL family questionnaire input, (See Appendix, Figure 3) Finally, I will record and prepare the findings from the questionnaire as well as corroborating research literature to frame the goals and activities of the first day of the PD for the PD.

Detailed Product of PD

The PD will consist of two sessions. Each session will be 90 minutes long. The first-day session will be held in a big conference room on the first day scheduled by the school district. All general education and TESOL teachers working with ELL students will be invited, by school administration, via e-mail to participate in the two-day PD event. The activities for teams of teachers will include an introduction of the facilitator, an icebreaker, a presentation about home-school partnerships, a Watch-Think-Share, and the creation of a toolkit, in the form of a binder or electronic copy, for the creation of a home-school partnership program.

At the first session, general education and ESOL teachers will be given a toolkit/binder with vital information about school-based and community-based resources that can facilitate their home-school partnership pilot program with ELL families. The toolkit/binder, paper or digital, will also include other PD materials and spaces for the general education and ESOL teachers to add custom-made materials for the families they will be teaching. Additionally, the binder will also include an analysis of the questionnaire. As I stated earlier, the questionnaire will be translated, emailed, and/or distributed by community partners. The purpose of sharing the questionnaire is to provide teachers with practical ideas and suggestions about collaboration with ELL families based on the advice of (Heineke and

McTighe (2018) who encourage the use and dissemination of this type of data - questionnaires or community outreach efforts.

General education and ESOL teachers will be divided into three teams of four to six participants, depending on the number of attendees. Dividing the whole group into smaller teams will enable each participant to express their viewpoints and ideas and is a time-saving strategy for accomplishing PD goals. During the first day I will give PD teams a toolkit (in the form of a binder or digital file) of a home-school partnership program that contains ideas and activities present. Teams will also brainstorm and develop additional activities to develop their connections with ELL families (see Appendix, Figure 5). All teams will pilot their home-school partnership programs before the second-day PD session. Due to the large number of potential collaborators, teams will be given six weeks between the first-day PD session and the second-day PD session to plan with ELL families to launch and implement the home-school partnership projects. By the end of the first-day PD, general education and ESOL teachers will have the toolkit materials and a school specific plan of what their "home-school partnership will attempt to accomplish.

The second-day PD session will be scheduled after school during the month of October. The goal/target/purpose of the second PD day is to give teacher the opportunity to reflect on successes, challenges and plan. Here teachers will have time and the opportunity to meet to discuss the outcomes of the home-school partnership pilot they shaped at the first-day PD. This 90-minute session will take place in the same conference room where the first PD session will have been held. Teams of teachers will share their experiences of running the pilot program with other teams of teachers. They will discuss the resources that were used to help ELL families between the months of August (the first PD) and October (the second PD).

Teachers will also share with other teachers what worked for them and show examples or else what did not work to create a new toolkit of resources that are effective that support home-school partnerships. This last activity will wrap up the second PD.

Detailed Description of the First Day PD

Day 1 Agenda:

Learning Goals: The purpose of this PD is to strengthen teachers' ability to work collaboratively with ELL families to support students' success in school. Teachers will work together to plan activities that will build a toolkit for all teachers to be able to use in their schools to help bridge the gap between ELL families and school.

- 1.) Introduction: First, I will introduce myself and talk about why I wanted to learn more about this topic due to my personal experiences. Then I will present the agenda. (5 minutes)
- 2.) Icebreaker: Next, I will present an ice breaker activity. In this activity, I will ask participants to explain what collaboration means. Responses from each participant can help all participants to get to know each other and understand their viewpoints about the word collaboration. Research by King and Goodwin (2002) on ELL home-school partnerships stresses the importance of creating a welcoming environment for ELL families. Through this ice breaker activity, PD participants will begin a process of getting to know each other and collaborating. Based on this model, they will already have a tool to use for getting acquainted and work with ELL families. (5 minutes)
- 3.) Video Activity and Questions: The video responses open the discussion on what first impressions teachers can make on ELL families when they meet for the first time. This video activity supports the research of Lightbrown and Spada (2013) about the sociocultural challenges of ELL families face.

What did you notice from watching this video? (10 minutes)

What were you thinking and/or experiencing as you were watching this video?

What feeling did you share with the deaf person in the video?

4.) Documentary and Q&A Session: Next, I will present the results of the ELL family questionnaire. Also, I will show the documentary of ELL family parents views. After watching the documentary, the teachers will discuss as a whole group what they think of the results and then this will lead to the next part of the PD. (Watch- Think- Share) (15 minutes)

5.) Presentation: What did we learn from the questionnaire? (5 minutes)

6.) Presentation: Presenter will pass a handout for the teachers and explain the activity they will do. (Roadmap Handout) (10 minutes)

7.) Planning Time: Teachers will work in groups based on assigned teams. (30 minutes)

8.) Closing: 1.) What take- a- way did you get from this PD?

2.) What activities will you plan to present for the second PD? (5 minutes)

As mentioned earlier, the goal of the PD is to develop effective home-school partnerships based on the literature research in Chapter 2. I will introduce the agenda (see appendix, Figure 1) and myself as the facilitator. Next, I will present an ice breaker activity, a good way to start a PD session to help participants feel comfortable and accepted. In this activity, I will ask participants to explain what collaboration means. Responses from each participant can help all participants to get to know each other and understand their viewpoints about the word collaboration. Research by King and Goodwin (2002) on ELL home-school partnerships stresses the importance of creating a welcoming environment for ELL families. Through this ice breaker activity, PD participants will begin a process of getting to know each other and collaborating.

Based on this model, they will already have a tool to use for getting acquainted and work with ELL families.

After the ice breaker activity, I will ask teachers to view a brief video by a deaf professional demonstrating her views as an ELL individual. The signer talks about the feeling of being unwelcome and left out and the video is not captioned. I have purposefully made it not to be captioned to put teachers in the place of an ELL's experiences of feeling unwelcome and left out. I will ask teachers to share their impressions of the video through open-ended questions: What did you notice from watching this video? What were you thinking and/or experiencing as you were watching the video? and "What feelings did you share with the deaf person in the video? The video responses open the discussion on what first impressions teachers can make on ELL families when they meet for the first time. This video activity supports the research of Lightbrown and Spada (2013) about the sociocultural challenges of ELL families face.

Next, I will ask the participants to view a brief documentary of ELL parents about school-home collaboration and then be invited to share their insights about the video. This video considers ELL parents' perspectives about their involvement in school. I will ask this question: "What did you notice from watching this video?" Responses will lead to the next activity – the actual collaborating of PD participants that addresses the three areas (language, sociocultural and assessment barriers) in chapter 2. As mentioned in chapter 2, Henderson and Mapp (2002) argue that ELL families are likely to get involved in school when teachers reach out to connect with them. Responses will lead to the next agenda item – a review of model home-school partnerships with ELL families.

I will present literature that supports the creation and fostering of Ell-School partnerships. of home-school partnerships with ELL families. The presentation will address key concepts that

will remind teachers of communication strategies useful and not useful for connecting with ELL families (see Appendix, Figure 3). I will read out loud the concepts parental involvement/engagement, collaboration, as well as the following terms coined by Cummins (1979) -- basic interpersonal communication skills or BICS and cognitive academic language proficiency or CALP to remind the participants about the language and sociocultural differences between the school system and the ELL families. I will also offer PD participants an opportunity to share their thoughts about these concepts in a whole group discussion for ten minutes. The next activity will be the actual collaborating of PD participants that addresses the three areas in chapter 2.

I will then share a handout that has the Road Map that teachers can adapt for their own classroom (see Appendix, Figure 5). The handout will be another tool that will become a part of the new toolkit that participants will co-create. In chapter 2, Lightbrown and Spada (2013) talk about the need for teachers to be aware of ELL families' sociocultural backgrounds so they can feel comfortable supporting their children in school. With this in mind, participants will plan an after-school program in which ELL families will be invited to a cultural week/day event to present about why and how they celebrate one of their holidays. Participants will brainstorm the nuts and bolts of the cultural program such as identifying potential dates and checking in with ELL families through school email for their availability and interest in participating in this program before finalizing the date of the cultural event. The activity will prompt teachers to both build and strengthen their partnership with ELL families. I will provide teachers with resources on how to connect with ELL families. For instance, creating a plan to informing parents (with no or limited English) about state mandated Regents exams. At the conclusion of the first-day PD, I

will ask PD participants: What are the key takeaways? What activities from the Road Map will you complete?

Detailed Description of the Second PD

Day 2 Agenda

Learning Goal: The teachers will be able to Reflect and Present their new toolkit ideas to assess the overall success of their activities from the Roadmap Handout in terms of home-school partnership with ELL families. Teachers will also collaborate with the other teachers to help make a toolkit that will build the home-school partnership.

1.) Introduction: I will say good morning to all and a welcome back with a strength-based opener question. What is your favorite vacation place? (10 minutes) This is another example of collaboration.

2.) Small group Work: (45minutes) Power Point with rules/guidelines, teachers work in their assigned teams to answer reflection questions. Questions will be on the powerpoint.

3.) Whole Group Presentations: (10 minutes each group to present.) There are three groups for a total of 30 minutes. The teachers will present their activities that worked and the ones that did not.

4.) Closing: Questions:

1.) What is your takeaway from this PD? (5 minutes)

2.) What do you think could be a future research topic that would help with the home-school connection for ELL families?

Teachers will put their answers on a handout that is provided and then email to the presenter as a reflection of what they have learned and what they want to learn at future PDs about the ELL home-school connection.

I will send teachers a reminder email about the second-day PD. In this email, I will ask teachers to bring their results of the pilot home-school partnership program to the second-day PD. The second-day PD will take place six weeks after the first-day PD. As aforementioned, the second-day PD will be 90 minutes long and will be in a large conference room. The second-day PD will consist of a group activity and short presentations by each group. The learning targets are for PD participants to assess the overall success of their activities from the Road Map in terms of home-school partnership with ELL families. PD participants will share their experiences which will eventually be documented in the toolkit/binder. First, I will ask teachers to be seated with the members of their teams. I will then give the group activity instructions to teams about sharing their experiences with the home-school partnership program. I will use my PowerPoint slide to provide the group activity instructions and questions. I will ask each team to appoint a leader and a scribe for the group activity. I will also ask that each team member respond to all questions. I will pose the following questions for the team to discuss:

1. Can you review key takeaways from the first-day PD?
2. Can you give examples of activities and/or resources used in your school's ELL home school partnership program?
3. What were your 'AHA' moments?
4. What are the most important lessons you have learned?
5. Would these lessons be useful for your toolkit? Why or why not?
6. The exit ticket will be one thing you think will help your future class. What will you put in your toolkit?

The team scribe will record each team member's responses to each of the above questions. This group activity will be 45 minutes long. Each team leader will use the scribe's notes to do a

10-minute presentation to the whole group. The leader will present their group's reflections about their collaboration with ELL families. Each PD participant has the opportunity to document their own notes during the group activity presentation. I will then announce that I will update the toolkit by typing up the scribe's notes from each group and email the toolkit to everyone who will have participated in both PD. I will also conclude the second-day PD by asking everyone to email me with their suggestions for new research ideas for future PD. This last activity will wrap up the second-day PD.

Comments and questions

The ultimate goal of these two-day PD is for teachers to have a toolkit that enables them to connect with ELL families. Teacher as participants will familiarize themselves enough with the material about home-school partnerships to find ways to connect with the ELL families to ensure their ELL children's success in school. As referenced previously, perspectives of ELL families are important for teachers to hear.

Conclusion

After doing this two-day PD teachers should be able to collaborate and have a toolkit that will help them with their home-school partnership with ELL families. The teachers will also have resources to go to that will help them with understanding the three barriers mentioned in my literature review. With the information provided in this two-day PD teachers should have a stepping-stone to start having a successful classroom with their ELL families. I also believe that this will help teachers understand that we all need to feel welcomed and respected. However, I would still hope that the research on the home-school partnership should continue to make it even better. This is why at the end of the PD I asked for future PD ideas for the home-school connection partnership.

Chapter 4: Reflection

Introduction

The purpose of my capstone project is to be able to find research to help educators find ways to improve home-school connections for ELL families. Often, the families may not be aware of the opportunities available to them to help families. Some of the problems identified found in the research were how to communicate effectively with ELL families and how to give them accurate information (Breiseth et.al 2015). Other things to consider were that ELL families did not understand the American school system as far as assessments, graduating requirements, extra help for ELL students for academic success, how to facilitate interpreters, translators, and community resources that are available to help the ELL families (Mestry & Grobler 2007). Also, another factor was that is better if teachers have the proper training to understand the needs of ELL families and this does not always happen in college training to become a general education teacher (Fenner & Snyder 2019).

Conclusions

What did I do?

Through my research I was able to find many resources to build a “toolkit” to help teachers and ELL families establish a connection. In my research there were many options to help ELL families have a home-school connection. Language barriers is one of the obstacles that ELL families have trouble with to have a better school connection. In my research the author Soutello et al. (2016) states that “89 percent of ELL families did not attend school events and seventy two percent did not respond to correspondence to school due to language barriers. Also, 55.6 % of the families did not participate with the school because of the information being presented in English. It was suggested that the use of school psychologists

would be helpful to bridge the gap between the ELL families and school because the school counselor would incorporate diversity, cultural responsiveness and social justice” (p. 226). Schools can bridge the gap with ELL families by providing the right information using appropriate resources and accommodations suited for the ELL families. The second barrier is sociocultural barriers. Author Lighthouse and Spada (2013) pointed out that it is important to have family and community involvement as this will help with teachers planning and implementing lesson plans because the teachers will be using familiar background knowledge to make the connection. It also builds self-esteem for the students if they are learning from things they can already associate with. King and Goodwin (2002) emphasizes that teachers need to understand their attitudes about ELL families and not have negative attitudes about the ELL parents just because they are from a different culture. King and Goodwin also go on to say that parent involvement is being active, consistent, and inclusive. Which means teachers need to use the cultural resources that the ELL families and the community can use to help support their lesson plans. By doing this both the ELL families and the teacher benefit due to this helps teachers with lessons and it helps ELL students with something they are familiar with which in turn will help the ELL student feel comfortable. According to Tarawawa and Waggoner (2014) and Evans et al. (2020) families struggled to participate due to limited English proficiency, transportation problems, and feeling unwelcome. It was suggested that these families be put in contact with support from community leaders that could help with some of these burdens, and this could help ELL families feel welcome with this support. One of the last components addressed by Heineke (2018) presented was that parents need to have more opportunity to know more about the American Educational System

such as the importance of assessments. With the provision of this “toolkit” I feel ELL families will feel welcomed and will feel connected to the school.

What did I learn?

Through my research I was able to learn that it is important to be able to communicate with ELL families to help them with basic needs such as food, transportation, daycare, healthcare, housing, understanding the American school system, interpreters, translators, and understanding that everyone needs to feel they are welcomed and accepted to help them feel successful, according to authors King and Goodwin (2002). These authors believe that ELL families need to know that they are part of the school and we as teachers need to help the ELL families feel they can come to school and feel welcomed and be a part of the school. Home visits, phone calls, emails, with positive feedback are a great way to help with a home-school connection.

Authors Fenner, and Snyder (2019) state training teachers to develop home-school partnerships to improve outcomes for ELLs (language acquisition, sociocultural challenges, and testing) is another way to improve the connection with ELL families. These authors suggested, “high-quality professional development and certification around teaching English learners.” This would include finding models of teaching ELL students effectively. The teachers will need to be able to incorporate English learner strategies to help these students meet state content standards so they will be able to meet requirements to be able to graduate (Valdes et al. 2014).

Implications for Student Learning

The students will benefit from the concepts and product from my research because their personal needs will be met with some of the resources that came from my research that help

teachers to make a toolkit. Through my research valuable information was attained about helping ELL families find resources in the community as well as at the school. Schools would benefit from a Bilingual website or newsletter providing information for ELL families. ELL families would benefit with information about their daily needs. This would include food, transportation, healthcare, daycare, information on how the American School System works, interpreters, translators, career programs, after school programs and housing needs are a key role in helping families have a home-school connection. I would say that teachers need to know that not only are they teachers but being an advocate to help their students is part of a successful home-school connection.

Implications for Teaching

ENL, Bilingual, and non-ENL/Bilingual teachers will benefit from the concepts and ideas presented in the research and product because by having this valuable toolkit teachers will begin to understand that ELL families play a key role in helping a student feel welcomed. Teachers will understand that community resources can be a big help as far as meeting the family's basic daily needs. By providing resources for ELL families this will put less stress on the ELL families and they will also have a better chance of wanting to connect with the school if their basic needs are met. By providing interpreter's, translators that can help them communicate with the school this can help ELL families feel welcomed and want to come to school to volunteer in some way. It is vital for teachers to be able to understand that they play a key role in helping the ELL families and with the help of the toolkit that was made this will help with the home-school partnership.

Recommendations

I believe there is always room for improvement by looking into new research ideas about the home-school partnership with ELL families. Things are constantly changing all the time in the field of education. I think there should be more research on the effects of being taught in person or on Zoom and how it can affect ELL students because of going through the COVID-19 pandemic. More research is needed to assess the impact of online learning on ELL students as well as home-school partnerships with ELL families.

Final Thoughts

My final thoughts on this capstone project are that teachers really have a big part in helping ELL families establish a home-school connection. Teachers are more than teachers; they can also help the ELL families understand the American School System. They can also advocate for ELL families to help them find ways to support their various needs such as being able to communicate and accessing community resources such as housing, daycare, healthcare. I also believe that there is an ongoing need for research currency in home-school partnership with ELL families as the American School System has changed all the time. One thought would be the research on the effects of online instruction on ELL students and how they shape effective home-school partnerships with ELL families.

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Appendix

Figure 1:

Agenda

Day 1 Agenda:

Learning Goals: The purpose of this PD is to strengthen teachers' ability to work collaboratively with ELL families to support students' success in school. Teachers will work together to plan activities that will build a toolkit for all teachers to be able to use in their schools to help bridge the gap between ELL families and school.

1.) Introduction: First, I will introduce myself and talk about why I wanted to learn more about this topic due to my personal experiences. Then I will present the agenda. (5 minutes)

2.) Icebreaker: Next, I will present an ice breaker activity. In this activity, I will ask participants to explain what collaboration means. Responses from each participant can help all participants to get to know each other and understand their viewpoints about the word collaboration. Research by King and Goodwin (2002) on ELL home-school partnerships stresses the importance of creating a welcoming environment for ELL families. Through this ice breaker activity, PD participants will begin a process of getting to know each other and collaborating. Based on this model, they will already have a tool to use for getting acquainted and work with ELL families. (5 minutes)

3.) Video Activity and Questions: The video responses open the discussion on what first impressions teachers can make on ELL families when they meet for the first time. This video activity supports the research of Lightbrown and Spada (2013) about the sociocultural challenges of ELL families face.

What did you notice from watching this video? (10 minutes)

What were you thinking and/or experiencing as you were watching this video?

What feeling did you share with the deaf person in the video?

4.) Documentary and Q&A Session: Next, I will present the results of the ELL family questionnaire. Also, I will show the documentary of ELL family parents views. After watching the documentary, the teachers will discuss as a whole group what they think of the results and then this will lead to the next part of the PD. (Watch- Think- Share) (15 minutes)

5.) Presentation: What did we learn from the questionnaire? (5 minutes)

6.) Presentation: Presenter will pass a handout for the teachers and explain the activity they will do. (Roadmap Handout) (10 minutes)

7.) Planning Time: Teachers will work in groups based on assigned teams. (30 minutes)

8.) Closing: 1.) What are your take a way did you get from this PD?

2.) What activities will you plan to present for the second PD? (5 minutes)

Figure 2:*2021 Home School Partnership Survey*

Your Opinion Counts

Please complete this survey to help teachers better understand what can help families have a better connection with the school. Your answers will be used to develop a future “tool kit” for teachers to see what families may need to have a better connection with the school. The school will provide translators and or interpreters to help with filling out the survey if you need it. We would appreciate this returned with all other paperwork or within the first two weeks of school. Thank you for your participation.

1. What does home-school collaboration (connections) mean on your terms?
2. What do you know about the American school system, including your child’s graduation requirements?
3. What do you know about school resources for assessment (testing)?
4. What can school do for you to help your child succeed in school?
5. Would you feel comfortable to come into school and share a special tradition in your family?
6. Does your family have access to computers or phone?
7. What language do you speak in your home?
8. Are you familiar with after-school and community programs offered by the school?

9. Are you familiar with the school's programs that support the needs of ELLs in the classroom?
10. What things should the school know about your ELL family?
11. Any comments:

Figure 3:*ELL Responses to Survey Questions and Other Concerns*

1. What does home-school collaboration (connections) mean on your terms?

Many of them said they would like to know how their children are doing in school. They said they wanted to be informed how they can keep track of their children's academic progress, but it is hard to ask for this information without translators.

2. What do you know about the American school system, including your child's graduation requirements?

50 % reported they do not know about the American school system. 75% reported not knowing about graduation requirements.

3. What do you know about school resources for assessment (testing)?

75% said they do not know about school resources for assessment.

4. What can school do for you to help your child succeed in school?

Many of them asked for help in filling out forms and documents for their children.

5. Would you feel comfortable to come into school and share a special tradition in your family?

25% said maybe. 25% said not sure. 50% indicated they are comfortable as long as they find time in schedule.

6. Does your family have access to computers or phone?

66% reported not having access to computers. 100% reported having a phone.

7. What language do you speak in your home?

Spanish; Chinese; Russian; Bengali; Korean; Haitian; Arabic

8. Are you familiar with after-school and community programs offered by the school?

66% reported saying they are familiar. 34% said they are not familiar.

9. Are you familiar with the school's programs that support the needs of ELLs in the classroom?

34% reported saying they are familiar. 66% said they are not sure.

10. What things should the school know about your ELL family?

I can't get time off from work. How do we have parent-teacher conferences?

11. Any comments:

They want to know how they can help their children deal with bullying.

Figure 4:*Day 2 Agenda*

Learning Goal: The teachers will be able to Reflect and Present their new toolkit ideas to assess the overall success of their activities from the Roadmap Handout in terms of home-school partnership with ELL families. Teachers will also collaborate with the other teachers to help make a toolkit that will build the home-school partnership.

1.) Introduction: I will say good morning to all and a welcome back with a strength-based opener question. What is your favorite vacation place? (10 minutes) This is another example of collaboration.

2.) Small group Work: (45minutes) Power Point with rules/guidelines, teachers work in their assigned teams to answer reflection questions. Questions will be on the powerpoint.

3.) Whole Group Presentations: (10 minutes each group to present.) There are three groups for a total of 30 minutes. The teachers will present their activities that worked and the ones that did not.

4.) Closing: Questions:

1.) What is your takeaway from this PD? (5 minutes)

2.) What do you think could be a future research topic that would help with the home-school connection for ELL families?

Teachers will put their answers on a handout that is provided and then email to the presenter as a reflection of what they have learned and what they want to learn at future PDs about the ELL home-school connection.

I will send teachers a reminder email about the second-day PD. In this email, I will ask teachers to bring their results of the pilot home-school partnership program to the second-day

PD. The second-day PD will take place six weeks after the first-day PD. As aforementioned, the second-day PD will be 90 minutes long and will be in a large conference room. The second-day PD will consist of a group activity and short presentations by each group. The learning targets are for PD participants to assess the overall success of their activities from the Road Map in terms of home-school partnership with ELL families. PD participants will share their experiences which will eventually be documented in the toolkit/binder. First, I will ask teachers to be seated with the members of their teams. I will then give the group activity instructions to teams about sharing their experiences with the home-school partnership program. I will use my PowerPoint slide to provide the group activity instructions and questions. I will ask each team to appoint a leader and a scribe for the group activity. I will also ask that each team member respond to all questions. I will pose the following questions for the team to discuss:

1. Can you review key takeaways from the first-day PD?
2. Can you give examples of activities and/or resources used in your school's ELL home school partnership program?
3. What were your 'AHA' moments?
4. What are the most important lessons you have learned?
5. Would these lessons be useful for your toolkit? Why or why not?
6. The exit ticket will be one thing you think will help your future class. What will you put in your toolkit?

The team scribe will record each team member's responses to each of the above questions. This group activity will be 45 minutes long. Each team leader will use the scribe's notes to do a 10-minute presentation to the whole group. The leader will present their group's reflections about their collaboration with ELL families. Each PD participant has the opportunity to

document their own notes during the group activity presentation. I will then announce that I will update the toolkit by typing up the scribe's notes from each group and email the toolkit to everyone who will have participated in both PD. I will also conclude the second-day PD by asking everyone to email me with their suggestions for new research ideas for future PD. This last activity will wrap up the second-day PD.

Figure 5:*Road Map*

Adapted from: Graham, N. (2014). Project management checklists for dummies. Wiley.

This document is the Road Map of your team's home-school partnership program.

Directions: Work with your teams to provide specific details and resources for each area in this document. Complete the project by the next PD which is tentatively scheduled six weeks after this PD.

Team:

Team Members:

Sociocultural Opportunities

Goal Statement: To create a welcoming school environment for ELL families.

Deadline Date:

Coordinator: set up times and dates for project planning meetings; reserves space for project meetings; requests technical support for all project meetings and activities

Notetaker: takes notes of team meetings, distribute meeting notes to all team members

Communication officer: draft communications; distribute communications to school administrators, interpreters, translators, and ELL families about programming activities.

Activity Manager: work with volunteers to set up the room, clean up, close up the building, create access and signage for visitors

Resource Manager: identify resources needed to implement activities (funds, materials, refreshments); responsible for buying and bringing supplies and refreshments

- Activity # 1 Cultural Week/Day Event

Tasks:

Timeline(s):

Resources:

- Activity # 2

Tasks:

Timeline(s):

Resources:

- Activity # 3 (to be designed by the team)

Tasks:

Timeline(s):

Resources:

School and Community Resources

Goal Statement: To provide ELL families with information about school and community resources.

Deadline Date:

Coordinator: set up times and dates for project planning meetings; reserves space for project meetings; requests technical support for all project meetings and activities

Notetaker: takes notes of team meetings, distribute meeting notes to all team members

Communication officer: communicate with school administrators, interpreters, translators, and ELL families about school and community resources.

School Resource Manager: identify all things ELL families need to know about the school such as attendance, graduation requirements, after school activities

Community Resource Manager: identify all things ELL families need to know about life in America such as transportation, daycare, food pantries, social services, recreation, libraries, community centers, literacy volunteer programs

- Resource # 1 School Newsletter
- Resource # 2 Phone Tree
- Resource # 3 (to be designed by the team)

New York State Assessments

Goal Statement: To provide ELL families with information about graduation requirements and state assessments.

Deadline Date:

Coordinator: set up times and dates for project planning meetings; reserves space for project meetings; requests technical support for all project meetings

Notetaker: take notes of team meetings, distribute meeting notes to all team members

Researcher: have meetings with school principals to find out graduation requirements, school assessments, dates of assessments, and related information; identify other resources that provide information about assessments

Communication officer: communicate with ELL families about New York State assessments

- Communication Strategy # 1: Identify and translate written information about graduation requirements
- Communication Strategy # 2: Identify interpreters/translators for mandatory regents
- Communication Strategy # 3: (to be designed by the team)