



NSRA

DIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT

A guide to diversity communications/engagement in education



Acknowledgement

It only took a bit more than nine months for a team of motivated NSPRA professionals to give birth to this practical Diversity Communications Toolkit. And, as you will see, it is a birthdate well worth celebrating.

At NSPRA, we have been advising school district leaders for years to begin planning and implementing new and different communication strategies to reach their ever-increasing diverse communities. We assisted where we could, but we needed a central resource that would instantly provide an array of solutions to help school leaders everywhere.

NSPRA President Joe Krumm, APR, of North Clackamas School District (Oregon) started the process by creating and appointing a Diversity Engagement Project Team and set the leadership goals and objectives for this new organizational endeavor by NSPRA. Vice President of Diversity Engagement Stan Alleyne of the Minneapolis Public Schools (Minneapolis) led the team with key organizational assistance and content input from Joseph Ortiz of Roosevelt District #66 (Arizona) and Joe Krumm, APR. Sylvia Link, APR, of the Ontario Ministry of Education (Canada) was also instrumental in providing field-tested resources that have been used in Canadian schools. Hours of research, review and editing of materials, and conference call discussions led to producing this practical document. The project team members donated their work and leadership to NSPRA as a “give-back” to the profession and NSPRA is deeply appreciative of this contribution.

Special thanks also go to the Minneapolis Public Schools Office of Communications and the members of the NSPRA diversity communications toolkit team: Stan Alleyne, Joseph Ortiz, Joe Krumm, APR, Karen Kleinz, APR, Frank Kwan, Diane Legg, Sylvia Link, APR, Monique Soria, LaTarza Henry, Stephanie Bateman, Ellen Morgan, Gracie Valle-Chimal, Helen Yung and Andrew Pitt.

NSPRA members have learned to live with the notion that their jobs are never done. Changes in demographics, technology, leadership and special initiatives in today's schools force us to understand that we need to keep learning and enhancing our communication efforts and programs. This resource is just another step on that journey.

NSPRA is proud to deliver this new resource as a free downloadable e-publication to NSPRA members. Prices for print copies and non-member prices can be obtained through the NSPRA store at www.nspira.org/store.

Thanks to all who contributed to this next step in diversity communications.

Rich Bagin, APR
NSPRA Executive Director

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* Chapters contain a short introduction, examples from NSPRA member districts, guides for implementation and tools and resources for support



“It is time for parents to teach young people early on that in diversity there is beauty and there is strength.”

~ Maya Angelou

Introduction

The issue of diversity engagement is not some other school district's issue. Large or small; urban, suburban or rural; with or without a public relations staff or plan, the issues of diversity engagement are present in every school district in America.

The challenges that school districts face can surface in any area where students and families are different from the dominant culture: based on disability, sexual orientation, gender, religion, nationality, language, race or ethnicity and many other differences.

Because of these differences, traditional public relations (PR) approaches may not be most effective. As an example, any research conducted to develop communications strategies should be adjusted to fit the best communication methods for each community. The traditional written survey may be less effective than a focus group facilitated by someone who looks like and talks like the stakeholders being engaged.

Some PR practitioners from different cultures use their understanding of their culture to help them begin programs with minimal research, knowing they will adjust by trial and error. They know they can develop leaders from diverse cultures simply by recognizing and bringing out the strengths of the individuals in a group.

School systems across the United States and Canada are finding ways to incorporate best practices of diversity engagement into school communications programs of any size. This diversity tool kit will provide some of the best ideas, practices, strategies and structures that school districts across the continent have implemented, as well as offer examples and useful templates that can help you get your school district's diversity efforts off the ground.



SUPPORT

Resources

TOOLS

Conduct research to reach diverse audiences

Conducting research is key to developing a diversity communication plan or multi-pronged approaches to reach diverse audiences. In this section, your NSPRA colleagues share various methodologies of gathering information and conducting research that may help you better understand your community, as well as engage and communicate with diverse audiences. With these strategies, your school district has time to prepare to welcome new families, rather than struggle after the fact to meet the changing demands. Research methods such as data collection, focus groups, empowerment evaluation, Appreciative Inquiry and Photovoice are outlined to help you get started in better understanding your community.

Example from Peel School District

This example of an empowerment evaluation project was done by Peel School District in Canada. This research project focusing on the early years was conducted in a neighborhood with a very high percentage of newcomers and social risk significantly higher than other parts of the community.

<http://bit.ly/15JFFyF>

Guide to gathering demographic data and introduction

Knowing and understanding the demographics of the students, families and staff members in your schools and community is important data that can assist communications and engagement professionals in their work. Having information about our audience, such as languages spoken in the home, country of origin or family income, are factors that impact the ways in which we support, communicate and engage them. Demographic data helps shape our interactions with the audiences both short-term and long-term.

1. Collect and understand the demographics of your school district. Develop an understanding of the community your school district serves—what it looks like now and how it is expected to change in the next decade. Through census data and other local research, look at the following demographic characteristics of school-age children and their families in your community:

- language spoken most frequently at home
- preferred language for written material
- race and/or ancestry
- religion
- if not born in North America
 - » country of origin
 - » length of time they have lived in the community

- social risk factors such as family income, parental educational attainment, percentage of parent families and mobility
2. **Start with available census data before collecting your own.** If your school district is just starting a diversity communication plan or program, start with census data that is already available and build an internal understanding of diversity before attempting to collect your own demographics.
 3. **Collect data on a regular basis.** If your school district has a strong and well-developed diversity outreach program, it's most efficient to collect this data as a regular part of the school registration process for all children. If done well, this will give you the most complete and accurate picture of your school population and will provide information crucial not only for communication but also for program planning.
 4. **Paint a picture of your community and how it is expected to change.** Even if your school district is collecting its own demographic information, use census data projections to form a picture of how your community is expected to change in the next decade. It is important to begin to plan now for those changes. For example, your community may have a very small Asian population today, but trend data may show that this will change over the next decade.
 5. **Follow school district policies.** Due to sensitivities about student information, you should not attempt to collect it unless the school district—from senior leadership to front-line staff—understands that this information is being gathered to better meet the needs of diverse communities. Policies about the data collection should ensure that individual information is confidential and is reported only as aggregate data. It is essential that staff members who register children for school be trained on how to collect this information accurately and with sensitivity.
 6. **Gather school district staff member data.** To adequately plan internal communications programs you will need the same demographics for your school district's staff members as for your students and their families. Conduct a staff census to provide a baseline and then collect these demographics for new hires on an ongoing basis. To avoid a staff backlash, you need to build strong understanding and support among employees, senior administration and unions and/or bargaining groups about how this data collection will help your school district.
 7. **Compare demographics and identify key differences.** Compare demographic information for all public school taxpayers to those for families with school-age children and your district staff, and identify key differences. At times when you are communicating with all taxpayers—for example, during school finance campaigns—these differences will be important to your communication strategies.

Guide to multilingual focus groups:

Multilingual focus groups are an award-winning research strategy for multilingual audiences that will help engage and build trust with diverse audiences, as well as provide information to the school district to better meet the needs of diverse families.

1. **Recruit multilingual facilitators to conduct focus groups in parents' first language.** It is essential that these facilitators have an established relationship of trust with the parents—they may be settlement workers, faith leaders, community workers, etc. The facilitators must be able to speak and write the language of the audience, as well as English. Experience in facilitation is also a strong asset.
2. **Identify a researcher to work with the communications team on the research project.** This may be an in-house researcher, an independent consultant or a member of the communications team with research expertise. The researcher works with the communications team to determine the research scope and develop the focus group script and questions.
3. **Prepare the facilitators for the focus groups.** The researcher meets with the multilingual facilitators to provide training on focus group facilitation and to review the research scope and focus group questions. The researcher provides a template consent form for all focus group participants. Translations of the consent form are provided to the facilitators in the appropriate languages. Each facilitator is provided with a digital audio recorder to record the focus groups.

Role of the facilitators:

- interpret the focus group questions and script for their own use
 - recruit parents to attend the focus groups and arrange a location for the focus group that will be comfortable for the participants (the communications team provides an appropriate budget for venue costs, refreshments and a thank you gift for participants)
 - conduct the focus group in the first language and record the focus group session
 - keep track of names and contact information of all participants
 - transcribe the focus group discussion in the first language
 - translate the transcription into English
4. **Debrief of focus groups.** When all the focus groups are complete, schedule a debrief meeting with the researcher and the facilitators. The facilitators provide the researcher with the English copy of all focus group transcripts. They also have an opportunity to debrief with the researcher about the overall themes they heard from parents. At the conclusion of the meeting, facilitators receive payment for their services.
 5. **Develop summary report and share with participants.** The researcher compiles all of the transcripts into a research report. An executive summary is translated into all of the languages of the participants and shared with them.

Guide to Empowerment Evaluation

Empowerment evaluation is a model of research designed to engage stakeholders in any research about them. It is based on the philosophy that the stakeholders are the experts on their own experiences, not the researchers or professionals.

Empowerment evaluation places the research in the hands of the stakeholders being “researched.”

The more that people are engaged in conducting their own evaluations, the more likely they are to believe in them, because the evaluation findings are theirs.

Empowerment evaluation is guided by 10 specific principles. These principles help evaluators and community members make decisions that are in alignment with the larger purpose or goals associated with capacity building and self-determination. The principles include:

1. **Community ownership**—Primary responsibility and ownership belong to the community/ stakeholders, not the researcher. An empowerment evaluator is just one voice among many. The empowerment evaluator initially provides expertise, coaching, training, tools and technical assistance to the organization as the organization evaluates one or more of its strategies and builds its evaluation capacity. Eventually, stakeholders have the capacity to conduct their own research.
2. **Inclusion**—Involve the representation and participation of key stakeholders.
3. **Democratic participation**—Empowerment evaluation is a highly collaborative process. Stakeholders are given the opportunity to voice questions, concerns and values throughout the evaluation process. Every stakeholder's voice is to be heard and valued equally.
4. **Community knowledge**—Empowerment evaluation values and promotes the knowledge present within a community. Organizational and community stakeholders, not evaluators, are considered to be in the best position to understand the community's problems and to generate solutions to those problems.
5. **Evidence-based strategies**—Use strategies with high-quality (i.e., research) evidence of their effectiveness. Evidence-based strategies are often complemented by community knowledge to ensure that a strategy is compatible with the community context.
6. **Accountability**—Empowerment evaluation provides data that can be used to determine whether a strategy has achieved its goals. Negative results are not punished; rather, they are used to inform changes in a strategy or the selection of a new strategy for the purpose of producing better outcomes.
7. **Improvement**—Empowerment evaluation helps organizations improve their strategies so that they are more likely to achieve their stated goals and outcomes through activities such as needs assessments, assessments of a strategy's design, process evaluation and outcome evaluation.
8. **Organizational learning**—Foster a culture of learning. Stakeholders come to view positive and negative evaluation results as valuable information that guides strategy improvement and to believe that every strategy can be improved.
9. **Social justice**—Empowerment evaluation increases an organization's capacity to implement strategies that reduce discrimination, prejudice and intolerance.

10. Capacity-building—Stakeholders are better able to conduct their own evaluations, understand results and use them to continuously improve their strategies and their organization.

Empowerment Evaluation Principles in Practice, ed. David M. Fetterman and Abraham Wandersman

Guide to Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a form of action research that focuses on finding and enhancing the strengths of an organization or community. The approach uses questions, directed conversation and storytelling to find what is already working well and to determine how the organization can replicate its strengths, instead of focusing on finding problems. It also focuses on helping organizations/communities “outgrow” (rather than “solve”) their problems.

It has been described as an iterative, generative process that uses collaborative inquiry and strategic visioning to unleash the positive energy within individuals, organizations and communities.

AI attempts to use ways of asking questions and envisioning the future to foster positive relationships. AI uses these main steps:

1. **Define:** Awareness of the need for growth. Preparing for an appreciative process. Committing to the positive approach.
2. **Discover:** Interview process and gathering of experience. The identification of organizational processes that work well. Valuing the best of what is.
3. **Dream:** Visioning the ideal. Developing common images for the future.
4. **Design:** Aligning values, structures and mission with the ideal. Developing achievable plans and steps to make the vision a reality.
5. **Deliver:** Co-creating a sustainable, preferred future.

The basic idea is then to rebuild organizations/communities around what works, rather than trying to fix what does not. AI practitioners take a positive focus on how to increase exceptional performance instead of focusing on poor skills and practices. AI assumes that this line of reasoning is motivational. Progress does not stop when one problem is solved: it naturally leads on to continuous improvement. The method draws from stories of success in an attempt to create meaning.

<http://bit.ly/13avt7H>

Guide to Photovoice

Photovoice is a method of participatory research used mainly in the fields of community development, public health and education that combines photography (or video) with grassroots social action. Participants are asked to represent their community or point of view by taking photographs, discussing them together, developing narratives to go with their photos and conducting outreach or other action. It is often used among marginalized people and is intended to give insight into how they conceptualize their circumstances and their hopes for the future.

As a form of community consultation or social research, Photovoice attempts to bring the perspec-

tives of those “who lead lives that are different from those traditionally in control of the means for imaging the world” into the policy-making process. It is also a response to issues raised over the authorship of representation of communities.

Photovoice can be highly effective when language is a barrier for a community. Other benefits of Photovoice include the following:

- empowers people, families and communities
- awakens appreciation for different points of view
- strengthens positive relations (e.g. young adolescents, parents, community, etc.)
- increases civic involvement
- fosters family and community dialogue
- develops teamwork
- gives participants a voice in their community
- raises awareness of resources and problems
- creates powerful visual facts for fundraising and sponsorship
- has wide impact for low cost
- establishes partnerships for community change

Photovoice offers a specific process. Alternately, a school, district or community can take a more organic approach—bring together a group, pose a question or topic and let the participants collectively decide on the parameters for the photos. What is important is the process that follows of participants selecting specific photos, writing or speaking about what is important in the photos and sharing the photos with others.

Through photo sharing websites such as Flickr, Photovoice projects can easily be widely shared within a community. Creating Photovoice exhibits and presentations can also be very powerful.

Photovoice can be an effective research tool, especially as part of a larger research strategy, to engage hard-to-reach audiences; to cross barriers of language, culture, age or socio-economic status; and to help bring new perspectives to light for decision-makers and policy-makers.

www.photovoice.org

www.photovoiceworldwide.com

www.photovoice.ca

Tool [1a]

Sample questions for a focus group of newcomer parents:

1. What were some of the challenges you faced when you first moved to our community?
2. When you registered your children for school, what kinds of things did the school do to make you feel welcome and help you understand the school?
3. What other things could the school have done to make you feel more welcome and to give you information about your child's schooling?
4. What do you feel is the most important information to receive when you are first registering your children for school?
5. Thinking of the information you receive from your child's school currently, what would you like more of? What would you like less of?
6. As a parent, what kinds of things would you like to be involved in at your child's school?
7. What could the school do to encourage you to become more involved at the school?
8. What agencies in the community do you go to for information?
9. What is the best way for you to get information about the school?
10. Do you have internet access at home? How much time do you spend using the internet? What are the main things you use the internet for (for example: email, shopping, research)?
11. Have you visited the school district website? If yes, how often? What pages do you visit most often?
12. Have you visited the website for your child's school? If yes, how often? What information do you look for on the school's website?
13. Would you visit these websites more often if there were information in your own language?
14. What information would you like to see on these websites that is not there now?



Implement translation and interpretation services

Providing translation and interpretation services to families who speak a home language other than English is more than a legal requirement; it is one of the most important ways to improve parental involvement and engagement. In this section, NSPRA professionals provide you with their best practices in translation and interpretation for multilingual families. Guidelines for re-writing for clarity and proofreading are also included, along with methods for building capacity and opportunities to partner with other school district staff members to support effective multilingual communications.

Guide to producing effective and reliable translations

Providing translated written materials is one way to communicate to multilingual audiences. It is important that translated materials convey a message, not just words. Since some concepts don't translate the same across the many cultures and languages spoken in the world, using translators familiar with the native language and culture is a must in order to avoid literal word translation.

1. **Revise your document with translation in mind.** Most documents for English-speaking audiences are not suitable to go straight to translation. They should be edited—or completely rewritten—specifically for translation.
 - a. Remove any jargon. If a technical term needs to be used, put it in quotation marks and follow it with a plain language explanation of what the term means.
 - b. Translation is costly and time consuming. Try to increase the “shelf life” of the translation by removing content that will quickly become outdated.
 - c. Read through the document and try to identify words or concepts that might be specific to North America or to your local community. If possible, replace these with more universally understood content.
 - d. Ask yourself what additional explanations or information newcomers might need that families born in North America do not.
2. **Review the document for any content that you do not want translated.**
 - a. Names of people, phone numbers, addresses, URLs, trademarked product names—these are some examples of content that cannot or should not be translated. Highlight these items in your document and make a note to the translator not to translate them.
 - b. There will be times when you want both the English and the translation to appear (so the audience will know what the English word is). For example, if you are promoting a particular program or service, you may want audiences to be able to recognize the English word when they see it again.

3. **Consider whether to include content such as a URL to an English-only website or a phone number at which only English language service is provided.**
 - a. The customer who requires a translation will likely get little or no benefit from English-only information sources.
 - b. If you do want to include your organization's phone number and website, add an explanation—to be translated—indicating that only English service/information is available through these communication channels.
4. **For a large or high-stakes translation project, hold a focus group with members of various linguistic communities who speak both English and the target language.**
 - a. Ask them to review your text in advance and identify words and concepts for which there is no clear translation in their language.
 - b. Use the focus groups to help you reword these in a way that can be translated.
 - c. The focus group members can also give you information about potential attitudes or concerns about the content of your text of which you should be aware. They can suggest ways to address these concerns.

Guide for using a vendor for translation

Working with a translation vendor can be particularly beneficial if your school district doesn't have internal translation resources or if there is a large translation project that will require significant time.

1. **Interview a number of translation companies.** Here are some questions to ask:
 - a. How many years has your company been in business?
 - b. How many translators work for you? What qualifications do they hold? Do you outsource any of your translations outside of North America?
 - c. What is your process of working with a client on a translation job? What is your verification process?
 - d. If we receive a complaint from a customer about an error in translation, how would you respond?
 - e. What experience does your company have with the type of project we are doing (for example: website, marketing material)?
 - f. What is the most complex or challenging translation project you have done?
 - g. What value-added services does your company provide (for example: graphic design)?
 - h. What is your usual turn-around time?
 - i. What are your translation rates? Are there rush charges or premiums for certain languages? What is your minimum charge?
 - j. If we have a small wording change to a document that your company translated, what would the cost be?
 - k. Can you provide a list of references?

2. **Working with the translator.** If possible, meet with or speak by phone with each translator working on your project after the translator has read your English document.
 - a. Ask if the translator needs an explanation or clarification of anything in the document, such as technical terms.
 - b. Ask the translator if there are any words or concepts that cannot be translated in the particular language.
 - c. Discuss any parts of the document that require special attention and how the translator will handle them. If you held a focus group, share the comments and suggestions of the group with the translator.
 - d. Draw the translator's attention to any text that should not be translated or any other special instructions.
 - e. Encourage the translator to call you with any questions about meaning and context as the translation progresses.
3. **Working with a vendor/translators for a large project.** For a large project, such as a website or large publication, there should be an initial meeting with the translators and other members of the project team—writers, graphic designers, web developers and others. Decide on workflow, project management, quality control and methods of communication within the project team. Consider developing a private collaborative website to facilitate team communication and work.
4. **Verifying the translation of a vendor.** As part of its standard service, the translation vendor should provide a verification step in which a second translator independently reviews and proofreads the translation.

It is advisable to also conduct your own verification.

- a. Consider establishing your own internal reviewers—preferably staff members who read the specific language and understand your industry or products.
 - b. Consider establishing a small group of verifiers from your target audience—trusted customers or vendors who read both English and the other language and who can provide feedback about the quality of the translation.
 - c. If you held focus groups prior to translation, the focus group participants may also serve as reviewers.
5. **Putting the translation into a finished product.** Reformatting the translation into a finished product—brochure, website or manual—can present challenges, such as text flowing incorrectly or becoming garbled. Special care needs to be taken with non-Roman fonts.
 - a. Send the finished product back to the translator for review prior to printing or “going live.”
 - b. Use your internal verifiers again at this stage—before you go into production.

Guide to proofreading

“Do It Yourself” Proofreading Guidelines: The following are guidelines that should be followed when proofreading a translation:

1. To ensure consistency in terminology, one designated reviewer should be responsible for the review process. Using multiple reviewers creates confusion and inconsistencies.
2. The reviewer must also be supplied with a copy of the source document (in most cases English) and a copy of an approved glossary (if applicable). The purpose of this review process is to determine if the translation accurately reflects the original source document. Any changes from a reviewer that depart from the original source text or approved glossary are not recommended. Likewise, the introduction of new text, revising current text content or deleting text in the translation is not permitted unless approved by the author of the original source text.
3. Avoid style changes and focus on real errors or omissions. Make sure the goal of the review is to ensure correctness and practicality and not make stylistic changes that are purely subjective. If any changes in terminology are made, be sure to make them throughout the entire document. Stylistic changes that are neutral or that detract from the translation are not recommended.
4. Review for completeness, numerical accuracy and spelling of English words, such as names, titles and names of organizations.

Guide to Simultaneous Language Translations

Similar to what is used during United Nations meetings, simultaneous translation involves translating what is said in English into another language using a self-contained transmitter and headset receivers for each audience member.

Each audience member who needs translation should receive a headset/receiver prior to the meeting, usually leaving a form of identification as a “deposit” to ensure the headset is returned afterward.

As the meeting progresses, everything that is said is heard in the interpreted language simultaneously or very close to “real time.” The advantage over an in-person interpreter sharing a microphone is that a meeting can proceed without interruption of speakers since comments are being interpreted over the headsets. The interpreters providing the service can also be used for two-way communication.

Although some large organizations own the equipment, it is often more economical to contract with a service that rents the equipment and interpreters together as a package. Interpreters who are part of the package should operate the equipment.

Depending on the length of the meeting, there may be two interpreters so they are able to take breaks.

Things to consider about simultaneous interpretations:

Pros

- Immediacy promotes engagement and interaction
- No breaks for translation
- Concurrent multiple language capability
- Less obtrusive
- Translators can be used for two-way communications

Cons

- Cost is dependent on number of languages, number of people, length of meeting
- Technology-dependent; subject to malfunctions, battery charges, equipment loss
- Prior to meeting, need to allocate adequate time to collect “deposits” and distribute headsets
- After meeting, need to allocate adequate time to return headsets and “deposits”
- If decision is to purchase a system, need to allocate funds for purchase and ongoing maintenance

Tool [2a]

Multilingual Stylebook

For key languages in your school district, create a stylebook guiding the entire district on best practices for communicating specific programs and reviewing common grammar usage, style, punctuation, etc. This can be a living document online that anyone in the school district can access to use as a tool for localized and ongoing translating or interpreting needs. This tool will help achieve uniformity and consistency in messaging in the often subjective world of interpreting and translating.

Resources:

Los Angeles Unified School District Translations Unit <http://bit.ly/14cH9DK>

NYC Department of Education: <http://on.nyc.gov/1cr9OGG>

Tool [2b]

Best Practices for Translation

- **Translate the message, not the words.**
Do not be afraid to take some creative liberty with the translation to ensure your families understand the message. Avoid including phone numbers or websites in English without a disclaimer.
- **Add context when necessary.** Some education concepts that may be intuitive for English-speaking families may not be for everyone. Take time to explain concepts like grading scales and schedules to those who need help.
- **Avoid automatic translations.** Automatic translations are problematic because they focus on literal translations and are not accurate when translating homonyms, acronyms and education-specific jargon.
- **Do not limit yourself to text and speech.** Some cultures trust radio broadcasts and others prefer video and television. Some immigrants read better in English than in their mother tongue. Keep an open mind and research what is best for your community.
- **Create a glossary of commonly used educational terms.** Educational terms and acronyms are complicated for English-speaking families to understand. Our best advice is to minimize the use of abbreviated terms like IEPs (Individualized Education Programs). They make simple communication messages a lot more complex. These terms make families feel that educators are speaking down to them.



Best Practices for Interpretation

- **Students are not interpreters.** It is never appropriate to use a student to interpret for a family. If interpretation is unplanned for, using students, parents or other untrained speakers of other languages can be a liability. Only trained interpreters should be used for these services, especially when communicating sensitive information.
- **Announce the interpretation.** Make sure that at the beginning of a meeting, large or small, the facilitator announces that live interpretation is happening. Live interpretation means that the interpreter is simultaneously listening, mentally translating and orally interpreting spoken information. Remind speakers to speak clearly and into any microphones that are being used so that their messages can be interpreted correctly.
- **Become culturally aware.** Take the time to learn some key information from the culture of the target language. What are some common beliefs and values? Being able to find common ground is a great way to tailor your communications to each group and avoid misunderstandings.
- **Communicate the intention of the source.** Keep an eye out for social cues such as sarcasm, passive aggression and politeness and make the listener aware of the intention of the speaker with or without direct translation.





CONSISTENCY

FOCUS

CHARTER

COMMITMENT

EXCELLENCE

Develop community and family engagement strategies

Communication and parent/stakeholder engagement plans must be aligned to be effective. The primary objective should be to welcome every family and every student and actively engage them as partners in student learning and school improvement. Engagement must be authentic and two-way. In this section, school districts from across North America provide community and family engagement strategies that have been successful in all types of school districts. From parent advisory groups to parent academies and community partnerships, your NSPRA colleagues share the best ideas for your use, offering step-by-step guides to both simple projects and large initiatives to implement and operate family and community engagement efforts and plans.

Diversity Engagement Structures and Positions

While some school districts are in the beginning stages of developing strategies for school-level and district-level diversity engagement strategies, other districts have full departments dedicated to this work. There are many good examples of how school districts organize and provide resources to developing engaging strategies.

Example from North Clackamas School District

In North Clackamas School District in Milwaukie, Oregon, the Outreach and Engagement Department includes 2.5 community liaisons (Spanish, Russian and Vietnamese) and 3.5 interpreters, all led by a director of outreach and engagement. The program focuses on staff training and community outreach to diverse cultures, working to engage in the way that best meets their cultural needs.

A comprehensive equity plan guides the work of the team and the district. The equity goal of removing barriers for all students is one of three district-wide goals adopted by the school board. At this time, the district is researching how to conduct an equity audit to determine inequities that should be addressed in the system.

Contact: Sara Gandarilla; gandarillas@nclack.k12.or.us, 503.353.1900
Enrollment: 17,022

Example from Los Angeles Unified School District

The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) has made a commitment to increase parent and community participation. A Translations Unit facilitates communication for parents, staff and diverse communities through professional written translation and oral interpretation services.

Ninety-two languages are spoken in the second largest district in the United States. Along with in-house support in Spanish, Korean, Chinese and Armenian, the district provides sign language spe-

cialists. These language specialists have created appropriate terms and translations in other languages where none were available before. For more information, click here: <http://translationsunit.com/>

Using educational and social-emotional strategies, the Office of Human Relations, Diversity and Equity builds collaborative relationships and proactively reduces intra- and inter-group violence and bias. It assists in crisis recovery and community restoration and provides consultation and comprehensive trainings on a variety of human relations topics. For more information, visit: <http://bit.ly/lausdhrde>

The Multilingual and Multicultural Education Department (MMED), formerly known as Language Acquisition Branch, is committed to improving the lives of both English Learners (EL) and Standard English Learners. Its focus is the implementation of the EL Master Plan with fidelity at all schools so that student achievement is realized. MMED is comprised of the following offices:

- Asian/Pacific and Other Languages (APOLO)/Dual Languages Office
- English Learner Federal and State Programs
- English Learner Programs
- Standard English Learner/Academic English Mastery Program
- World Languages and Cultures

For more information, visit: <http://bit.ly/lausdmmmed>

Contact: Ellen T. Morgan, 213.241.6766, ellen.morgan@lausd.net
Enrollment: 655,716

Example from Pasco School District

The fastest-growing school district in Washington State is the Pasco School District, which now has a Hispanic majority (69%) in the schools. A community relations manager is part of one of several Pasco School District employees who engage in diversity programs throughout the district, which has more than 16,000 students. The district translates for Spanish and Russian; the other ten languages spoken in students' homes are outsourced.

With a 25 percent white population, the community is the first Hispanic majority census tract in the Northwest. For the past decade the district has added an average of 600 new students each year.

Along with the community relations manager, other facilitators that are involved with diversity outreach include student achievement specialists, prevention/intervention specialists, home visitor and the Parent Education Center coordinator. The district houses a Parent Education Center which offers Pasco School District parents the opportunity to take ESL, Read and Rise and computer classes.

In 2011, Washington State Auditor Brian Sontag said, "We are hoping to identify what is going on in the Pasco School District so that other districts can emulate these efforts to bring down non-instructional costs so that more money can go into instruction."

Pasco uses the following events to engage a diverse group of families at schools:

School and Family Partnerships: Pasco School District officially joined John Hopkins University's NNPS (National Network of Partnership Schools) in spring of 2005. Operated by Student Achievement and housed at Captain Gray, the School and Family office provides information, support, training, and technical assistance for each school's Action Team for Partnership. Partnerships improve school programs, provide family support, and connect families with schools and the community, and help teachers teach. Each school has an ATP. More information is available on the ATP webpage found under the 'Families' tab at www.psd1.org.

Partners in Educating All Kids! (PEAK!): The PEAK! Program is designed to involve and recognize community organizations and businesses as partners. A PEAK! Partner makes a financial contribution to a school, and participates in school events. Visit the PEAK! Web page at www.psd1.org.

VIP Days: VIP Day allows community members a chance to follow a high school student through a morning of their daily schedule, observe school life, and meet teachers, administrators, and staff.

Bus Tours: Community and business members join the Superintendent to tour schools, visit classrooms, speak with educators and principals, and spend valuable time together. Bus Tours are enjoyable and informative ways to get an inside look at what is happening in Pasco Schools.

Partners In Kindness (PinK): PinK awards are given to groups, organizations and individuals who donate goods, services or cash with a minimum value of \$1,000 to directly benefit Pasco students. PinK awardees are listed on the district website and honored by the Board of Directors.

Contact: Gracie Valle-Chimal, GValle@psd1.org, 509.543.6743
Enrollment: 16,328

Example from Clarksville-Montgomery County School System

In Clarksville-Montgomery County School System, the diversity engagement program is built around parent support groups in four diverse areas: English Language Learners, cultural diversity, special education and the military.

The district has a commitment to diversity and is working to foster a climate of inclusiveness for its diverse community of students, parents and staff. There has been a new emphasis on diversity communications, with a focus on effective listening to each of the groups as a starting point to building trust and a stronger connection and understanding of the district.

The system, with more than 30,000 students, has 34 languages spoken in the home. A mobile population creates challenges. Diversity shows 57 percent white enrollment, 27.6 percent African American, 10.4 percent Hispanic and 3.2 percent Asian/Pacific Islander.

Contact: Andrew Pitt, andrew.pitt@cmcss.net, 931.920.7877
Enrollment: 30,000

Example from Metropolitan Nashville (TN) Public Schools

Metropolitan Nashville (TN) Public Schools serves more than 81,000 students in 153 schools. Students come from 118 countries and speak more than 130 languages, with Spanish, Arabic, Kurdish, Somali and Vietnamese being the top five non-English languages spoken. MNPS considers its diversity an asset, but it also provides challenges for communication; parent involvement; cultural understanding/awareness; and service supports for students, their families and district employees. To address these challenges, MNPS uses a combination of targeted district resources and community partnerships. The MNPS English Learners and Family and Community Partnerships offices work collaboratively with other offices and community leaders to engage the diverse families within the school district.

English Learners Office: The Office of English Learners (EL) works to ensure that every student, regardless of English proficiency or cultural background, is successful in the school setting and progressing academically, while at the same time increasing his or her proficiency in English. Included within the department are the ELD (English Language Development) Curriculum and Instruction Department, the International Student Registration Center and the ELD Teacher Resource Center. The department is responsible for assessing and identifying students to receive ELD services and helping schools maintain the appropriate compliance for ELD programs.

Not only does the EL Office provide instructional support, it also provides school-based parent outreach translators who represent 10 different languages and district-level translators for written materials and district-wide phone messages. The parent outreach translators provide direct and indirect language assistance between non-English language background (NELB) families and schools. This can include interpretation during school meetings, translation of school-level materials and phone messages, assisting parents with access to school/district resources, help with resolving conflicts or questions and accompanying district staff on home visits. The EL Office also works closely with community and religious leaders and relief agencies to plan for the arrival of new refugee families and to identify and meet new and current families' needs. Examples include offering English classes to parents, providing cultural awareness classes to district staff and parents and providing newcomer services to students who may never have received formal educational services in their home country.

Family and Community Partnerships Office: Part of the Student Services Division, the Family and Community Partnerships Office was created to help improve student success by improving parent and community engagement on a school and district level. Its strategy is an integrated focus on parent engagement, health and social services, youth and community development and community engagement. The specific needs of NELB families are integral to the planning and execution of programs. The office includes four lead community outreach specialists who work directly with community leaders and support agencies, as well as 13 family involvement specialists who provide direct services to schools and families. Some of their responsibilities are to:

- provide direct assistance to families and students
- develop and provide high quality programs, trainings and workshops for families based on needs assessments and goals of the school and district

- meet regularly with school and district staff and leadership to share expertise; raise concerns about barriers to parent and community engagement; link academic goals with family programs; coordinate events and opportunities; and establish and maintain lines of communication between families, community partners, schools and other MNPS departments

Contact: Olivia Brown, 615.259.8406, olivia.brown@mnps.org.

Enrollment: 86,000

Example from Fairfax County Public School

Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) is the 11th largest school district in the nation with 181,000 students, 23,000 employees and nearly 200 schools. FCPS racial demographics are: White, 43.1 percent; Hispanic, 22.1 percent; Asian American, 19.3 percent; African American 10.4 percent; multiracial, 4.6 percent. Approximately 26 percent of students receive free and reduced price meals, 17 percent receive English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) services and 14 percent of students receive special education services.

To engage diverse audiences, FCPS uses strategies including making multiple language interpreters available at meetings, holding special meetings specifically for non-English speakers and using school-based parent liaisons to help communicate messages to non-English speakers.

Multiple language interpreters for community meetings: FCPS has interpreters (hourly employees) who are available to translate in seven languages for major community meetings on high profile issues such as boundary changes, academic program changes and new superintendent searches. The interpreters use simultaneous translation headsets.

Special meeting for non-English speakers: Because it is often difficult to draw non-English speakers to community meetings, FCPS decided to hold a special meeting for non-English speakers on an important boundary change proposal. The district marketed the meeting in seven languages and noted that pizza and child care would be available. The meeting was held at one of the most diverse elementary schools in the district for a greater comfort level. More than 200 non-English speaking parents showed up for the meeting, which was successful in terms of the quality of information shared and engagement level of the parents with staff.

School-based Parent Liaisons: Parent liaisons have been one of the most effective ways to reach out to diverse parents and increase their engagement in their children's learning. There is at least one parent liaison in 175 schools and they work closely with the principal to reach out to families, especially non-English speakers. Their duties are varied, but include families knowing about the importance of attending parent-teacher conferences and other school meetings. Parent liaisons, who are usually bilingual, also facilitate dialogue between families, teachers and principals in terms of unique challenges that the family may be facing that could impact student learning. Funding for the program comes from a combination of Title III funds and local district funds. Parent liaisons generally work part-time and often work at multiple schools, which provides principals flexibility in how they use the positions.

In annual evaluations, principals cite the parent liaison program as one of the most effective ways to impact student achievement at their schools. We often hear anecdotally that principals would like more parent liaison hours allocated to their school. Hours are allocated based on a formula using ESOL and free/reduced price meals so that the neediest schools get the most funding.

Contact: Barbara M. Hunter, bmhunter1@fcps.edu, 571.423.1218
Enrollment: 181,000

Example position for Community Outreach Liaison

Job goals:

To increase community understanding and improve effectiveness working across cultures advocating on behalf of bilingual students, their families and the district.

Qualifications:

- High school diploma or equivalent required.
- Experience working and/or working within a public school system located in the United States of America.
- Knowledge of the value of education and understanding of the beliefs and practices of the targeted cultural group.
- Ability to communicate effectively with parents, school staff, administration staff and public.
- Knowledge of and demonstrated language skills, both spoken and written, in English and the target language.
- Ability to facilitate discussion across cultures for the purpose of understanding and resolving student, family and other school issues.
- Demonstrated understanding of culture and the impact the culture may have on the education of students and the ability of parents to be engaged in the education of their children.
- Understanding of the strengths and needs of the target group, school district and school.
- Demonstrated knowledge of the structure, function and culture of the school.
- Valid driver's license and reliable transportation.
- Demonstrated ability to maintain confidences and understand student information privacy rights.

Essential duties:

- Share knowledge of the school and district, helping parents from the targeted culture to effectively navigate the public school environment for the benefit of their children.
- Share cross cultural information between the targeted group and the district to facilitate understanding and communication.
- Assist in training and supporting bilingual instructional assistants in their role in bilingual community engagement.

- Work with the district interpretation and translation team to ensure written communications are accurate through proofreading and/or editing as requested.
- Assist in translating emergency communications on an as-needed basis.
- Assist in developing educational materials about the district or school to help parents and/or community members learn about school systems.
- Provide information and guidance on implementing diversity initiatives.
- Develop and maintain trusting relationship between the district/school and parents/students.
- Assist in improving relations between cultural communities and educational institutions through projects, communications and meetings.
- Assist in establishing an inclusive and collaborative environment.
- Model and mentor behavior change, focused on breaking down bias, prejudice and other institutional barriers.
- Attend meetings at various school and community locations, traveling within the district and larger metropolitan community using own private transportation.
- Adhere to and follow district policies and procedures and state and federal laws related to employment in public education system.

Example position for Multilingual Liaison from Burlington School

Job goals:

To support New American students and their families in order to achieve success in the U.S. education system.

To inform and educate the school community about the culture and the needs of families who immigrated to the United States.

Qualifications:

- Must be fluent and literate in native language.
- Must have strong command of English language in order to provide appropriate translation and interpreting services.
- Familiarity with education system of native culture and the U.S. education system.
- Experience working with children preferred but not required.
- Ability to communicate effectively and respectfully with students, parents and school community.
- Acquire cross-cultural and interpersonal skills.
- Basic knowledge of computers preferred but not required.
- Ideal candidate will have solid organizational skills and ability to work in emergent situations.

Essential duties:

- Assist with enrolling new students.

- Assist in completing school forms for new and returning students (e.g. Home Language Survey, registration forms, permission slips, food/lunch program, health information, emergency contacts, Supplemental Education Services forms, media forms, immunization records).
- Support New American students in classrooms, when available.
- Act as an advocate and role model for all students in the school community and especially for students from the liaison's community.
- Support New American families in understanding the U.S. and BSD school system.
- Communicate with New American families on the regular basis.
- Interpret at school meetings and parent-teacher conferences (during school hours/some nights).
- Conduct home visits when necessary.
- Provide cultural background information to school staff (e.g., make presentations, answer questions, offer feedback, consult on issues).
- Represent and advocate on behalf of New American parents/guardians to help them communicate their needs, questions and concerns effectively.
- Ensure that New American parents are consistently informed about all relevant school events and information in a language they can understand to the extent practicable.
- Encourage and assist parents/guardians in becoming more involved in the school community and in supporting their children's education.
- Provide written translations and oral interpretations of informal and formal school letters addressed to the parents/guardians in a language they can understand to the extent practicable.
- Communicate effectively and in a timely manner with school staff and members of the school community.

Evaluations:

Performance will be evaluated by the liaison coordinator annually on the ability and effectiveness in carrying out the above responsibilities in accordance with procedures established by the superintendent of schools.

Advisory Group Structures

Every school communications professional should seek guidance and input from diverse stakeholders before launching new projects and initiatives. For smaller school districts, this would be a great first step in developing a communications/engagement strategy. Large urban districts should never forget this vital step. It can save your district time and resources as well as create champions and ambassadors for what you are trying to accomplish.

Example from Minneapolis Public Schools

District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC)

DPAC serves as an advisory council to the superintendent. DPAC discusses budgetary and policy issues with senior administrative leadership. The group offers a parent leader perspective to the school district's decision-making process. It also serves as a sounding board to the superintendent. Read the DPAC charter: <http://bit.ly/16EMALS>

Example from Pasco School District

Migrant and Bilingual Parent Advisory Committee

The Pasco School District Migrant and Bilingual Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) is a parent group for migrant bilingual families with school-aged children in the district. The history of PAC spans four decades; in the 1990s, PAC was restructured to include a leadership-trained parent representative from each school and an elected executive committee.

PAC provides input to the superintendent in the development and improvement of programs that serve eligible migrant and/or bilingual program students. Each year, PAC plans, organizes and produces two general information meetings for all migrant and bilingual families. In addition to this, PAC also spearheads an annual conference for hundreds of Pasco students and their families. This day-long event features topics for attendees ranging from preschoolers to grandparents and everyone in between.

A partnership with Washington State University GEAR UP provides a leadership track for students in sixth grade through high school. The partnership includes an event that features a prominent national keynote speaker along with workshops and breakout sessions highlighting local law enforcement, college-bound programs, universities and colleges and district and local resource experts. On a day-to-day basis, PAC, through its leadership and focused efforts, helps parents who often feel disenfranchised find a voice and express their views. To learn more, visit: <http://bit.ly/pascoms>

Example from Minneapolis Public Schools

Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC)

SEAC is comprised of a majority of parents/guardians and key special education staff. The council is a partnership between the school district and parents/guardians of students with disabilities. This engagement strategy gives families of children with special needs an opportunity to network with other families. It also gives parents and members of the community an ongoing opportunity to learn more about special education services and voice their ideas and concerns.

- SEAC meets monthly
- A different topic is discussed each month
- Parents and community are always given time to ask questions
- SEAC has its own email listserv to facilitate regular communications to families with students who have special needs
- View the SEAC brochure: <http://bit.ly/16ElByX>

Example from Minneapolis Public Schools

Faith-based Advisory Group

The Faith-Based Advisory Group is a solid network of faith-based partners who understand and support the school district's strategic plan. The group provides a systematic process for members of the faith-based and school community to become authentic partners.

This group is important because:

- Members have access to more people and are able to circulate messages
- In many communities, such as the African American community, elders and ministers are held in high regard and are well respected
- Members are credible sources in their communities and are able to reduce rumors and spread the word about district campaigns and priorities
- Members can act as a sounding board on new initiatives

Guide to establishing communications/engagement advisory groups

1. Reach out to the following people to join your diverse group: district- and school-level leaders, support staff, teacher leaders, influential community leaders such as ministers or business owners, active parents and communications professionals who have students in your district.
2. Schedule quarterly meetings.
3. Engage in conversations and questions like these:
 - What information is important to parents?
 - How would parents and community members like to receive information from their schools/districts?
 - What tools, resources and venues are used to receive other (non-district) information?
4. Invite advisory group members to key meetings and give them roles to play.
5. De-brief meetings and activities with the group to assess the effectiveness of the communication and engagement strategy.

Guide to diversifying school district stakeholder groups

1. Be willing to change the configuration of existing district stakeholder groups to ensure proper representation of backgrounds, ethnicities and socioeconomic groups.
2. Recruit diverse members by taking referrals from your communications/engagement advisory group and asking principals for active parent volunteers.
3. Provide appropriate translation/interpretation services at the meetings to ensure participation.
4. Be open to exploring new meeting models, times or styles to ensure that families of diverse backgrounds can attend or participate.
5. Make sure the meeting agenda is relevant to all stakeholders in attendance.

Liaisons

Liaisons can play an important role in establishing and building trust and relationships with diverse stakeholders. There are many different types of liaisons that serve various roles in school districts. The following examples are models of how some school districts have structured liaison programs for diverse parents.

Example from Niles Township High School

Family liaisons connect newcomer families to schools

Niles Township High School District 219 developed its family liaison program as a way to make a critical connection between our schools and parents with limited English proficiency. Family liaisons reach out to these families to welcome them into schools and encourage them to take an active part in their children's education.

Of the 4,900 students at Niles North, Niles West and Niles Central High schools, almost six out of 10 speak a language other than English at home. More than 90 different languages are represented. Because parental involvement is one of the most critical factors in a child's academic success, D219 aims to develop powerful partnerships with all our parents, but language barriers are one of the greatest impediments. Furthermore, families who are new to the country often do not understand how U.S. public schools work. We want these families to know that they are welcome in our schools; the liaisons can provide a more comfortable entry point.

We realized we needed to find more proactive ways to reach out to the very parents who are least connected to our schools and help them learn how they can help their children succeed academically. We conducted some informal research by speaking with staff members and parents from some of our largest ethnic communities, focusing on the most commonly spoken non-English languages: Spanish, Urdu, Assyrian, Arabic and Korean. We received the same advice from all these communities: if the parents are not coming to our schools, we need to find a way to approach them in a respectful, welcoming way. So we developed the family liaison program.

Services provided by the family liaison program:

- A liaison for each of the five most-spoken languages contacts families who have requested translated materials or interpretation services in that language. (We have a check-off box on student admission forms for this purpose.) The liaison explains the program, offers to serve as the family's personal connection to the school and invites the family to attend an upcoming school event.
- Each year we hold a special incoming freshman/transfer student night specifically for identified families. They are encouraged to bring all family members, including small children, grandparents and any other relatives who might be living in the household. This is a chance for each family to meet its liaison. The evening involves orientation to each high school that includes: a building tour and welcome by the principal; an introduction to the Student Services Office, including an explanation of the important role played by guidance counselors; an introduction to the College and Career Center, with an explanation of how our schools help students search for an appropriate college; an introduction to ELL services by our World Languages/ELL director; an overview of the Niles Township Schools' ELL Parent Center by the center's director; and a session led by the Student Activities director, where the director explains the importance of extracurricular activities and sports in the overall high school experience, as well as the positive influence extracurricular activities play in the college admissions process.

- The liaison contacts client families to notify them about important events such as parent-teacher conferences, the D219 college fair, sophomore college night and advanced placement (AP) night. The liaison is available at each of these events to offer simultaneous interpretation via wireless headsets.
- The liaisons are available to interpret at D219's annual public forum meetings: the annual review of programs, which is held to get public comment about recommended curriculum and personnel changes; the Niles Township Youth Coalition's annual Town Hall Meeting on Raising Teens; and the superintendent's annual budget address.
- Each liaison makes periodic check-up calls to the family to ask how the student is doing and find out if the family needs additional information or support from the school.

How do we identify the families who need the service?

The family of each incoming freshman or transfer student is required to fill out and submit an admission form. Because of the diverse demographics of Niles Township, we ask families to tell us: the birth country of each student; for immigrant families, when the student arrived in the U.S.; and whether the student has ever received ELL or bilingual education services in a U.S. school. We ask for the student's native language and ask which language is primarily spoken in the home. We also ask if the family would like translation/interpretation services in the household language. We enter the interpretation requests into a database. Those families in the five most common language groups are assigned a specific family liaison. We review the other requests with our ELL/World Languages staff. Our staff members are able to help families in many other languages, such as Romanian, Gujarati, Russian, Polish, etc. We also take advantage of the certified interpreters who are available through the ELL Parent Center.

How did we recruit the liaisons?

As we developed the program, we solicited input from staff members from the respective ethnic communities. We wrote a letter explaining that we were looking to hire qualified interpreters on an hourly basis and sent the letter to families from the targeted communities. We asked staff members and some students to spread the word to their friends and community members. We received more than 80 inquiries about the openings and conducted initial phone interviews with applicants who seemed qualified. We interviewed those who showed most potential; those who did well were asked to translate a flier announcing the family liaisons program from English into their language. We also had them do a simultaneous interpretation exercise. We hired eight family liaisons for the five most common languages. The majority of these liaisons are parents of students or former students and all of them live within the D219 boundaries, so they are an integral part of the community.

How are the liaisons trained?

Initially we held an orientation for the liaisons that introduced them to Student Services programs and personnel, including guidance and counseling staff and resources for parents (such as the on-line grade viewer and D219's Individualized Learning Plan for students). Because guidance counselors are the primary advocates for students' academic achievement and their overall experience at school, the liaisons are encouraged to develop solid working relationships with them. Liaisons become familiar with the most important school events so they are able to extend informative invitations to their families.

How is the program funded?

The program is low-cost but yields high benefits. For the 2012-13 school year, we dedicated up to \$28,000 for translators and interpreters in the World Languages/ELL curriculum budget. Liaisons are paid on an hourly basis. We explained to them before they were hired that this is a very part-time position, but an important one. Aside from the direct payments to liaisons, other supporting costs, such as supplies (including simultaneous translation headsets) and clerical help, are provided through the department's regular operating budget.

How has the program been working?

For the families who have availed themselves of the program, it has made a positive difference in their becoming involved in our schools and taking an active role in their children's academic success. In general, though, this is a slow and arduous process. Our liaisons have reached out to several hundred families and we have had initial conversations with a majority of them. Our immediate goal is to convince a family to attend at least one school event, meet the liaison and realize that there is someone from their own culture who can be an advocate for their child's success.

What are some of the important things we've learned?

- Personal relationships are critical. Families often express grateful surprise when they initially hear from their liaison. In many cases, the contact is a necessary first step to any kind of engagement with the school. Families in a given cultural group also talk with and trust each other, so we have found that a family that has a positive experience with the liaison program will often encourage friends to join them at a program or event.
- Do not spend your time, energy and resources translating written materials unless you know there is a real need. Early in the program our liaisons spent a lot of time translating fliers and letters. We learned that the time is better spent contacting the family by phone and having a conversation to explain a program or event and answer specific questions.
- Persistence is key. Response rates are low and it is not unusual for three or four families to say that they plan to attend a given event, only to have one—or none—show up. But as our liaisons become more experienced in anticipating families' needs and as word of mouth about the program continues to grow, we see the investment paying off, as families who had no prior connection with their school start to get involved.

***Example* from Minneapolis Public Schools**

Community liaisons

Community liaisons are district employees who strive to build better relationships and facilitate communication with district families and administration. These individuals need to understand the priorities of the district so they can help circulate the message in the community with neighborhood associations, parent-teacher associations, elected officials and grassroots community organizing groups. Roles include:

Monthly meetings

- Host monthly zone meeting in coordination with assistant superintendents and principals
 - » Rotate meeting locations to give all schools an opportunity to host

- » Provide culturally diverse meals
- » Include key district leaders to discuss various priorities of the superintendent
- » Provide ample time for question/answer sessions

Stay closely connected:

- Share pertinent talking points from the superintendent
- Review upcoming events and meetings (controversial and fun)
- Listen to concerns and rumors persisting in various communities, schools and stakeholder groups

View a sample event flier: <http://bit.ly/19yq8Jr>

Example from Minneapolis Public Schools

Ombudsperson/district-school liaison

Most school districts have an employee working in this capacity. The individual may be hired specifically for this role or may perform this function along with other job responsibilities. This person should be clearly identified and everyone at the central office should know who this person is. The individual assigned to this role must have exceptional interpersonal and listening skills and be a strong problem solver.

Parent Academies

Parenting classes, sometimes called parent academies, have been a successful strategy to equip parents with both need-to-know and nice-to-know information, resources and tools to support their student's education. Parent academies can help parents better navigate complex school systems that may be unfamiliar to them. These opportunities also help parents become more engaged in the work of the school and district.

Example from Minneapolis Public Schools

Connecting Parents to Educational Opportunities

This is a seven-week curriculum-based program designed for parents who want to learn how to better navigate the public education system. The idea is to provide parents with the necessary tools and skills to develop strong and positive home-school partnerships.

Each level of curriculum offers grade-appropriate information including the following:

- How the school system functions and operates
- Standardized tests and assessments
- How to calculate GPAs
- Understanding report cards
- How to effectively communicate with principals, teachers and other school staff
- How to prepare for college

Learn more: <http://bit.ly/1crsfD>

Example from Wichita Public Schools

Wichita Public Schools (WPS) holds a Parent University as a series of three half-day workshops on Saturdays aimed to help parents be even stronger partners in their children's education following the theme: Learn. Teach. Lead. The events, held in October, January and April, allow participants to choose from a variety of interactive workshop sessions facilitated by district and community representatives, hear from dynamic lunchtime speakers and gain knowledge from a number of information resource booths. WPS removed many of the barriers for attendance by providing free admission, interpreters (Spanish and Vietnamese), childcare, food and, for one session, transportation. As an added incentive, the district gave away several \$50 gift cards donated from local merchants.

For WPS, the best thing about Parent University was meeting the program's objectives as evidenced by the overwhelmingly positive response from participants. Planning and coordination is key. Pre-planning in the summer, collaborating with community organizations and assembling and training a skilled planning team of 20 district employees to execute the day-of operations with ease has resulted in well-run events that create enjoyable experiences for all participants and planners.

The most challenging aspect about Parent University was funding, initially. The district's Family Engagement Office, which is solely Title I funded, coordinates Parent University. However, general fund money was able to be applied in all instances to make this a district-wide effort so that non-Title I families also benefit. WPS believes in a district-wide approach to family engagement, not just isolating the work of family engagement to Title I schools.

Parent University: <http://bit.ly/wpsfe>

Short-term Engagement Strategies

Whether a school district has a long-term engagement strategy in place or is just getting started, short-term strategies can be great quick but meaningful wins for schools or districts.

For Community

Example from Minneapolis Public Schools

Soup with the Supe

Soup with the Supe is a community engagement series hosted by the superintendent of schools to invite parents and community stakeholders to join an open conversation about public schools.

Soup with the Supe provides the opportunity for attendees to meet with the superintendent and members of the executive leadership team to learn about the vision for the school district and engage in an open dialogue style forum. School district leaders open the event by serving soup to the attendees while enjoying student entertainment. The superintendent then engages the audience in a town hall style question and answer session.

Learn more from the promotional video: <http://bit.ly/14zWayk>

View a sample Soup with the Supe flier: <http://bit.ly/19ysHv8>

Example from Pasco School District

Superintendent Bus Tours

This event provides Pasco School District patrons with an opportunity to spend a morning with the superintendent while gaining valuable information about our schools. Community members, parents and local business and civic leaders are invited to join the superintendent on a tour of two or three schools. Guests have an opportunity to see, hear and feel the quality work accomplished at schools every day. Guests visit students in classrooms, see teachers at work and interact with principals. Bus Tours are an enjoyable and informative way to see what is happening in the Pasco School District. Registration is required to attend since space is limited.

Example from Pasco School District

Principal for a Day

This event fosters a community connection to school leadership by inviting one person from a business, non-profit or faith-based organization to shadow a principal for the day. Together they embark on a busy day in the life of a principal and all that it entails. Patrons learn what it takes to educate a child and that the process is not as easy as they may have imagined. During this important day, skills are observed and lessons are learned. This opportunity provides great community perspective on how it takes a village to raise a child.

Example from Pasco School District

Student Shadow

Community members, business partners and local leaders are paired up with high school juniors and seniors for a morning of high school classes. Students are paired with adults in career fields that may be of interest to the student, creating mentorship opportunities. This half-day event begins with a briefing from the superintendent and concludes with lunch and a debriefing where patrons and students share their impressions of the day.

Example from Pasco School District

Community Festivals

The Pasco School District takes part in community events to engage with parents and community members who do not traditionally visit the schools. A district booth is set up with administrators and principals manning the station to meet and greet the community. Topical information is distributed (calendars, kindergarten readiness information, district publications, etc.) Students are drawn to the booth by games, pencils and balloons and parents are greeted with a smile and great information. These community outreach opportunities occur approximately twice a year depending on what events are taking place in the community and have included Cinco de Mayo, Latino Expo and the Fiery Foods Festival.

For Parents

Example from Pasco School District

Very Important Patron (VIP) Days

VIP Days give community members and parents the opportunity to participate in a typical morning

of high school classes with a high school student or their own child as their guide. After morning refreshments and a welcome by the superintendent, visitors are able to experience school life from the eyes of a current student as they “shadow” the student in their morning classes. Guests participate in lessons; meet teachers, administrators and staff; and experience the reality of being a high schooler today. This half-day event concludes with lunch and a debriefing where patrons and students share their impressions of the day.

Example from Pasco School District

Bring Your Parent to School Day

Parents and guardians of high school freshmen are invited to spend a morning at school attending classes with their child. These events are held in October in an effort to engage both the student and parent early in the high school process. This is also a great target event for students who may be having a difficult transition into high school. This half-day event concludes with lunch and a debriefing where parents and students share their impressions of the day.

Partnerships

Schools alone can't do the important work of educating students. Partnerships of all kinds are an essential part of any school system's success. The trick is to find the right partners that will fill the right needs of your district, school or students.

Example from Pasco School District

PEAK! Program (Partners in Educating All Kids!)

Pasco School District's business to school partnership program is designed to involve and formally recognize community organizations and businesses as partners of Pasco schools. A PEAK! Partner enters into a contract, which includes a financial contribution of \$500 to the partner school and an agreement to participate in a minimum of three school events that support the school's improvement plan. These events can be as simple as reading to students, but have also been as involved as year-long contests and large-scale math and science nights. The contract must be renewed annually to continue the partnership. Visit the PEAK! web page at <http://bit.ly/14cGXeg> for details.

Example from Pasco School District

National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS)/Action Team for Partnerships

NNPS was established by Dr. Joyce L. Epstein at Johns Hopkins University in 1996 to organize and sustain a program of school, family and community partnerships. Pasco joined NNPS in 2005 and has teams consisting of parents, teachers, administrators, staff and community members who work together to connect family and community involvement with school improvement goals. Out of 19 Pasco campuses, 18 schools have an Action Team for Partnerships (ATP). ATPs improve school programs, help teachers teach, provide family support and connect families with schools and the community. The primary goal of every ATP is helping students reach their academic goals and ultimately success. Pasco has received national district and school awards from Johns Hopkins for the program each year. Visit: <http://bit.ly/11LoKhF>

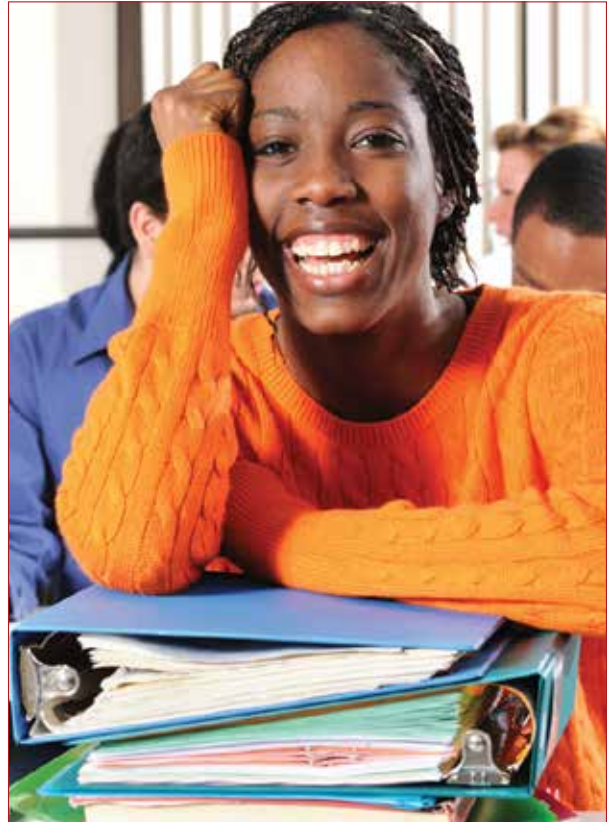
Tool _[3a]

Tips to increase your district's cultural competency

- Many times, immigrant parents simply need to be invited to be part of the school environment. In many cultures, it can be seen as “pushy” just to show up and get involved in the schools. Immigrant families want to be welcomed and invited by the school. That is their comfort level and schools need to be aware of this.
- Letters in all necessary languages should be provided to give parents an idea of what to expect during parent/teacher conferences.
- Parent volunteer letters in all languages necessary should be sent out to engage multilingual parents in the school community.
- When having meetings with diverse communities, make sure that the venue is big enough. Many immigrant families show up with extended family members. Recognize that this is a cultural norm for many of these groups. The whole “it takes a village to raise a child” adage is exemplified when immigrant families show up to meetings. The extended family is very important to immigrant cultures. Oftentimes, decisions about the education and care of children are group decisions with everyone providing input.
- Because many families bring small children, it is best to have a separate area or room specifically geared to providing activities for younger children so as not to create a distraction for the important information given at these meetings. Of course, appropriate and adequate supervision should be provided for the children's area.
- When sending information to parents, using phrases like “reserved or limited seating,” “free event” and “refreshments provided” resonate. If you can have parents fill out a registration form to attend a meeting, even better.
- Many of the mothers in a shared culture community keep in touch with each other and are up to speed on each child's education, even those children who are not their own. Again, this is part of the “village raising a child” concept.
- Understand what habits dictate daily life for your diverse communities. Does it make more sense to have a meeting during the day as opposed to after school or work?

Tool [3a]

- Many diverse communities follow their own cultural norms. We need to understand this and be respectful of these cultural traditions.
- Door prizes may enhance meetings with any parent community. Donations such as canvas bags, books, crayons, gift cards to restaurants, etc., are great.
- Many universities have grants to allow them to partner with local schools. Seek these opportunities out and take advantage of establishing these relationships.
- Provide a certificate of appreciation to parents for volunteering, attending meetings, etc. This builds the parent's self-esteem and encourages him or her to become more active and involved in your school community.
- Understand the social nature of many of these diverse communities. Food is very important culturally. You may not be able to have a full-blown potluck, but serving some refreshments at meetings can enhance attendance.





coming

STUDENTS

EMPLOYEES

PARENTS

SAFE

RULLYING

OUT
4
GOOD

TRANSPARENCY

Intentionality

Create a welcoming district through family centers

Establishing student placement and new family centers require significant investment, but in progressive communities that fully embrace diversity, it is almost an expected resource. In this section, your NSPRA peers from the United States and Canada provide examples of the centers that have been developed to welcome diverse families to the community and the school district.

Example from Niles Township School District

The Niles Township Schools' English Language Learner (ELL) Parent Center supports families with limited English proficiency by helping them learn English and providing them with the skills and tools to understand the U.S. public school system and advocate for their children's academic achievement.

The need: Niles Township is home to one of the fastest growing populations of immigrants and refugees in the Chicago metropolitan area: more than three out of 10 students were born outside the U.S. and almost six out of 10 students speak a language other than English at home. More than 90 languages are represented. These rapidly changing demographics prompted the Niles Township Superintendents' Association to spearhead an effort to create a central location to better acquaint these families with our public schools and how they work. With the support of the local school boards, the Niles Township Schools' ELL Parent Center opened its doors in July 2008.

Who it serves: The center provides services at no charge to families with children enrolled in nine K-8 elementary districts and the District 219 High Schools (Niles North, Niles West and Niles Central) in Skokie, Lincolnwood, Morton Grove and Niles.

The center provides services in three key areas:

1. Literacy—so parents can effectively communicate. Classes include English as a Second Language, family literacy, health literacy and classes in English conversation and writing.
2. Parent education—so parents themselves can model life-long learning. Classes include free parental training for parents of children ages 0 to 3, classes that provide homework help for students while their parents learn parenting skills and a discussion group for mothers and their teen daughters.
3. Access to community resources—so parents can support raising healthy children. Services include immigration, visa and Medicaid information; citizenship classes; financial literacy classes; computer classes; health fairs; and employment advice.

Setup and funding

The center was created through an intergovernmental agreement between the public school districts that are members. The center is funded by those districts through a funding formula based on the

number of students enrolled in each district. The center is also supported by state and federal grants and from funds provided by private donors. It is housed in 1,300 sq. ft. of space provided by Skokie School District 68 at its administrative center.

Staffing

The center employs one director and one part-time assistant. The center relies heavily on volunteers, including unpaid interns and local high school and college students who provide homework help and who care for children at the center while their parents attend class.

Partners

The center has established powerful partnerships with local units of government and nonprofit agencies. For example, volunteers from Oakton Community College lead classes in ESL, family literacy and computer skills. Local librarians participate in family field trips, where participants learn about multilingual databases, resources, the Book Mobile and library card applications. U.S. Congressional Representative Jan Schakowsky's office provides immigration and visa advice and offers other advocacy services. PACE Suburban Bus Service representatives explain how to get around town with public transit. Local hospitals and medical professionals provide financial support for school physicals, coordinate school supply and healthy snack drives and serve as guest speakers in health literacy classes. Open Communities, formerly Interfaith Housing Center of the Northern Suburbs in Illinois, offers financial literacy workshops and "Know Your Rights" workshops and has partnered on grants to support a community writing project and the new parent mentor program.

Other services

The center also offers trained interpreters in more than 12 languages who are qualified to assist local government and nonprofit agencies in communicating effectively with their clients. The center serves as a local clearinghouse for all issues related to English Language Learners in Niles Township.

Performance measurements

In its short history, the center has provided a full range of services to more than 800 families. Programming grew from one family literacy class to a full schedule including conversation and intensive English. The center started with a list of bilingual volunteers who offered to help interpret; it now has more than a dozen certified interpreters who have completed 100 hours of training and have been tested for written and oral proficiency. The center has outgrown its dedicated space and is investigating affordable expansion options. It continues to provide new programming, such as the parent mentor program.

Website: <http://www.ellparentcenter.org/>

Example from Peel School District and the Roosevelt School District

A welcome center for your district's parents can be an essential tool for inviting diverse communities into your school district. But just what should that welcome center look like? What elements make this welcome center inviting so that diverse audiences feel engaged with your district? Following are some examples and tips on how your district can make your welcome centers more inviting to your community.

The Roosevelt School District in Phoenix, Ariz., funds 19 Parent Centers and a district-wide Parent

Education Resource Center through both Title I funds (entitlement funds for high-poverty, low income school districts) and Title III funds (English Language Learners). Title I districts generally are some of the most diverse school districts in the country. The entire Roosevelt School District and all 19 of its schools are Title I schools.

Title I money typically requires a parent involvement component. Parent involvement makes a dramatic difference in the life of a child. There are family and community involvement grants available that can fund certain areas of a welcome/parent center or offset district costs. You just have to know where to look for them. Work with staff grant writers to enhance your district's chances of receiving such funds.

The Peel District School Board in Ontario, Canada, has three We Welcome the World Centres. Most of the cost of these centers is funded through settlement grants from Citizenship and Immigration Canada. The Peel board also provides significant in-kind contributions, such as space in schools with available room.

Settlement workers who speak, read and write many of the languages of the families they serve staff the welcome centers. Teachers and child minders also staff the centers.

Newcomer students register for school at one of these three centers. This is service to Peel board's 230+ schools, since more than 4,000 students who register at the centers would otherwise come directly to schools to register. This relieves workload from school secretaries and guidance staff in secondary schools.

We Welcome the World Centres are open year-round. Naturally, the peak time for new students to register for school is during the summer, when schools are normally closed. This means students are registered and ready to start class when school starts—better service for families, streamlined workload for schools at their peak registration time and improved outcomes for students who start classes without delay at the start of the year.

Part of the registration process at Peel board is an “orientation interview” with the student and family. Teaching staff review any transcripts or other documentation, interview the student and family and conduct standard age-appropriate assessments. They share information with the family about the school system and explain how class placements work. In Ontario, elementary-aged children are placed in classes based on their age, then provided with in-school support to learn English. In high school, depending on their assessed language skills, students may learn all their academic subjects in an English Language Learners class until their language skills are strong enough to ensure they will be successful in regular high school classes. The welcome center teachers recommend a placement for the student, based on the orientation interview, and share information with the school that will be welcoming the student and family.

Personal development opportunities can draw parents into a welcome/parent center. The Roosevelt School District offers the Rosetta Stone Language Development software in its computer labs. Each school Parent Center has licenses for Rosetta Stone (up to 50 per campus) so that parents can learn English. Parents can go at their own pace; by the end of the semester/year, parents are better able to communicate with their student's teachers and vice versa.

Any school district can offer Rosetta Stone classes in the languages spoken in their respective schools, providing parents with an incentive to become more literate in English in order to facilitate communication with the school.

Parent Coordinators

A welcome/parent center is more effective when it has a parent coordinator who is a motivated, reliable individual with good customer service skills and training for dealing with parents and the public in general. It helps if these individuals are also resourceful. For example, they should be able to be on the lookout for items like computers that are not being used so they can be incorporated at the welcome/parent center. The Roosevelt School District employs each parent coordinator on a 29.5 hour per week schedule.

With the goal of having parents become more involved in student success, parent coordinators should demonstrate the value of learning English. Hiring parent coordinators who share the language of the diverse community allows for a sense of trust with the school. In essence, these parent coordinators become a bridge to enabling these parents to become more self-sufficient and to have more self-confidence. Some parents in the Roosevelt School District have become proficient enough in the English language that they have gone on to community college and gotten their AA degrees. When the parents feel empowered like this, they set a great example for their children and the path toward education success is established in that particular household.

Classes and Workshops

Welcome/parent centers can also provide classes and workshops on successful parenting and how parents can work with their children and communicate better with them. These workshops should introduce parents to the school system and should offer other topics, based on topics of interest identified by parents through surveys, etc. The workshops should be offered in parents' first language. Examples of topics include the following:

- how to help your child be successful in school
- the English language learner program
- how to help your teen choose high school courses
- how to help your teen with career planning
- how to help your teen plan for post-secondary education

School districts should be resourceful and use administrative staff to provide classes for parents. For example, Roosevelt utilizes its reading and math specialists to provide parent workshops on how parents can work with their children in these respective school subjects.

Welcome Center Essentials

A welcome/parent center should have an extensive lending library with hundreds of books to encourage children to read. This provides a great resource for parents. Many local organizations are willing to donate children's books if you know where to look and who to ask.

These centers should also be a one-stop shop for parents, especially those in need. School supplies, uniforms, backpacks and health supplies should be available at no cost to parents. Many of the

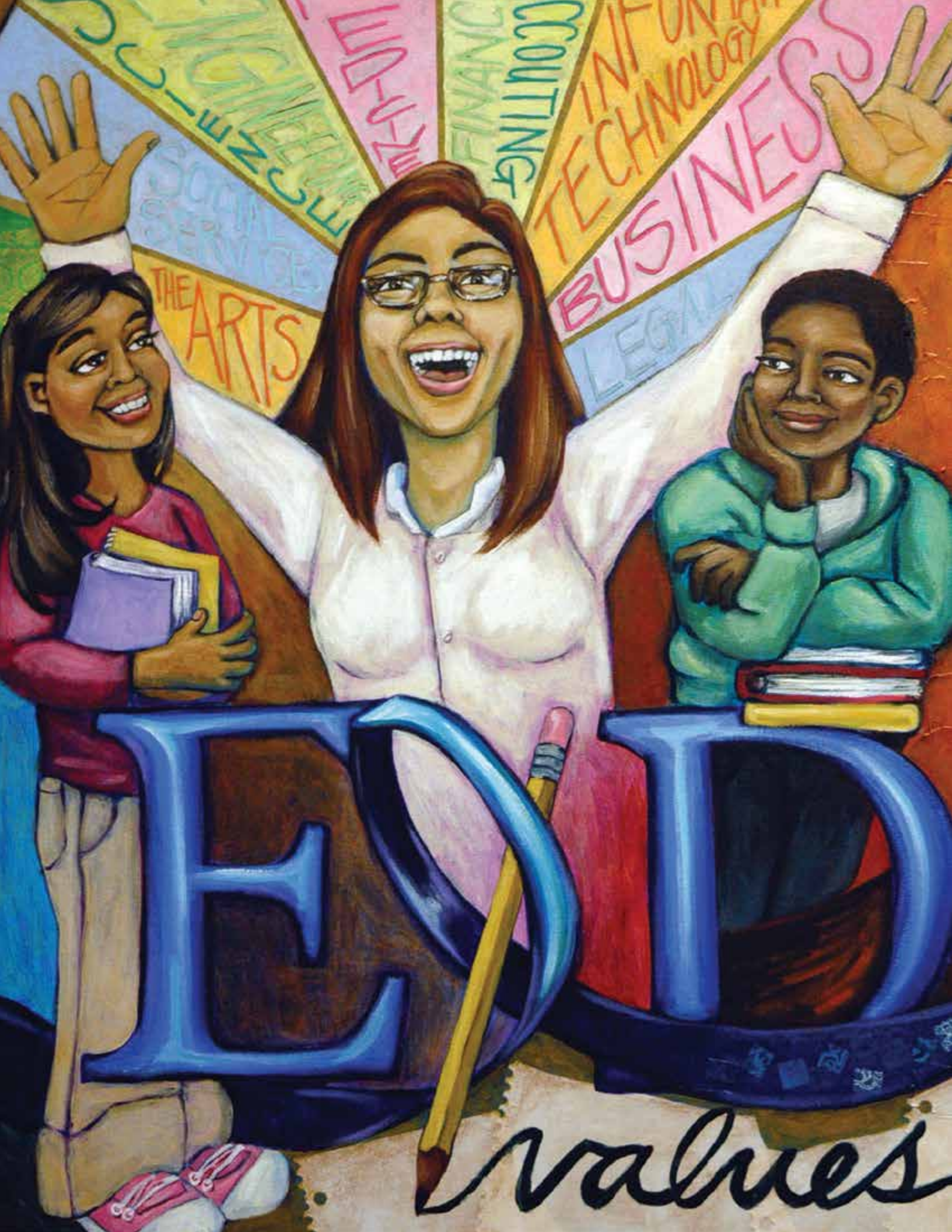
Parent Resource Centers in the Roosevelt School District serve a homeless population. “Homeless” does not necessarily mean that students and their families are on the streets, but it could mean that the children are not with their parents and living with extended relatives such as grandparents and aunts and uncles.

At the Peel board welcome centers, in addition to registration and orientation, newcomer families have access to the following free services:

- adult education and English classes
- childminding (while parents/guardians use services at the welcome centres)
- computer access to Peel resources
- information about employment, housing and health care
- information about Ontario’s education system
- internet access
- interpreters
- referrals to community settlement services (for example, for assistance in finding housing, jobs, filling out forms for social assistance, etc.)

Best practices on Welcome Centers-From Peel School District and the Roosevelt School District

- A welcome/parent center needs to be child friendly and engaging for the little ones. Often parents come to the school with young children who are not school age. If there is an area set aside at the welcome center where there are puzzles, games, coloring books and other activities for children, parents can focus and conduct the business that they came to the center to complete.
- Centers should be easily accessible. Parents should not have to wander around campus to locate the welcome/parent center. Clear signage in all appropriate languages should be posted directing parents to the center. The welcome center itself should be near the front of the school where the general public would have easy access to the facility.
- Bulletin boards should be created and clearly placed near the entrance to the welcome/parent center where appropriate fliers and information can be posted. Fliers and information, of course, should be printed in the languages spoken in your communities. For example, at the Peel board welcome centers, information is provided in 40 languages.
- Parent/welcome centers should be proactive in their attempts to help parents help their children to be more successful in school. Tip sheets for completing homework, for example, should be provided in all necessary languages.



LEAD

values

Create a diversity/inclusion competent district

As cities, communities and schools continue to change and become more diverse, it is crucial that school district systems, structures, policies and procedures adapt to the students and families we serve, not the other way around. In this section, NSPRA members share important insights into how school districts can be leading organizations of equity and inclusion. In addition to these important readings, this section provides resources, questionnaires, checklists and assessments to help you and your school district become more culturally and linguistically competent.

Why cultural competency and why now?

The rise of more culturally diverse student populations now requires school district communications teams to develop effective strategies that engage and involve all parents in their children's education. Such activities enhance customer service and reinforce an atmosphere of inclusion for all. However, such atmospheres do not just happen because we hire an interpreter for a parent meeting or publish multilingual versions of publications. All school employees—teachers, administrators, bus drivers, secretaries, custodians and food service workers—need to understand the things that are important to various cultural groups and learn how to make every student (and parent) feel like he or she is a valued and respected member of the school family.

While certain gains can be made through diversity communication, true inclusion requires organizational transformation at the level of values and norms. Communicators can be champions in helping create diversity competent school districts.

Becoming diversity competent involves developing the capacity for self-awareness and critical self-reflection within your school district. Being diversity competent means having the skills, knowledge and values needed to practice inclusion at both individual and organizational levels.

Equity and inclusion are the values (attitude, beliefs) and strategies (demonstrable behaviors) needed to nurture the capacity for the school district to foster diversity and enhance the district's capacity to face complex and changing environments.

More specifically, diversity competent school districts (and the people in them):

- Acknowledge that equity is a necessary condition to break down structural barriers that privilege some cultural and historical assumptions over others
- Are environments where people can reach or exceed their potential
- Respond to student, parent and staff differences in a respectful and inclusive manner
- Recognize that equity affects how the entire organization functions, how organizational values are lived and how work is carried out
- Recognize, understand and respect student, parent and staff differences

Diversity competence is reflected in:

- Governance structure (board and decision making)
- Human resources (hiring practices, employee reward systems, promotion opportunities, retention, work-life balance and ongoing learning)
- Program planning and service delivery (curriculum; relations with students, parents and community)

Principles and assumptions

We live in a diverse and changing society. While every person has a right to be treated fairly and equitably, barriers exist at all levels of society that result in the inequitable treatment of some individuals and groups. This inequitable treatment means different people have different access to power and privilege and some are therefore unable to fully participate within their communities.

Because they are not openly accepted or encouraged to participate in community organizations—including schools and school districts—particular individuals and groups do not have the opportunity to fully benefit from and contribute to society. To change this situation and ensure equitable treatment of all people who interact and engage with schools and districts (staff, volunteers, clients), it is important to examine our values, policies, practices and procedures. Only then can systemic barriers be identified and removed.

Diversity and inclusion issues to be addressed include (but are not limited to) culture, race, language, country of origin, religion, physical or cognitive ability, gender, sexual orientation, family type, mental illness or age.

Why inclusiveness is important

Removing barriers to inclusion will make a school district more effective at achieving its mandate. There are many reasons why inclusiveness helps to make a district more effective:

- It will ensure equal access and participation in your district by diverse populations.
- It will be easier to respond effectively to the various needs of the students, parents and community that your district serves.
- It will help to ensure that your district is representative and reflective of the local population.
- It will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of your programming and provide better outcomes for your students.
- It will help to ensure that your community is represented and validated within the various parts of your organization.
- It will ensure that your strategic directions are fully informed by, and are consistent with, diverse representation and inclusiveness.
- It will help people make good decisions in an environment of change and fiscal uncertainty.
- It will enhance your district's ability to effectively respond to future demographic changes.
- It will make your district more accountable to the community.

- It will ensure that your district is fully complying with legal obligations under state/provincial and federal human rights legislation.

Organizational benefits

Inclusivity within an organization creates many benefits, both short and long term, for the district:

- It enhances community input and relationship building.
- It helps build your district's reputation as a progressive and inclusive employer of choice.
- It provides social, economic and cultural enrichment through increased diversity.
- It improves morale, especially among board members, staff, students, parents and volunteers who may currently feel marginalized.
- It builds organizational capacity and expertise.
- Increased participation encourages greater sharing of responsibility and workload.
- It reduces conflict and ensures that the root sources of conflict are better understood.
- It complies with relevant legislation, supports risk management and protects your district from liability.

Barriers to Equitable Access

Issues of access and choice are important when examining power and privilege. Access is defined as having the right, opportunity or ability to reach, enter or use a facility, program or materials; visit a person or people; and/or receive, understand and use information, knowledge or skills. Access is limited or prevented when barriers exist. Barriers create limited or restricted access to a facility, program, materials, people or information. Such barriers may be accidental or intended.

People may face many barriers that prevent their full and active participation in society based on their personal identities and/or circumstances. For instance, systemic discrimination may be encountered by those who have a disability, by people of color or by youth and seniors in situations where programs are set up for able-bodied, white, middle-aged people. People's cultural or religious attire, or the fact that they have a speech impediment or limited ability in English, can also subject them to discrimination in circumstances where strict dress codes are in effect and verbal communication is important. Such barriers may not only limit their active participation in organizations, but may actually prevent them from even contacting such groups to begin with.

People do not necessarily choose to deliberately discriminate against those who are different from themselves. Many of the barriers to participation within school districts exist because of a lack of awareness of differing wants or needs. Barriers can be removed and access can be increased by first exploring what some of these barriers are and how we can learn to notice them in the behaviors of ourselves and others.

Basically, a barrier is an obstacle that prevents an individual or group from accessing certain services or opportunities. A barrier can be:

- physical (e.g., stairs)

- financial (e.g., lack of bus fare)
- attitudinal (e.g., individual or organizational discrimination)
- social (e.g., prevailing norms and attitudes)
- linguistic (e.g., limited English skills)
- geographic (e.g., isolated location)

Such barriers may be real or perceived. It is important to recognize that there are a variety of ways in which school or district buildings, programs, services and opportunities can be inaccessible to some people. Access is related to many different aspects of an organization, such as communications, signage, physical design and delivery of services.

In some cases, people may find it difficult to fully participate in their communities because of an individual constraint. For instance, an individual who has a hearing impairment may find it difficult to participate in a community meeting. However, he or she may be accommodated by being provided with materials in print format rather than just orally, by a request that participants in the meeting speak clearly and try to face the hearing impaired person so that he or she has the opportunity to read lips or perhaps by the availability of sign language interpretation.

There is no simple formula for alleviating all barriers, as each person's needs are unique. When we treat everyone the same, we ignore differences. When we treat people equitably, with a diversity/inclusion competency mindset, we recognize and respect differences.

Therefore, the process of determining what accommodations are needed and feasible must be considered on an individual basis in each specific circumstance. Since not all needs will be apparent, it is important to find out from every person involved or potentially involved in an organization if there are ways that their participation can be maximized. This may be done as part of an orientation. By consulting all affected individuals, plans for accommodation can often be established within a reasonable and mutually acceptable time frame.

Sometimes the accommodation of needs is not possible without causing undue hardship for the people involved or for the organization that is trying to accommodate them. Solutions may have to be found to offset the costs or risks involved in accommodation. Also, where accommodation cannot be immediately addressed, it may need to be phased in over a longer period of time.

For example, in order for changes to be made to physical infrastructure that may require a large financial outlay, the organization might consider:

- creating a special fund where periodic payments can be made
- asking individuals and organizations for grants or donations
- holding a fundraising event specifically for this purpose

It is also important to recognize that people who require accommodations are unlikely to approach

the organization to demand or even request them. It is more likely that they will simply feel unwelcome and consider not participating or be unable to do so.

Organizations can create a welcoming image by choosing their meeting or activity locations carefully (e.g., ensuring they are physically accessible and on subway or bus routes.).

Exhibiting good faith and a willingness to explore creative solutions for reducing barriers to equitable access and making accommodations is a huge step toward becoming inclusive. Moreover, taking incremental steps toward making all people feel welcome and included (before someone issues a request or complaint) shows that you are open to change and exercising voluntary responsibility.

Example from Trillium Lakelands District School Board

Safe Space

Trillium Lakelands District School Board (TLDSB) is a mostly rural 7,500 square mile area in east-central Ontario, Canada. There are eight main communities with a total population of 148,287. The school board serves 18,000 students at 41 elementary schools and seven secondary schools.

A focus area as part of an “Equity and Inclusive Education” thrust has been to introduce “Positive Space” signs to school communities. The school board equity and inclusive education committee provided training to all school principals, school board trustees, community agency partners and others. The training included a focused look at issues facing students, staff, parents and community members who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer/questioning (LGBTQ). Each principal was provided with a sign to post in an area of the school where members of the LGBTQ community could truly feel safe. The placement of the sign was to be determined by the school community through conversations with staff, parents and students. At the training, participants were asked to indicate how accepting they perceived their school council, students and staff to be around this issue.

As is common practice at TLDSB, all school principals and trustees were provided with a message map as well as research facts about the experiences of LGBTQ students, their families and allies.

The level of acceptance varies across the district. It is a non-issue for secondary schools that have established Gay Straight Alliance clubs at each school. Acceptance is more difficult for some elementary schools, and after an initial backlash from some communities, the district asked primary schools to back away from the conversation for the time being. Elementary schools with grades four to eight are continuing the conversation and there is general acceptance of the signs at most schools. The schools that have the highest level of acceptance are where the principal has spent many months working with staff and students to engage in conversations and learning about LGBTQ and the ramifications of homo-negativity on students and their families.

Creating a diversity competency framework for your district

These resources will help you get started in creating a diversity competency framework for your district. Here are some typical elements that would be included in such a framework:

Organizational culture

Mission, vision and values statements explicitly include statements about diversity and inclusion.

- Policy and decision making.
- Diversity competency incorporated into all policies.
- Allocation of adequate resources to implement diversity competency policies.
- Input from staff, students, parents and community in decision making.
- Diverse community members consulted on key issues.

Governance

- Diversity and inclusion reflected in board and senior leadership.
- Ongoing diversity training for board and senior leadership.

Administration

- Diversity and inclusion management knowledge and skills as requisite for leadership roles.

Training

- Ongoing diversity and inclusion training for all staff.

Human resources

- Active recruitment of staff to reflect all aspects of diversity and inclusion.
- Human resources practices are barrier-free.
- Composition of the community is reflected in staff.

Communications

- District communication materials reflect the full range of diversity and inclusion of the students, staff, parents and community.
- Translation and interpretation is provided proactively.
- Communication is culturally appropriate.
- Communications works with diverse communities to develop diversity and inclusion plans.

Service delivery

- Curriculum reflects the full range of diversity and inclusion.
- Barriers preventing access to service have been identified and removed.
- Service delivery is inclusive and diversity-appropriate.
- Support services are provided as required.

Guide to developing a comprehensive diversity training model

Note: This article is based on the Cultural Competence training program developed by the Jefferson County Public School District's Department of Diversity, Equity and Poverty Programs.

Developing a comprehensive cultural/diversity competency training program is a marathon, not a sprint. It will take time and commitment, but if you persist, it will become an ongoing practice.

1. Find a partner. How can a communications department facilitate this training? That's simple. It can work in cooperation with another district department like ESL or—as is the case with the Jefferson County Public School District in Louisville, KY—in conjunction with the Department of Diversity, Equity and Poverty Programs. Depending upon the size of the district and its organizational structure, the communications department may become a supporting player, rather than the driver of the training program.
2. Make cultural/diversity competency an integral part of your district's strategic plan or board goals. When there is commitment and direction from the top, it is easier to get buy-in from all stakeholders. When a clear objective is identified, all players can stake out their area of expertise and make a contribution.
3. Organize the training around a theme that reiterates or supports a board or district goal. Not only does this elevate your work as integral to district success, it also sends a strong message to all employee groups that cultural competence is a “moral imperative and key expectation” of their job performance and it helps them internalize board and district goals.
4. Create a facilitator's guide that includes clear purpose, objectives and specific learning targets for each employee group and why cultural competence is important to their roles. Introduce the program by outlining the need for and general information about cultural competency to each level of staff through a series of facilitated group discussions supported by awareness videos your communications department can produce for each level of employees. The guide also includes an order of the videos and notes for suggested activities and reflective conversations.
5. Make the training relevant! Do not be tempted to use only pre-packaged videos or training materials from third-party production companies. Create videos that explain the history of diversity in your community and relay the comments and experiences of students and teachers in your district. When staff realize that the content is about their community, their schools and their students rather than dramatizations by actors, they are much more likely to take it to heart.
6. Include a test (but do not post a grade). Even though your department has printed lots of documents that list demographic facts and figures about your district, many non-school-based employees will be unaware. Consider developing a demographics quiz that will help staff get a better feel for the diversity in your district. A cultural competency self-test can also be developed. Ask participants to identify the things they do frequently, occasionally or rarely from a list of desired behaviors critical to creating a welcoming, inclusive environment for all.

Tool ^[5a]

Organizational Assessment

This worksheet was created by The Denver Foundation's Inclusiveness Project (www.nonprofitinclusiveness.org) to support organizations doing inclusiveness work.

Becoming more inclusive requires a commitment to an in-depth, extended process. The following short pre-test will help you determine whether this process is appropriate for your organization at this time. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers—the purpose of this assessment is to help you determine whether the process is a good fit for your organization. If it is not, you can take other steps to work on inclusiveness, some of which are explained at the end of this assessment. You will tally your answers after completing question six.

This pre-test has been designed to be taken by an organization's CEO/executive director, board chair or other senior-level staff or board leadership. Most questions will rely on your impressions and opinions, which may or may not be the same as those of other members of your organization. It may be helpful for individuals within an organization to have a discussion about the answers after taking the pre-test, prior to embarking on your inclusiveness work.

- 1. Which of the following choices best summarizes your organization's focus regarding inclusiveness/diversity? (select one)**
 - a. We are primarily interested in having more staff and/or board members of color.
 - b. We are interested in incorporating inclusiveness into all that we do—changing the way our organization meets its mission; our culture and environment related to race and ethnicity; and how we recruit and retain people of color as board members, staff, volunteers and clients.
 - c. We are primarily interested in improving our services/reaching out to clients of color.
- 2. Based on your knowledge, which of the following statements would best characterize your CEO or executive director's approach to inclusiveness? (select one)**
 - a. Our CEO/ED believes that inclusiveness matters, but that we have other priorities to focus on right now (fundraising, strategic plan, capital campaign, etc.).
 - b. Our CEO/ED would go along with an inclusiveness initiative if the board of directors or a major funder strongly recommended it.

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- c. Our CEO/ED believes that our organization should not take race or ethnicity into account in any area of our work.
 - d. Our CEO/ED believes that being inclusive is simply the right thing to do.
 - e. Our CEO/ED believes that inclusiveness will help our organization to raise more money.
 - f. Our CEO/ED believes that inclusiveness will help us to better meet our mission, such as in the following ways: raising more funds, improving services and programs and better meeting the needs of our community.
 - g. Our CEO/ED believes that our organization should become more diverse to respond to community pressure or expectations.
3. **Based on your knowledge, which of the following statements would best characterize the approach of your board of directors to inclusiveness? (select one)**
- a. Our board thinks that inclusiveness is generally a good thing.
 - b. Many members of our board of directors strongly believe being more inclusive would help us to better meet our mission and they raise issues related to race and ethnicity often (i.e., when discussing program policies, suggesting training for the board, etc.).
 - c. Most members of our board of directors prefer that we not take race or ethnicity into account in any area of our work.
 - d. Our board of directors does not seem to have strong positive or negative feelings about inclusiveness.
4. **Current organization focus/priorities: (check all that apply)**
- ☐ Our organization is in the midst of (or about to embark on) a major capital campaign.
 - ☐ Our organization is in the process of a CEO/ED leadership transition.
 - ☐ Our organization is currently addressing a crisis (i.e., loss of a major funder, major influx of clients, federal or state funding cuts, etc.).
 - ☐ Our organization is in the midst of a major reorganization.
5. **The level of resources that you believe your organization can commit to an inclusiveness initiative: (select one)**
- a. We have (or can access through funders) funds available (\$3,000 or more) and are able to make inclusiveness a priority for our staff and board's time and energy right now.

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- b. We are able to make inclusiveness a priority for our staff and board's time, but we do not have funds available.
 - c. We have funds available (\$3,000 or more), but our staff and board have other priorities right now.
6. **The kind of work your organization would be willing to engage in for an inclusiveness initiative: (select one)**
- a. We would like to undergo diversity/inclusiveness training about culture, diversity, race relations and/or racism.
 - b. We would like to complete an organizational assessment that provides information about our work in relation to race and ethnicity and that provides information that we will use to create an inclusiveness blueprint (i.e., a diversity strategic plan).
 - c. We would like to undergo diversity/inclusiveness training about culture, diversity, race relations and/or racism and we would like to complete an organizational assessment that provides information about our work in relation to race and ethnicity and that provides information that we will use to create an inclusiveness blueprint (i.e., a diversity strategic plan).

Answer Key

Convert your answers to numbers.

Question 1: a = 3, b = 6, c = 4

Question 2: a = 1, b = 2, c = 0, d = 3, e = 2, f = 4, g = 2

Question 3: a = 3, b = 4, c = 0, d = 2

Question 4: Subtract four points from the total score for each line checked.

Question 5: a = 3, b = 2, c = 1

Question 6: a = 1, b = 3, c = 5

Record your total here: _____

Total 14 – 21: Good fit: Your organization is probably ready to consider a comprehensive initiative.

Total 8 – 13: Moderate fit: Your organization may wish to start more gradually by focusing on specific pieces of inclusiveness. Your organization may wish to take six months to a year to plan for a comprehensive initiative.

Total 0 – 7: Not a good fit at this time: The comprehensive initiative process is likely not a good fit for your organization's current interests and resources. Read on to see the six key areas, each of which includes several options for inclusiveness work.

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Characteristics That Will Affect Your Organization's Ability to Go Through the Initiative Process: Six Key Areas

Regardless of your organization's total on the organizational assessment (Tool [5a]), you will find it helpful to take these areas into account when deciding whether the comprehensive initiative is a good fit for your organization.

1. Focus on Inclusiveness Versus Diversity

This process is designed for organizations that are interested in becoming more inclusive in a comprehensive way that will affect all areas of their organization, from programs to governance.

This process is not well suited for organizations primarily focused only on increasing the representation of individuals of color at board or staff levels. These organizations will likely find, though, that changing organizational culture, recruitment and retention practices and other policies and procedures in a deeper way will have an important effect on the organization's ability to recruit and retain individuals of color into all levels, including staff, volunteers, clients and board members.

If your organization is primarily interested in diversity (i.e., increasing representation at different levels of your organization), we recommend that you engage in discussions internally about the reasons behind your organization's desire to increase representation of individuals of color, the factors that influence your ability to do so and the benefits of inclusiveness. You may also wish to consult respected colleagues within your field who are working toward deeper inclusiveness, or who have successful inclusiveness practices, about their work.

2. Strong CEO/ED Commitment

Research has shown that the level of commitment to inclusiveness from the CEO/ED, whether white or a person of color, is a key factor in becoming more inclusive.

We recommend that organizations that do not currently have a strong, deep commitment from their leadership not go through this process at this time, even if all other factors are present. If your organization does not have a strong commitment from your CEO/ED, you may wish to have board members or other staff talk with your CEO about why you feel inclusiveness is important. Furthermore, you may recommend that your CEO/ED talk with colleagues in your field who have strong inclusiveness practices about their work, including the benefits and challenges of an inclusiveness initiative.

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However, we recommend that you do not go through the full process until your organization has a strong commitment from the CEO/ED in place, including the desire to lead an inclusiveness initiative for your organization.

3. Board Commitment

Commitment from your board of directors will help institutionalize inclusiveness at your organization because the board is responsible for making policies, governance and hiring the CEO/ED.

If your organization has weak or moderate support for an inclusiveness initiative at the board level, but has all of the other key items in place, you may wish to go through this process.

Some organizations may find that their board members do not fully understand the benefits of inclusiveness for the organization. If this is the case, completing Making the Case for Inclusiveness (www.nonprofitinclusiveness.org) and then presenting your findings to your board could be a way of helping your board become more supportive of your initiative. Furthermore, you may wish to engage an inclusiveness trainer or consultant to help your board understand the ways that race and ethnicity affect your organization's work.

4. Environment

If your organization is currently involved in an initiative that requires a great deal of time and energy, such as a capital campaign, now is likely not the best time to take on inclusiveness work, as it will only compete with your other priorities.

It is best to wait until your organization has completed other potentially competing initiatives and then begin the process detailed in this process.

If your organization is currently facing a crisis, such as a drastic cut in funding, it is best to focus your energy on stabilizing your organization prior to beginning this process.

If your organization is in the midst of a leadership change or reorganization, it is best to wait until that change is complete, as the leadership of the CEO/ED is vital to a successful inclusiveness initiative.

5. Willingness to Commit Resources

The process of developing an inclusiveness initiative will take resources—time, energy and funds. For your work to be successful, it is important that your

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organization have adequate resources in place. Organizations should be able to commit time and resources for an extended period—from six to 18 months—and should be prepared to make the inclusiveness work a priority.

If your organization is ready to do this but does not have funds available, you may wish to spend a year planning for the initiative by going through the Costs and Time Factors of Doing Inclusiveness Work, Roles and Responsibilities of People Who Work on Inclusiveness, Making the Case for Inclusiveness, What is an Inclusiveness Blueprint? and Find Consultants and Training Resources and setting funds aside in your budget (or request financial support from individuals or institutions) for next year (www.nonprofitinclusiveness.org).

Organizations that have funds available for work but do not have time should set aside those funds until they can commit staff and/or volunteer time and energy. The funds you will need will depend on your organization's size, access to volunteer resources and ability to devote staff time and energy.

6. Willingness to Participate in Both Organizational Development and Inclusiveness Training

This process is designed for organizations that are interested in both training about race and ethnicity and evaluating and addressing any existing weaknesses in their organization's programs, practices and policies. Both areas are intertwined and dependent upon one another for the eventual success of your inclusiveness initiative.

If your organization is focused solely on inclusiveness training, this process is probably not right for you. Such organizations may decide to engage the services of an inclusiveness trainer. After completing training, these organizations often consider how to institutionalize the benefits of that training in all areas of the organization, at which point they may return to the initiative process.

If your organization is focused solely on changing policies and programs related to inclusiveness, this process is not quite right for you, as it relies on the connection between the individual work done through training about culture, race and ethnicity and inclusiveness policies and practices in the workplace.

However, the degree to which your organization engages in each of these areas is up to you: some organizations may choose to do a multi-day inclusiveness training retreat and gradually work on organizational development, while others may choose to spread out small chunks of training over the course of a year and work intensely on organizational development.

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Note that the above characteristics will likely fluctuate over time. For example, your board might be mildly interested in inclusiveness at the start of your initiative and fully committed by the time that you are through. Or, your organization might have a great deal of staff time to commit to the initiative over the summer during a programming lull, but less staff time to commit during the winter. Such changes are to be expected. The most important thing is that your organization and its leadership make a continued commitment to addressing inclusiveness in your organization

Additional Helpful Qualities

In addition to meeting the characteristics of the above six areas, the following qualities will likely be helpful to your organization as you go through the initiative process. Unlike the above six areas (especially numbers one and two), these qualities are not strictly necessary for an inclusiveness initiative following the model detailed in this process:

- Open to feedback about the organization's work.
- Expectation that this work will include difficulty and discomfort.
- Strong internal and external communication systems, both formal and informal.
- Organization's ability to change.
- Conflict-resolution skills within the organization.
- An internal culture of respect.
- A belief in the value of differences.
- A belief that race and culture matter in the delivery of services.
- Ability to set and reach goals and objectives.
- Ability to track, measure and evaluate progress.

If your organization does not currently have one or more of the above qualities (e.g., you may believe that your organization can improve its conflict-resolution skills), you can choose to address that as a part of your initiative (e.g., by looking at how race and culture affect conflict during inclusiveness training sessions).

Summary

Inclusiveness work is a marathon, not a sprint: it will take time, patience and endurance. Through the course of this process, your organization will likely experience highs and lows and it will need internal strength and external support. But, at the completion of the process, you will have a concrete blueprint for how to make your organization more inclusive and will be well on your way to implementing this plan.

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Your plan should improve your ability to do some or all of the following: serve current and prospective clients, recruit and retain staff and board members, meet the needs of your community, solve problems creatively and effectively and fulfill your mission. In short, committed organizations ready for the process will probably find it well worth their while.



Tool ^[5c]

Personal Readiness Checklist

Each of us carries a personal wealth of knowledge and life experience that begins building one block at a time from the moment we open our eyes at birth. Following the theoretical path of social constructivism, we are fluid and ever-changing beings.

Who and how we are in the world today is based on each of our unique foundations, held together by our beliefs, attitudes and perspectives. Rarely do we have the opportunity to look back and self reflect in order to evaluate our ideas or test our assumptions. In this course, your willingness to look deeply at your self-identity and the social structures that make up our society will lead to more equitable and inclusive societies.

Check List: How ready are you?

This is not a test and not a tool for self-judgment. It is simply a way for you to discover where you are today.

To what extent are you...?

Consider the following statements and rate yourself 1 through 5
(1 = never 5 = always)

Comfortable with being uncomfortable	1	2	3	4	5
Willing to receive a 'hard truth'	1	2	3	4	5
Willing to deliver a 'hard truth'	1	2	3	4	5
Comfortable sharing your views and experiences	1	2	3	4	5
Willing to engage in controversial issues	1	2	3	4	5
Appreciative of different points of view	1	2	3	4	5
Open to having your views challenged	1	2	3	4	5
Able to see the world from someone else's perspective	1	2	3	4	5
Comfortable working through disagreements and conflicts	1	2	3	4	5
Willing to examine the sources of your biases and assumptions	1	2	3	4	5
I understand how privilege and oppression affect our lives	1	2	3	4	5

Tool [5d]

Focusing on Racial Equity as We Work

Organizing groups should review this list of questions occasionally to make sure they are working well together.

Who are we?

- Does our group represent all sectors of our community?
- Who is missing?
- What efforts have we made to include all racial groups?
- How well does the leadership in our group reflect our community?

How do we interact/communicate?

- How do group members interact?
- Describe the racial dynamics in the group. Are we honest about how things are going?
- How comfortable are we discussing our own issues of race with one another?
- How effective are we at working equitably across racial groups and other differences?
- Do we need to set aside time for team building and deeper exploration of the issues?
- Are we all participating fully or are we holding back and letting others represent our interests/views?

How are we functioning and making decisions?

- How are meetings run? Who decides?
- How do we decide who will lead the group?
- What dynamics are at play when white people provide leadership?
- What dynamics are at play when people of color provide leadership?
- When we plan our meetings, what consideration do we give to racial and cultural differences (location, flexible scheduling, social time/food, time, etc.)?
- Whose voices are heard when we make decisions? (Do our leaders make room for all views?)
- Where do we fall short?
- How could we improve?

Tool [5e]

Racial Dynamics to Watch For

As you approach a large community-change initiative, pay attention to racial dynamics. Consider the following examples. Talk about how you might prevent or correct these situations.

Planning and organizing

- The organizing committee recruits one person of color to “represent” the African American, Latino and/or Asian “community.”
- The chair of the group selects a large, prosperous, white church—or another venue frequented by whites—as a regular meeting site for the organizing team.
- The group decides to rotate meeting sites between a prosperous white church and a local black church. White attendance is very low when the meeting takes place at the black church.
- The leadership of the organizing team is all white. White team members dominate the conversation and make most of the decisions.
- The organizers speak only English in groups that include people who have limited English skills.
- People use academic language or “insider” jargon when trying to recruit working class people or immigrants.
- The organizers schedule meetings in the middle of the day, assuming everyone can take a long lunch break.
- Leaders run meetings without considering cultural differences around time or the need for some cultures to connect socially before getting down to business.

Dialogues and facilitation

- The white facilitator seems to lead most of the time; the person of color who is co-facilitating tends to do more note-taking.

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- The white organizer checks in with the white facilitator about how things are going.
- One or two people of color are asked to speak for their whole group.
- People of color do most of the storytelling. White people listen a lot, but they are not willing or encouraged to share stories on race on a deeper, more personal level; instead, they are more likely to talk about gender, etc.
- The conversation on race is dismissed and replaced by conversation on socio-economic status, gender or sexual orientation (for example). Knowing that it is easier to talk about other issues, the facilitator is not willing to press the group to focus on race.
- The facilitator steps out of the neutral role and begins to “teach” the group.
- During the dialogue, participants make racially charged statements. The facilitators are inexperienced and uncomfortable, so they shut down the conversation.

Working on action

- Action groups are often dominated by white participants. While people of color may be invited to participate, they are more “for show.” Old habits and behaviors continue, and white participants stay in the lead.
- As people form new partnerships to address problems in the community, they hesitate to include people from different racial groups.
- People who are most affected by new policies are shut out. They have no voice in the policy making.
- Even though many new “actors” are speaking up and trying to make change, they are gradually closed out of the process and things revert to “business as usual.”

Tool [5f]

Developing and Sustaining an Equity Lens to Our Work

Ideas to think about, reflect upon and act on as we continue to do our work:

Action Task Forces

What dynamics should we be looking within our action group around issues of equity, racial/ethnic, cultural, social, gender, etc.?

- **Our Membership**
 - » Is it reflective rather than representative?
- **Participation**
 - » Who is participating? Is participation equal? Are we considering a variety of skill sets (analytical and intuitive)?
- **Leadership**
 - » Is our leadership reflective of our community in our action groups?
 - » What are the implications of leadership from white people? People of color?
- **Meeting Time and Space**
 - » What does it mean to look at meeting times and spaces through an equity lens?
 - » Are we asking people of color to come to “white” venues to meet? Are we willing to consider alternative places and times?
 - » Do meeting schedules allow for full participation?
 - » How do our concepts of time impact our meetings?
- **Meeting Agendas**
 - » What elements need to be included in each meeting if we are looking through the lens of equity?
 - » Relationship building time?
 - » Eating?
 - » Flexibility in meeting time?
- **Communication**
 - » Do we regularly check in on the dynamics of the team?
 - » Are we regularly doing our own work around equity?
 - » What does it mean to communicate through an equity lens?
 - » Are we moving beyond “politeness and pretending”?

Tool [5g]

Post-Meeting Debrief Questions for Action Groups

- **Reflections on dynamics of group**
 - » What did we notice?
 - » Are we opening space for all voices?
 - » How did we intervene?
 - » What should we be aware of in the future?
- **Reflections on our interactions**
 - » How well are we modeling equity and power sharing? How can we improve?
 - » How are our equity lenses shaping our perceptions of our group?
 - » How comfortable are we discussing our own issues of race and other forms of equity with each other?
 - » Do we need to devote time for team building and deeper exploration of the issues?
- **For leaders**
 - » Is my leadership responsive to all voices in my group? Is it seen as valid and legitimate? Do I open the space for all views?
- **For members**
 - » As a member, am I fully participating or deferring to others to represent my interests/views?



Other Resources:

An Inclusion Lens: Workbook for Looking at Social and Economic Exclusion and Inclusion

<http://bit.ly/1aSu3kx>

Center for Gender in Organizations

<http://bit.ly/12t57G1>

Diversity Executive

<http://www.diversity-executive.com>

Racial equity tools

<http://bit.ly/16C3Npg>

Resources for using dialogue to prevent and transform conflict

<http://bit.ly/13av312>

Advancing Diversity and Inclusion in Public Service

<http://bit.ly/13aCJPI>



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