



FORDHAM UNIVERSITY

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The NYC RBE-RN @ Fordham University Professional Newsletter - Fall 2015 Issue

The primary objective of the NYC Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBE-RN) at Fordham University Graduate School of Education and the Center for Educational Partnerships is to assist schools across all five boroughs in creating professional learning communities centered on the education of English Language Learners (ELLs).

As we announced in our June issue, the New York State Education Department (NYSED) has awarded the Fordham NYC RBE-RN a 5-year grant to continue its work with the educational community of New York City. Our partnership with the schools focuses on improving the performance of English language learners. The work is guided by the amended Commissioner's Regulation Part 154 which governs bilingual and ENL (formerly ESL) education programs, and to this purpose, the team offers coaching, mentoring, job embedded professional development, and support to school teams in the inquiry process, data analysis and planning for ELLs.

Another important component of the NYC RBE-RN is its Regional Professional Development on timely issues, such as the changes to CR Part 154 and/or the NYSESLAT thus providing comprehensive and continuous support to the work of principals, assistant principals, teachers and parents.

The role of the family in a child's education and the significance of establishing strong communication links between the school and the home are at the core of this year's school improvement efforts by both the New York State Education Department and the New York City Department of Education. We embrace these critical initiatives and dedicate this first issue of our professional journal to connecting research and best practices through articles that we hope will boost and extend current school practices, and encourage teachers, counselors, social workers, parent coordinators, school psychologists and administrators to explore new ideas and strategies to engage families and communities, particularly those with English language learners who represent linguistic and culturally diverse backgrounds.

Please visit our website for more information on our Regional Professional Development sessions and resources:

www.fordham.edu/nyc-rbe-rn-newyork

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**Welcome, Dr. Roach, Dean
Fordham Graduate School of Education**

“Two of the key tenets of a Fordham education are **cura personalis** (Education that is respectful of the unique needs and identity of each student) and **service with and for others**.

· The work we do in the classroom, school building or other educational settings is the pinnacle of these two important themes. Respecting the unique cultural backgrounds, needs, strengths, and identity of each child is at the core of what we do. Its how we think of and treat the children, youth & families with whom we work. Serving with and for others is a powerful philosophy for setting up a classroom, for approaching teaching and learning. These two hallmarks of our work are why I came to Fordham and its how the RBERN approaches work in the communities in New York. “

**The Center for Educational
Partnerships**

We are, first and foremost, a group of scholars and practitioners who are committed to applying cutting-edge research. We are dedicated to applying that research in the service of K-12 students, teachers, administrators, and parents, as well as to education and government agencies to enable all children to achieve and succeed academically.

Under the direction of Anita Vazquez Batisti, PhD, Associate Dean for Partnerships, we have grown rapidly, forging partnerships with the New York City Department of Education and the New York State Education Department. The center has a myriad of grant projects that serve of all New York city and the greater metropolitan area.

**Message from Dr. Batisti, Associate Dean and Director,
Center for Educational Partnerships**

Dear Colleagues:

I am delighted that the Fordham University Graduate School of Education, Center for Educational Partnerships, has again been awarded the New York State/New York City RBE-RN contract for the next five years. During the 2015-16 academic year, New York City districts and schools will profit from the expertise of our accomplished RBE-RN specialists team who will provide support, professional development and mentoring in all matters pertaining to ELL education, including family involvement.

This newsletter will focus on how schools can engage parents/caregivers in the education of their children. Parents must be welcomed into the school setting. They need to see themselves as partners in their children’s education. In families where the adults speak another home language, it is essential for schools to transmit the idea that the home language be maintained because it provides an important foundation of language and vocabulary that is essential to the academic success of ELLs. As we move through the year, we will take a close look at how the educational community and families can come together to help bolster students’ vocabulary and future literacy.

I thank you for your hard work and I wish you all the best in this school year.



Warm regards,

Dr. Anita Vazquez-Batisti
Associate Dean
Fordham University
Graduate School of Education



Abby Baruch

FOOD, FESTIVALS & FLAGS

The broad generalization of the three Fs: **food, festivals** and **flags** is listed on many plans for the purpose of connecting with parents of different cultures. In our city, represented by more than 200 countries and over 150 languages and dialects, a special day here or there is not enough to close this diversity gap, demonstrate inclusivity and develop positive relationships with ELL parents. The actual demographics are reflected in a 2013-2014 report for ELLs in New York City that indicate 159 languages other than English, of which the top ten are illustrated below.

Rank	Home Language	# of ELLs	% of All ELLs
1	Spanish	96,163	61.8
2	Chinese	22,170	14.2
3	Bengali	6,546	4.2
4	Arabic	6,501	4.2
5	Haitian-Creole	3,591	2.3
6	Russian	3,315	2.1
7	Urdu	2,881	1.9
8	French	2,387	1.5
9	Uzbek	1,205	0.8
10	Punjabi	1,013	0.7
11	Other (149)	9,800	6.3

Fig. 1 Source: NYC- DOE 2013-14 Demographic Report

- 1 out of 7 students in NYC Public schools is an ELL
- 1 out of 3 students in NYC comes from a home where English is not the home language.

Parents + Culture + School Community = Culturally Responsive Parent Engagement

The clue: “A strategy for engaging English Language Learner (ELL) Parents”

The answer: “What is the multi-cultural day assembly?”

If this were to be a Jeopardy response, the contestant would not score.

For school leaders, engaging culturally and linguistically diverse parents has a common thread; an event once or twice a year strategically displayed and listed on the school calendar.

We know that most research indicates a strong correlation between student success and parent engagement. Going beyond a *food fair*, as Dr. Karen L. Mapp, the author of “Beyond the Bake Sale” (2007) suggests, is essential for the training of school staff members in how to communicate with parents, especially across racial and socioeconomic divides. The apparent culture gap can pose a challenge for schools, teachers and the community; a purposeful focus may very well be the key to developing a successful parent-school-community relationship.

The notion of the *Cultural Iceberg*, introduced by Edward Hall, 1976, needs to be revisited as we examine multicultural sensitivity, cultural competence and our parent-school interactions. Culture involves shared and learned patterns of human behavior, social interactions, perceptions, and beliefs which are transmitted from one generation to another. However, cultural patterns are not limited to peoples’ ethnic heritage alone. Families develop their own unique

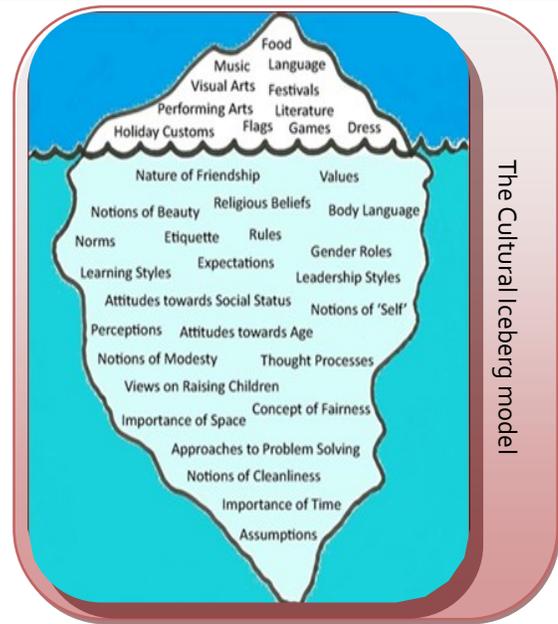
cultural attributes depending on many factors including their economic class, religious beliefs, urban/rural setting, generation and country of residence. Cultural identity is rarely simple in diverse societies such as the United States.” (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010)

The Cultural Iceberg model depicts what appears at the surface and hides what actually is significant when it is looked at from another perspective. This is a reminder for educators to be informed about the less tangible/visible elements of culture – beyond music, ethnic clothing, and holidays - in order to develop a deeper understanding. What is revealed of the iceberg above the water gives us few clues about the portion below and vice versa. This is directly correlated to how some may stereotype groups by making assumptions and generalizations. It is also important to note that each culture has deep-rooted core values that cannot easily change. These values are passed on generationally and are attached to parental belief-systems. It is incumbent upon us to understand our ELL parents and the countries they have left behind. Too often the school views parental engagement as a deficit model that is contingent upon the ELL parents’ perspective and their *lack* of participation.

This view leads some educators to feel that culturally and linguistically diverse students and their families are the problem instead of citing the school as the potential source of the problem. We cannot marginalize this population! As we analyze and reflect compassionately, it is in this way that we can truly understand the issues that an ELL parent may be experiencing.

Cultural Responsiveness *Re-think and deconstruct to establish successful relationships.* Successful relationships can be built with our parents if we take opportunities to build bridges of understanding by learning more about the parents' cultural proclivities of the community in which we work. Although our efforts are sincere in respecting and honoring the new culture, *are we completely versed in the varied and acceptable forms of communication? How do we react to people who come with different backgrounds?* There are reasons why Timor may not be permitted on the class trip and we may have no knowledge of the fear of abduction his parents actually have as a result of the political climate in their country. Gioia's parents may believe that school is solely for educators and their role is to remain passive. These are merely some examples to illustrate why we cannot assume that a lack of parental involvement is related to the lack of parental interest.

Are we creating a climate of cultural responsiveness? Are we embedding the curriculum with details to which our ELL students and their parents can relate? Are acronyms used without explaining them in simple terms? In his study, Dr. Luis C. Moll (2005) suggests that the integration of the community into schools can begin when schools support ELL parental involvement opportunities by validating *cultural capital* and *funds of knowledge* possessed by the ELL parents. These funds of knowledge are found in students' homes, communities and are often untapped by schools. The September, 2015 report of the Migration Policy Institute entitled *The Impact of the Early Schooling Experiences of Children from Immigrant Families* recommends: Pursue reciprocal, equalizing relations with parents and communities. In order to change the assumptions that many nonimmigrant teachers have of immigrant family life and communities, schools need to forge more equitable and reciprocal relationships with parents and communities."



The Cultural Iceberg model

Re-think and deconstruct our choice of gestures. Our choice of body language, personal space, hand signals, voice, eye contact, etc. can be easily misinterpreted or confusing to those with whom we want to communicate. For example, **are we aware that if we show praise to a student by patting him or her on the head, in an Eastern culture, we would be taking the soul from that child? Or, are we aware that the way in which we use our hands and fingers to communicate may even be considered an offensive gesture in some cultures?** School personnel will likely benefit by compiling the array of various cultural etiquette gestures for positive communication and reference purposes.

Although we try to build a culture of partnerships with our key stakeholders there is no specific and guaranteed formula to engage ELL parents; each school is unique. When teachers reflect on their own assumptions and beliefs and take steps to reach out to parents, they send a robust message of authentic understanding in order to bridge the cultural gap. From a culturally responsive lens we are obligated to organize activities that include all parents with all events – from the beginning of the school year to the end – not just for artificial and simulated days. With this in mind, *isn't it ironic that October is known as Cultural Diversity Month, a month? Just thinking...*

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Parents' Bill of Rights for New York State English Language Learners: What we, ELL Educators really need to do

Practitioners celebrate the NYSED Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages for opening a welcoming door to all parents/guardians of ELL students.



Diane Howitt

As educators, it is our responsibility to carry the message of the Parents' Bill of Rights and the Blueprint and to provide enlightenment to all educators regarding our culturally and linguistically diverse parents/caretakers and children. *What do we all need to know about families from a wide variety of countries and cultures? How do we welcome them into our schools? How do we honor their cultural backgrounds and experiences? How do we make their transition into our educational world more inclusive? How to we foster a rich home-school connection?*

To achieve those ends, we all should examine our own personal views. This is inclusive of endeavors to learn about the cultures, languages, and experiences of our children and their caretakers.

To begin, not all educational systems around the world treat parents as partners in the schooling of their children. In many countries, schools are regarded as agents that act "in loco parentis". Parents cede their authority to schools and accept without question that the school will make the appropriate decisions for their children. In most cultures, educators are held in very high esteem. Thus, judgments that are made within the context of the educational setting by peo-

ple in a position of authority (administrators, teachers) are respected and adhered to by parents/caregivers.

The single notion that parents cede their authority to the school runs counter to expectations we have here in the United States where we expect active parental input and participation. Imagine how a parent with a different cultural experience is perceived by the administrators and teachers here. The default reaction might be: "The parent isn't interested..." "We can't get the parent to come in..." "This is a problem..." In fact, the parent is probably displaying respect for and to the authority of the school. **Our own personal understanding of a parent/caretakers' experience is key to helping them navigate this new system and to encouraging them to become more directly involved in their child's education.** Just as caregivers need to learn about our processes, so do school staff members need to develop knowledge and deeper understandings about cultural differences that drive behaviors. Doing this will help avoid misunderstanding, and will foster the creation of alternate pathways to communication.

"Parent, family, and community involvement in education correlates with higher academic performance and school involvement. When schools, parents, families and communities work together to support learning, students tend to earn higher grades, attend school more regularly, stay in school longer, and enroll in higher level programs. Researchers cite parent -family/ community involvement as a key to addressing the school dropout crisis; it also notes that strong school-family-community partnerships foster higher educational aspirations and motivated students.

The evidence holds true for students at both elementary and secondary level, regardless of the parent's education, family income, or background. The research again documents that parent involvement affects minority students' academic achievement across all races."

Jeynes, W.H., (2003) *A meta-analysis: The effects of parental involvement on Minority children's academic achievement.* In *Education and Urban Society*, 35(2)

Parents' Bill Of Rights for New York State's English Language Learners

The Parents' Bill Of Rights for New York State English Language Learners (ELLs) proposed by the New York State Education Department represents an important step in empowering our students' parents and guardians by providing them with the tools to learn their rights as caregivers, as well as their children's rights.

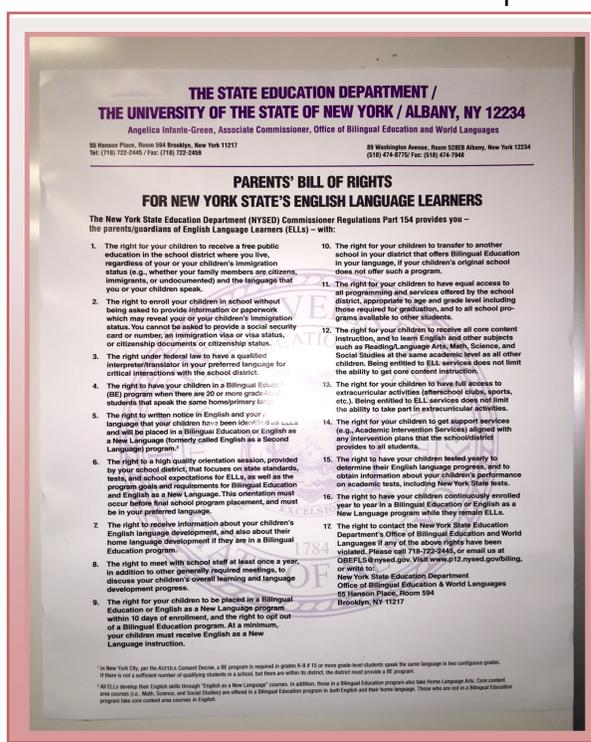
Language is an important issue for parents of ELL students. We, as language educators, should take the lead in enlightening the educational community about the importance of honoring languages spoken in the home, providing access to school information in that home language, providing professional development to all staff members so that there is a solid understanding that a good foundation in one's home language bolsters a student's self-esteem and cognitive function which leads to positive academic outcomes and creates a school culture that is inclusive and accessible.

All parents have the right to receive information from a qualified translator in their preferred language. The above provision speaks to the parent/caretaker's right to know about the availability of all programs and to feeling well-received in a new environment. That is, a school culture that welcomes all students and families into a school community that might otherwise feel alien.

How do we enlighten parents/caregivers about all educational options? Take a look at some acronyms, another new language! What is an ELL? How is a child identified as an ELL? What is HLQ, NYSISTELL, NYSESLAT, ELA, CCLS, SWD, IEP? What is a TBE, DL, ENL, ESOL, SIFE program? How are placement decisions made? What proficiency levels do we associate with being an English language Learner? What are my choices as a parent/caregiver? Often parents need to be

told that they can ask these questions and that they have the right to know about all educational options for their children. The manner in which families are given access to this information is vital to a productive home-school relationship. Parents must understand that their children have the right to a free public school education regardless of immigration status.

This issue is particularly stressful for immigrant families who may have come here under duress, from war-torn countries, as refugees, or in an alternative manner. Parents cannot be asked to provide documentation of citizenship or immigration status, legal or illegal. Schools need to provide parent/caretakers with the assurance that they can feel free to enroll their child in a public school, and be involved in school activities, without repercussions. In other words, the message from all members of the educational community is that school is, indeed, a safe haven.



Carmen Farina, Chancellor of the New York City Department of Education, also shares this vision. In this year's September letter to parents she states, "I was encouraged by the results of our annual School Survey which indicated now, more than ever, you are feeling welcomed in your schools, with greater access to teachers, school leadership, and academic information on your child..." Needless to say, Ms. Farina's commitment to parental rights and equity for families of ELLs will be reflected in the schools' work moving forward.

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Elsie Cardona-Berardinelli

**THE COMER MODEL
(THE COMER SCHOOL
DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAM)**

According to Comer (1996), involving the parents in the total process eliminates the perennial conflict between the school and the parent, since the two are now working together.

The Comer School Development program model is based upon the idea that there is tremendous value in the relationships that children form as they grow up, especially in the relationships that are formed with adults. "Children need positive interactions with adults in order to develop adequately." (Comer, 1996, p. 28) In order to foster this type of interaction, the Comer School Development Program involves multiple members of the community in the educational process, beyond the usual teachers and administrators.

Please refer to page 8 for details.

**Family Engagement Equals Success for
English Language Learners**

Developing a plan using the Comer School Development Program

Is it possible for students to succeed in school without family engagement? What can schools do to effectively develop and build effective family-school partnerships?

For many years schools have grappled with the issue of whether they really wanted parents/families involved in school affairs. Now after many years of research, it is clear that indeed if "American public school systems are to succeed in educating all students, including English Language Learners (ELLs) they will need to be guided by a people-centered approach that includes parents/families." (Drake, 1995)

As former school principal of The LAB School (P.S./MS 315), one of my major goals at the start of the school year was to continually improve parent/family engagement. I was able to accomplish this goal by developing an intentional plan of action with my school staff for strategically engaging all of our parents/families, particularly those of ELLs. A model you may want to consider, that I can endorse due to its proven effectiveness in my school is the Comer Parents' Program Model. The Comer model is different from other programs in that it deals with the total parent/family population. In the Comer School Development Program (SDP), developed by James Comer in the 1968-69 school year in New Haven, Connecticut, the Parents'/Family Program is one of nine components for school improvement. The model views the relationships between parents and school personnel as the key to a positive climate that supports the growth and development of children (see page 8 for details). This multilevel process is further enriched when considering Drake's (1995) four broad categories of parent/family activities outlined in the chart below.

Devising and implementing a program with the intention of truly engaging parents/families of ELLs in the school community reaps significant results: Students tend to do better academically; students are better behaved; parents/families feel more respected and are more cooperative with the school; parents/guardians show more confidence in the teachers and administrators, and more willing to seek the school's help with the children (Henderson, 1987).

Information Exchange	School-based Support	Home-based Instruction	School Governance
Family Handbook	Tutors/resource persons	Homework helpers-unit supplements	School Leadership Team
Newsletters	Aides and monitors	Parent/Family briefing sessions to discuss new curriculum	Members of subcommittees
Monthly calendar	School beautification workers	Make-it-take-it workshops	PTA Executive Boards
Information packets	Family/Parent Center	Summer reading packets; independent study plans	
Parent/Family meetings/conferences	Family/Parent Library Corner	Story-telling	
Phone calls, Memos	Curriculum Nights	Family trips/vacations	
School website			

THE COMER PARENTS' PROGRAM MODEL

LEVEL	ACTIVITIES	RATIONALE
<p>Level 1</p> <p>At level one, emphasis is placed on broad-based participation designed to have all parents/families involved in supporting their children's education. This involvement can be promoted through membership in home-school organizations, such as Parent-Teacher Associations and participation in multiple activities planned by teachers and parents/families.</p>	 <p>At this level, activities specific to engaging Parents/Families of English Language Learners may include beginning of the year school and class/family orientation meetings, curriculum night, multi-cultural potluck suppers, invitations to cultural arts performances, school newsletters, planned activities by parents/families and teachers such as storytelling hour, academic and language development conferences etc.</p>	<p>These activities are useful vehicles through which one can teach parents/guardians how to conduct a meeting, make decisions, plan events, learn problem-solving strategies, interact with others, etc. By working on projects together, parents/families and school staff see their common goals and help produce a warm, nurturing school environment.</p>
<p>Level 2</p> <p>At level two, parents/families of ELLs-are encouraged and trained to serve as volunteers seeking to integrate them more fully into the day-to-day life of the school .</p>	 <p>Volunteer activities may include Bilingual classroom assistants, tutors, clerical aides, cafeteria aides, library aides, welcome chaperones, and monitors. To effectively implement this component you must provide training to interested parents/guardians of ELLs. There are a number of community based organizations that you can reach out to that can also provide this type of training.</p>	<p>Parents/Families of ELLs are visible in the school building, because they take part in the educational program for their children every school day. When children see their parents/families interacting with teachers and administrators, working harmoniously together, they are more prone to internalize the values and goals of the school.</p>
<p>Level 3</p> <p>At level three, you see parents/guardians as-decision-makers and therefore, engage them in school governance and management., including PTA Executive Board, Leadership Team, Graduation Planning Team, and Quality Review Planning Team.</p>	 <p>Parents/Families of ELLs are encouraged to become members of teams that require different constituency groups to work and make decisions, usually starting in neutral tasks free of complex, value-laden or conflicting issues, and gradually joining school governance teams that address more challenging issues.</p>	<p>By engaging parents/guardians of ELLs in a wide variety of educational programs and in day-to-day activities, they learn about school operations, curriculum, and better parenting strategies. Parents/families feel they are valued members of the school community, and acquire social, organizational, and political skills needed to serve as advocates and bring about institutional change.</p>

References:

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Smith-Ramirez, C. 1995. "Stopping the Cycle of Failure: The Comer Model"

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development 52,5: 11-19

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Technology and Parental Involvement

In K-12 schools, one of the most interesting developments has been the growth in parental involvement



Alejandro Caycedo

The influence of computers in education cannot be overstated. With the advent of smart phones, tablets and now even smart watches, students, teachers and school staff are easily able to search information, text one another, and engage in a myriad of new ways to communicate.

In K-12 schools, one of the most interesting developments in computer technology adoption has been the growth in parental involvement by allowing schools to post homework assignments, grades, and other reports on their websites, so parents can more fully guide and support student learning. Some of the basic information now commonly posted on school calendars include weather-related closings, application forms for various programs, lunch menus, and a directory of school staff contacts.

In New York City, the Department of Education has implemented the *Framework for Great Schools* initiative. It includes *School Quality Snapshots and Guides*, to give current information about each of the 1,700 schools in the city. Families also have online access to their child's grades and attendance by logging into a new page called *NYC Schools Account*. This tool is accessible from a computer, smart phone or tablet. Parents who don't have a computer can get free computer use at their local library. To access the page, visit the NYC Schools Accounts webpage: <https://mystudent.nyc>

The Department of Education has also revamped their main website, providing links for parents and families. Besides the *NYC Schools Account*, parents have access from home to the Common Core Library; the National PTA's Parents' Guide to Student Success; the New York State Department of Education's Engage NY; and Parenting Resources at the U.S. Department of Education.

High School guidance counselors use Student Transcript and Academic Recording System—STARS—to provide accurate advice regarding courses to take each semester by keeping track of student progress towards meeting graduation requirements. Special Education teachers and administrators create Individualized Education (IEP) Plans, and monitor effectiveness of their program by using the Special Education Student Information System—SEIS.

Perhaps the most popular applications of technology in education are happening in the classroom. How are computers serving as instructional tools? Each innovation, from tape recorders and televisions,

(continues on page 10)

CODING CLASSES

One of the current developments in public schools is providing classes in coding. Some schools are starting at the elementary school level, with basic concepts such as algorithms, and the value of repeating the same operation thousands of times. Some other schools prefer to teach coding in after-school settings.

Programming (coding) consists of:

- Creating a sequence of instructions for the computer;
- Translating these steps into a computer language; and
- Ensuring that the program performs reliably as intended.

For lower grades, MIT offers **Scratch**, a visual language. The advantage of visual programming is that students drag-and-drop icons to create games, and interesting applications. Middle and High school students can develop far more sophisticated applications for computers, tablets and even phones. Many of these students become Computer Students.

to smartboards and desktops, has had some amount of penetration in the classroom, Today's most popular technology is tablets. The Apple iPad pioneered this device, which is primarily used to access the Internet. But the device has proven to be indispensable, mainly because of the many apps available. Now there are numerous manufacturers.

Thousands of websites offer educational materials. Textbooks, articles and videos are now available for tablets, computers and smart phones. Teachers are preparing their lessons, incorporating the tablet as a central content-delivery mechanism. YouTube and social media propagate videos at record-breaking speed Having the video "go viral" is not only highly coveted, but also increasingly common.

Alejandro Caycedo serves as the Systems IT and Data Specialist for the Center for Educational Partnerships at Fordham University, and for the NYC RBE-RN. His main areas of interest are the nexus between innovation and technology, and the application of current Internet and new media to education. Prior assignments include Academic Policy Administrator for the NYC DOE, and Special Education / ESL coordinator with the Fordham Children First Network. He has been instrumental in adopting emerging technologies, including STARS and SESIS at NYC public schools. Mr. Caycedo has extensive experience in education, commerce, industry, finance and consulting. He applies mathematical and analytic solutions to expand capacities, increase productivity and develop new, effective ways to communicate. He holds a degree in Operations Research and Applied Mathematics from Columbia University.

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Sara Martinez

"Families and schools belong together."

Let's Connect



The school leadership has a moral responsibility to bridge gaps that exist between the home of ELLs and the school.

In the recent noisy debate about the state of public education, nobody argues that it makes sense to strengthen ties between school and home", explains Suzie Boss Journalist and PBL advocate in her twitter account <http://www.twitter.com/suzieboss> "Families and schools belong together." Research tells us so and so does common sense. They're all strengthened when parents come inside, get acquainted with teachers, and get involved in their kids' learning.

To encourage stronger ties between home and school, *Edutopia* has just published the **Home to-School Connections Guide, a free download**. As the subhead promises, it's packed with "tips, tech tools, and strategies for family-and-school communications."

Educators greatest area of influence in the relationship of parent and school is how welcome does parents feel when they walk up to the front door. *How really welcoming is your school, are the parents real partners or they are only encouraged to visit classrooms once a year and host the bake sale?*

It takes focused planning and thoughtful work to develop a parent engagement program at a school. Communications between home and school is the crucial key to unlock parent involvement at your school.

On the next page, please find, Eutopia's **10 tips to increase communication**.

Continues next page

Ten Tips to Increase your Communication with Parents

The Home-School Connection guide offer tips as well as *how to's* for the schools. Here, I am only citing one item on each section to whet your appetite and look at the publication on the website.

1. Go Where the Your Parents Are:

A Facebook page for your school is more effective than a paper newsletter. It can capture the attention of parents and community members that use Facebook regularly.

2. Welcome Everyone: Have a family technology night to introduce parents to critical technology tools such as those that can help close the language gap, e.g. Voki avatars (viki.com), Losbloguitos.com and tweetdeck.com.

3. Being There, Virtually: Edmodo.com offers social networking designed specifically for the classroom.

4. Smart Phones, Smart Schools: Using group texts to inform parents from due date for assignments, to celebrations or bragging about the students.

5. Seize the Media Moment: Use the media to stimulate your parent's meetings, or have a group discussion. A good example is the documentary on how four families from NYC lived the lottery process to gain access to a charter school (the Lottery, by Madeline Sackler)

6. Make Reading a Family Affair:

School can foster a basic strategy to strengthen Literacy, Read Together... visit the Read Across America site (nea.org/readacross).

7. Bring the Conversation Home:

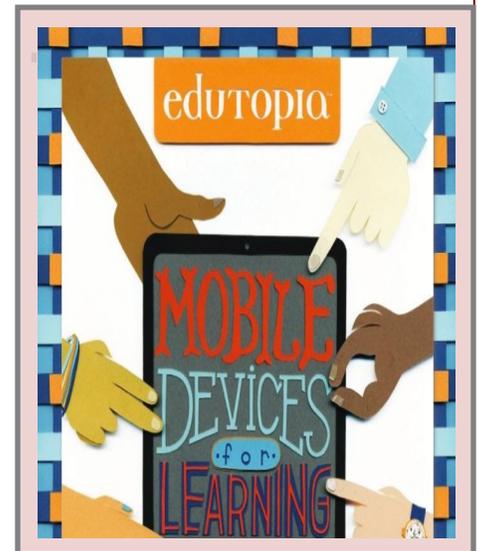
Meeting with your child's teacher. If parents have difficulties and cannot make it to the school, visit with the family via video, e.g. edutopia.org/yes-prep-parent-involvement-video), and What's Up and/or Skype.

8. Student-led parent Conference:

A website called The K5 offers video tips for parents on how to make the most of parent-teacher conferences.

9. Get Families Moving: Encourage healthy eating and exercise by creating a link between the school and the parents, such as *Let's Move* (letsmove.org) the national campaign launched by First Lady Michelle Obama to inform parents on how to avoid childhood obesity.

10. Build Parent Partnerships: Define you goals, keeping in mind that the purpose is not only parent *participation* but meaningful, and positive parent *engagement*. It is never too late to strengthen the lines of communications between all the stake players. The beginning of the school year is an ideal time to put into practice some of the suggestions from this article.



THE GEORGE LUCAS EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

The George Lucas Educational Foundation is a nonprofit foundation. It was founded by filmmaker George Lucas in 1991. As a child he felt bored and unchallenged at school. As a parent, he saw the same inability of schools to foster the curiosity to sustain lifelong learners. He decided to create the Foundation Edutopia “to identify and spread innovative, replicable and evidence-based approaches to helping K-12 students learn better.”

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Bernice Moro Ph.D.

Engaging Parents of ELLs with Disabilities: Challenges and Solutions

Engaging parents of children with disabilities can be a challenge for many educators, especially when they come from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

RESEARCH DATA

When parents are engaged in their children's education in the home and at school, there are benefits to the students and to the entire school community. Breiseth, L., Robertson, K. and Lafond, S. (August 2011), *A Guide for Engaging ELL Families: Twenty Strategies for School Leaders*. Colorin Colorado.....

Schools' understanding and respect for ELL's heritage and culture nurture collaborative relationships among parents, schools, and students and enriches the learning environment. Rodriguez, D., Carrasquillo, A. and Lee, K.S. (2014), *The Bilingual Advantage: Promoting Academic Development, Bilinguality, and Native Language in the Classroom*. New York: Teachers College.

If students, including ELLs with disabilities, are to achieve academically and socially, schools must provide them with an education that is culturally responsive. Zion, S. and Kozleski, E. (October 2005) *Understanding Culture*. National Institute for Urban School Improvement Arizona State University.

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To engage parents of ELLs with disabilities and provide them with a culturally responsive education, the school community should consider the following approaches that are documented in the literature.

What You Can Do

- Value and respect individual students and their families; this is particularly crucial for ELLs with disabilities. The entire school community must be aware that they are not part of a homogeneous group, that along with their disabilities, they and their families may possess a variety of different cultures, languages, socio-economic status and religions; factors that can influence their overall academic and social development.
- Determine specific challenges that can impact individual students and their families. These may include: demographic differences (e.g. length of time in the U.S., language(s) spoken in the home, home country, educational background of the family, and economic status); socio-cultural differences, such as cultural and religious beliefs regarding disabilities; as well as a variety of other issues, e.g. health, employment,, etc.
- Establish a culturally responsive school environment by providing all school staff with continuous and sustained professional development on such topics as: the impact of culture and the home language on students' overall academic and social success both in school and in the community-at-large, as well as strategies to effectively engage and communicate with diverse parents.

- Provide an overall supportive and welcoming school environment, both in individual classrooms and throughout the school.
- Promote schoolwide communication with parents' in their preferred language. Communication can occur via personal contact, individual classroom and schoolwide meetings, after-school information sessions, and written communications, such as: letters, emails and newsletters.
- Provide parents with opportunities to learn about relevant topics, e.g. technology and ESL, homework and literacy help in the home, accommodations and interventions, understanding the child's IEP, and advocating for their child.
- Embrace and form community partnerships. Capitalize on existing community resources, such as civic and church groups. Encourage parental leadership by enlisting parents as partners and decision makers in the school community, e.g., participating in school leadership teams, assisting other parents to become involved and engaged in the education of their children.

In Conclusion...

A robust partnership between families, schools, and the community-at-large can be fostered by acknowledging, responding to, and celebrating cultural and linguistic differences. Providing equal access through a culturally responsive education and engaging parents as equal partners in the education of their children will ensure that ELLs with disabilities are academically and socially successful in school and in the community.

Engaging Middle School Parents: A 'Win-Win' for Everyone Involved

Providing young people with expanded learning opportunities afterschool and summer, while simultaneously engaging families in those programs and during the school day, creates a “win” for everyone involved.

According to a body of research, engaging families in children's learning has a powerful, positive and lasting impact on students' academic outcomes and life prospects. However, linking home, school and community for families of English Language Learners presents its challenges. What may work in one community or school may not work in another.

Schools and afterschool leaders must identify the barriers within their communities that prevent parents from being more active in their children's education. The diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds of families demand new strategies to encourage involvement of bilingual families. It is imperative for schools to develop strategies for communicating across languages and cultures and that student expectations are clearly outlined and accessible to the multilingual and multicultural parent body.

In schools that have turned around, teachers are familiar with students' cultures and backgrounds. They spend time in the community, invite parents to observe in classrooms, try to understand parents' concerns, and embrace parents as partners. In turn, parents respond by becoming involved in school activities and addressing teachers' concerns about their children's schoolwork.

New York 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) are part of a federal program that supports community learning centers across the country to offer expanded learning opportunities through the following:

- Academic enrichment outside school hours— *includes providing tutorial services to help students who attend low-performing schools, to meet State and local student academic achievement standards in core academic subjects such as reading and mathematics.*
- Youth programs, services and activities— *encompasses youth development, drug and violence prevention, counseling, art, music, recreation, technology education, and character education, designed to reinforce and complement the students' regular academic programming.*
- Family literacy - *offer families of students served by community learning centers opportunities for literacy and related educational development.*

A key to the success of schools participating in this program is hiring “community advocates” to focus on families whose children are struggling in school. The advocates build relationships and offer assistance without meddling in families' lives, connecting them to resources and making referrals to counseling. These community advocates also help to “work things out” to avoid suspension.



Aileen Colón

In Pueblo, Colorado, (2005), families liked the way parent-teacher conferences were coordinated with the afterschool program's family night. During the Family Night/Conference, teachers were in the gym during the afternoon and early evening, and a simple dinner was available, which helped to create a welcoming environment for families.

At the Elmont Memorial Junior-Senior High School, in Nassau County, New York, 100% of the students enrolled are children of color, many of them from immigrant families and single-parent households. Here, communication with parents is an essential component of their before-school and afterschool support programs. Parents and teachers collaboratively design academic intervention plans that give personalized support for class work and the NYS Assessments. Teachers working in the before and afterschool programs tailor instruction to meet students' needs, aligning closely with what is being taught in the classroom (National Education Association, 2011).

Source: www.expandinglearning.org/expandingminds

The Salomé Ureña community school in District 6 is a good example on how this collaboration can work. There is a long established partnership with Children's Aid Society and a full-time parent coordinator for adult education who arranges programs on ESL, GED, computer, financial literacy, and citizenship, as well as parent support groups, clubs, and advisory councils for the low-income Latino population that attend the three middle schools and the high school in the campus.

Through leadership training, parents learn to advocate for themselves and their children. They go to City Hall to promote afterschool and school-based health centers, as well as, organize for housing rights. An evaluation of six Children's Aid Society middle schools (2007) noted that their community school model contributed to a positive school climate and enhanced support

structure not usually found in stand-alone afterschool programs.

Both research and practice make it clear that neither schools nor afterschool programs will succeed in improving student outcomes without engaging parents. Fortunately, there is much information on how to do this effectively. Family-School-Community Partnerships 2.0, a new report from the National Education Association, offers many examples of wrap-around and community education programs that collaborate with families to support student achievement. For a free copy of the report, go to:

www.neaprioritieschools.org/family-school-community-partnerships.

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Roser Salavert

BILINGUAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS (BE)

A Bilingual Education program is a research-based program comprised of the following instructional components: a) Language Arts which include Home and Language Arts; b) English as a New Language –formerly ESL, and c) Bilingual content areas.

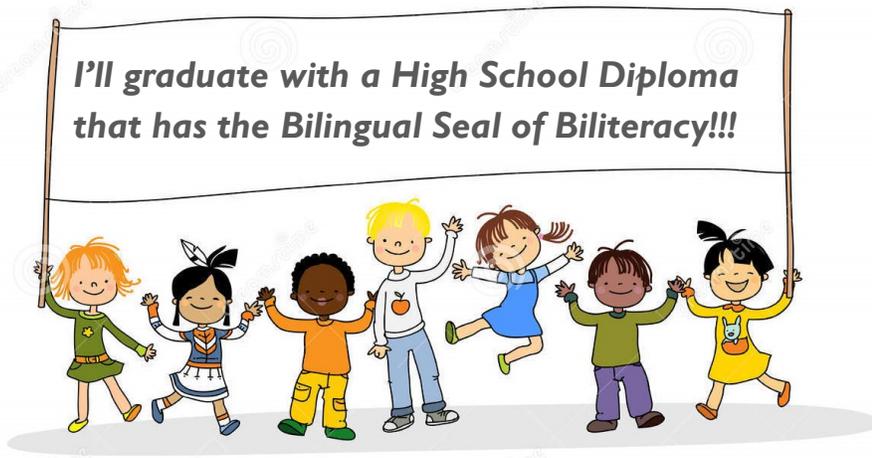
An Eye on the Grand Prize H.S. Diploma: Graduating with a Seal of Biliteracy

High school students can now graduate with a Seal of Biliteracy.
How can schools and parents support this goal in the early grades?

When as parents and/or educators, we are faced with decisions that may impact the future of our children, we always go for the options that afford the best opportunities to help them grow into well-rounded, educated individuals. Thus, the importance of choosing to nurture a child's natural abilities to learn languages!!

The Seal of Biliteracy, which recognizes the value of having proficiency in more than one language is a direct result of the amendments to Part 154 and the Blueprint for the Success for English Language Learners.

The New York State Seal of Biliteracy (SSB or "the seal") It is an award given upon high school graduation, and it takes the form of a gold seal that appears on the transcript or diploma of the graduating senior. First introduced in California, the New York Board of Regents established the State Seal of Biliteracy in New York in 2012 (Section 815 of the Education Law). This provision is to encourage students to learn languages, to maximize their potential as learners and as future contributors to the nation's workforce in a competitive global market place. The results of a pilot in a few schools during the 2014-15 school year has provided the state with the insights necessary to begin the implementation of "the seal" initiative this school year statewide.



Goals of the State Seal of Biliteracy. The goals are to ensure that participant students:

- ⇒ Develop high levels of proficiency in their home language and in their second language. They need to meet the criteria for foreign languages (LOTE or Pathways) established by New York State.
- ⇒ Meet Common Core Learning Standards and perform at or above grade level in academic areas;
- ⇒ Pass the State assessments in the core subjects and in ELA

How can elementary and middle schools promote the Seal of Biliteracy? We all know from documented research that the acquisition of a second language at early age is part of child language learning and developmental process, and that children can acquire language more easier at that age. Therefore, the information about the option of a high school diploma with a seal of biliteracy, can help parents make a more informed decision when deciding whether to enroll their child in a bilingual education program.

Similarly, for a families whose first language is English and understand the value of having the ability to speak more than one language in today's global society, the information about the Seal of Biliteracy can motivate them to consider placing their children in a Dual Language program, or a foreign language program.

Elementary, middle and high schools may also want to consider nurturing and extending children's language potential through chorus, plays, reading groups, and many other enrichment and after school programs.

The New York State Seal of Biliteracy initiative is endorsed by elite groups of professional organizations, including the ACFTL, TESOL, NABE, NYSABE and NCSSFL. Professional organizations, schools, parents and students appreciate the value of "the seal" and keep an eye on the *Grand Prize* for high school. That is, helping students graduate with a high school diploma that has the Seal of Biliteracy.



Eva Garcia

DUAL LANGUAGE PROGRAMS

Dual Language program is a type of bilingual education program that offers students from two different or the same home language backgrounds and/or cultures the opportunities to become bilingual, biliterate, and bicultural while improving their academic ability.

THE TWO –WAY MODEL

This model includes both English Language Learners (ELLs) and English proficient students. The teacher or teachers provide instruction in both languages.

THE ONE –WAY or DEVELOPMENTAL MODEL

This model is primarily composed of students who come from the same home language and/or background. The teacher or teachers provide instruction in both English and the target language.

Source: Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages at www.p12.nysed.gov/biling/

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