

Dear Educator,

Thank you for downloading this resource. We are thrilled to be sharing this resource to help you with the language development of Multilingual Learners (MLs) in your learning space.

Schools across New York State (NYS) have the great fortune to serve over 260,000 English Language Learners. The New York State Education Department (NYSED) believes that **all teachers are teachers of MLs**. NYS educators are charged with ensuring that all students, including MLs feel safe/connected/included/ see themselves in their learning environments, have access to grade level content, meet grade-level standards, experience high quality instruction, and use all of their languages in order to learn and express themselves.

To ensure the academic development and personal growth of all of our MLs, families and teachers must maintain good communication and be equally engaged in the education and development of the students. Communication between families and teachers and family engagement is key for the students to achieve success and growth. It is very important that both families and teachers maintain fluid communication.

This resource will help you explore some of the best practices you can use for communicating and engaging with families of MLs.

YOU MAY:

- ✓ Share copy of this resource with all educators of ELLs & MLs;
- ✓ Use it for your own instructional purposes; and
- ✓ Reference this resource in blog posts, at seminars, professional learning opportunities, workshops, conferences and/or other such venues, and when doing so please give credit to New York State Education Department (NYSED) and the NYS ELL Leadership Council- Strengthening English Language Learners & Multilingual Learners (ELLs & MLs) Instruction.

Special Thanks to Following Authors/Contributors

The Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages and the NYS Education Department;

Alyssa Canonico, Academic Standards Facilitators (East Ramapo Central School District);

Nadia Nashir, Assistant Superintendent Multilingual Education (Buffalo Public Schools);

Madeline Sanchez, Director for ENL, Bilingual Programs and World Languages (Peekskill City School District);

Jill Schilling, District Coordinator for World Languages, ENL and Bilingual Education (Lindenhurst Union Free School District);

Denise Stevenson, Director of ENL and World Languages (Riverhead Central School District);

Priscilla Zarate, ENL and World Languages Coordinator (Islip School District).

Thank you for being an advocate of our MLs!

Keeping Strong Communication and Engagement with Families is Essential for All!

Family Benefits

- Strengthens quality of families' home involvement with their children's learning
- Provides families with different ideas on how to help and support their children at home
- Improves families confidence about the value of their own school involvement
- Improves families' rapport with teachers, which results in mutual respect.

Student Benefits

- Raises student academic achievement
- Increases student motivation for learning
- Improves student behavior
- Improves student attendance
- Improves student participation with homework and school in general

Teacher Benefits

- Allows teachers to focus more on the task of teaching children
- Helps teachers learn more about student needs
- Provides teachers with a better understanding of student culture and apply toward creating culturally inclusive classrooms



Create a Welcoming Environment From the Start

Physical Environment

- * When possible, does the main office staff speak the native tongue of the families you are serving?
- * Do signs/posters reflect a welcoming environment and are they translated into a language families can understand?

- * Do the school hallways and walls reflect a culturally responsive environment depicting student work and representative of varying cultures?
- * Are documents and other paperwork translated for families to understand?

Giving Families a Voice

- *Share surveys to gauge what times they are available to participate in school events, to share concerns, family schedules or ideas for informational workshops all in a language they can understand.
- *Provide them with an opportunity to be leaders and help engage more families.
- *Share communication apps with families that use their home language so families know how to stay connected.

- *Make connections even if you don't speak their language by learning small phrases. This creates a welcoming and safe space for families to feel comfortable approaching you.
- *Hold orientations that are delivered bilingually (*when possible*) to foster an inclusive environment for all community members.
- *Share opportunities being offered in the community for them to learn English if they are interested.

Reflection

- *What do you know about your ML students and families?
- *What do you want to learn?

- *Who on the staff works most closely with your ML families?
- *What would be valuable for your school-wide staff to know?

What's My Role When I Communicate with My Families of MLs?

Ensure there is communication in multiple formats (audio, visual, written, etc.);

Be a liaison between the school and the home;

Provide information through various communication platforms: email, phone, mail, and other specific platforms used by the school district.

My role is to:

Advocate for the rights of parents when it comes to school-home communications;

Ensure there is communication being provided in the parents' home languages;

Advocate for the rights of parents when it comes to school-home communications.

How to keep parents informed?

Help them learn about:

Their rights;

School events;

Classroom procedures;

Educational strategies;

Test dates;

Use of their home language;

Homework;

Academic progress;

Student behavior;

Resources to use at home;

Family learning resources.

How Do I Communicate With My Families of MLs?



Use their preferred language and mode of communication.



Find a fully bilingual interpreter for your verbal interactions or a translator for your written communications.*



Translate the written communications that you send home.**



Learn some of their language.



Put parents/families in touch with bilingual staff.

Source: Colorin Colorado

*Please make sure, when finding a bilingual interpreter, you are following the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). FERPA safeguards student privacy.

** Please know that none of the translation tools replace using a human translator.



What Are Some TIPS When Working with Families of MLs?

Communicate with your ML families in their language and mode of preference:

Create a welcome packet for the new families in your class.	Survey families at the beginning of the year to figure out work schedules, prior commitments, language of preference, mode of communication, cultures, etc.	Be open to families about how to communicate with you right from the beginning and be flexible with their schedule.
Send home information about a new topic before a new unit is started in class.	Prepare a presentation for Open House and share a translated copy with them.	Make families feel welcome before they enter the classroom.
Give families a list of suggested questions about what to ask their child about school or about your class.	Recognize all cultural traditions in your classroom.	Create a short communications each month, week, or season to talk about class events.
Do not use email as a replacement for face to face or phone conversations.	Offer frequent chances for families to volunteer in your class and promote them.	Inform yourself of school-wide events and keep track of the school calendar.
Make sure that the families in your school know the full range of resources provided by the school.	Call home when there is "good news" to report about student behavior or progress.	When you are speaking with them, make sure that you are hearing what they are trying to say to you.

Source: [InformED: 50 Tips On How To Work Harmoniously With Parents.](#)

How Can We Engage Our Families of MLs?

Through:

Parent/family newsletters	Annual open houses	Curriculum nights
Home visits (where applicable)	Phone calls	Annual school calendars
Inserts in local newspapers	Annual field days	Homework hotlines
Notices and handouts in local markets, clinics, churches, mosques, temples, workplaces or other gathering sites	Annual grandparents or "special persons" days	Board of Education spokesperson or communications officer at PTA meetings
Website for the school	Website for your classroom	Workshops for parents/families
Meet the teacher night	ENL nights throughout the year	Discuss the importance of using their home language at home

Source: [American Federation of Teachers. \(2007\). Building Parent-Teacher Relationships. Washington, D.C.: American Federation of Teachers](#)