



# Community & Family Toolkit

*Engaging the families of English learners in  
classrooms, schools, and communities*

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# Toolkit Background

The Family, School, Community Toolkit has been designed with the goal of sharing best practices in engaging the families of English learners (ELs) in classrooms, schools, and communities. Developing family partnerships positively impacts everyone involved (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). For students, learning is strongest when schools, parents, and communities work together to support education.

According to the Racine Education Association and the Racine Educational Assistants Association, affiliates of the Wisconsin Education Association Council and the National Education Association:

- When parents are involved in their children's education at home, they do better in school, and when parents are involved in school, children go further in school—and the schools they go to are better.
- The family makes critical contributions to student achievement from preschool through high school. A home environment that encourages learning is more important to student achievement than income, education level, or cultural background.
- Reading achievement is more dependent on learning activities in the home than is math or science. Reading aloud to children is the most important activity that parents can do to increase their child's chance of reading success. Talking to children about books and stories in addition to reading to them supports reading achievement.
- When children and parents talk regularly about school, children perform better academically.
- Three kinds of parental involvement at home are consistently associated with higher student achievement: actively organizing and monitoring a child's time, helping with homework, and discussing school matters.
- The earlier that parent involvement begins in a child's educational process, the more powerful the effects.
- Positive results of parental involvement include improved student achievement, reduced absenteeism, improved behavior, and restored confidence among parents in their children's schooling.
- One of the most critical characteristics of a high-performing school is community support.
- Collaboration between a school and its community promotes responsible citizenship through volunteering and other local partnership opportunities.

**The family makes critical contributions to student achievement from preschool through high school. A home environment that encourages learning is more important to student achievement than income, education level, or cultural background.**

Furthermore, a research-based framework laid out by Epstein and Salinas (1992) indicates that success (higher student achievement) occurs through six types of involvement:

- Parental (schools assisting with parenting skills and family support, and parents assisting schools in learning more about family backgrounds and cultures)
- Communication between families and schools
- Meaningful and flexible volunteering in the school
- Learning at home that involves families in their children's academics
- Decision-making (where parents and communities have a shared governance)
- Collaborating with the community (coordinating resources and services)

This toolkit includes resources for schools and teachers to meet these goals, and better create communities for EL parents. To effectively meet these goals, it is important to:

1. Have a clear understanding of your EL families, their language backgrounds, and their cultural traditions.
2. Understand not all EL families are homogenous.
3. Create a welcoming, accepting environment for your EL families.
4. Recognize that your EL families are a vital part of your community.
5. Value EL families' native languages, cultures, and countries.

Colorín Colorado ([www.colorincolorado.org](http://www.colorincolorado.org)) has a wealth of resources to support schools in determining ways to best create a culture that is welcoming and understanding of EL families.

## References

- Epstein, J. L., & Salinas, K. (1992). *School and family partnerships*. Encyclopedia of Education Research (6th ed.). New York, NY: Macmillan.
- Henderson, A. T., & Mapp, K. L. (2002). *A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family, and community connections on student achievement*. Austin, TX: National Center for Family & Community Connections with Schools, Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.
- Racine Education Association. <http://rea-reaa.weac.org/2017/05/30/racine-students-parents-community-benefit-from-community-schools-model/>

## Additional Resources

- Henderson, A. T., Mapp, K. L., Johnson, V., & Davies, D. (2007). *Beyond the bake sale: The essential guide to family-school partnerships*. New York, NY: The New Press.
- National Education Association. (2008). An NEA policy brief: Parent, family, community involvement in education. Washington, DC: Author.

# Library Backpack Program

The Library Backpack Program is a program currently run at the Joy School in Syracuse, New York, USA. The goal of the program is to provide literacy materials for ELs and their families. Materials within the backpack help to develop English language literacy skills for both school-aged children and their parents and other family members. Each backpack is filled with four to six books. The materials include:

- Bilingual early readers
- English early readers
- Adult EL learning resources
- Language learning CDs

The goal of the Library Backpack Program is to provide literacy materials for English learners (ELs) and their families.

## Replication of Program

The steps outlined here will help you successfully replicate this program.

1. Determine a location for backpacks.
2. Purchase or solicit donations of new or gently worn backpacks.
3. Purchase or solicit donations of new or gently used books and learning materials.

*Note:* Advocate for an internal grant within your school district. Several school districts offer teacher grants; though they are typically small amounts, they are an effective way to begin building a library of resources.

4. Develop a check out/check in system (see "[Check In/Check Out for Library Backpack](#)").
5. Assess effectiveness of backpacks (see "[Backpack Evaluation](#)").

*Consider having this translated, and available in all native languages.*

## Materials Needed

- Backpacks
- Books, CDs, and other learning tools (see "[Learning Materials for Literacy Backpacks](#)")

### *Resources to Assist With Costs and Materials*

- Donations from families, libraries, vendors (See “[Example Poster](#)”)
- Potential grant opportunities:
  - **“From Failure to Promise” grants**

K-12 educators can apply for US\$500 mini-grants for creative ideas for adopting and using “From Failure to Promise” in their curriculum. The grants are designed to move students to reach their full potential in literacy, science, technology, or mathematics subjects.

([www.fromfailuretopromise.com/educators](http://www.fromfailuretopromise.com/educators))
  - **Association of American Educators (AAE) Foundation grant**

Classroom grants are available to all full-time educators who have not received a scholarship or grant from AAE in the previous three grant cycles (or 18 months). Awards are competitive. AAE members receive additional weight in the scoring rubric. Classroom grants can be used for a variety of projects and materials, including but not limited to books, software, calculators, math manipulatives, art supplies, audiovisual equipment, and lab materials.

([www.aateachers.org/index.php/classroom-grant-application](http://www.aateachers.org/index.php/classroom-grant-application))
  - Post on **donorschoose.org**
  - **Dollar General Literacy Foundation Youth Literacy Grants**

These grants provide funding to schools, public libraries, and nonprofit organizations to help students who are below grade level or experiencing difficulty reading. Grant funding is provided to assist in implementing new or expanding existing literacy programs; purchasing new technology or equipment to support literacy initiatives; and/or purchasing books, materials, or software for literacy programs. The maximum award is US\$4,000.

([www2.dollargeneral.com/dgliteracy/Pages/grant\\_programs.aspx](http://www2.dollargeneral.com/dgliteracy/Pages/grant_programs.aspx))
  - **NEA.org** has a list of grant opportunities.

([www.nea.org/grants/grantsawardsandmore.html](http://www.nea.org/grants/grantsawardsandmore.html))
  - **First Book** offers free and reduced prices on books to disadvantaged schools.

([www.firstbook.org](http://www.firstbook.org))

### *Learning Materials for Literacy Backpacks*

Literacy backpacks should include the following:

- Books for young children, bilingual and early readers
- Books for young adults, bilingual and English
- Books for adults, bilingual and English
- Other learning materials, such as flashcards and DVDs

### Recommended Books

*Books for Children:* [www.colorincolorado.org/books-authors/books-kids](http://www.colorincolorado.org/books-authors/books-kids)

*Books for Young Adults/Adults:* [www.colorincolorado.org/books-authors/books-young-adults](http://www.colorincolorado.org/books-authors/books-young-adults)

The following list is from “Children’s Literature for Adult ESL Literacy” (Ansin Smallwood, 1992)

#### **BEGINNERS**

Brand, O. (1974). “When I First Came to This Land.” New York, NY: Putnam.

Bunting, E. (1989). “The Wednesday Surprise.” New York, NY: Clarion.

Hoban, T. (1983). “I Read Symbols.” New York, NY: Greenwillow.

Kraus, R. (1970). “Leo the Late Bloomer.” New York, NY: Harper & Row.

Parkes, B., & Smith, J. (1984). “The Gingerbread Man.” Crystal Lake, IL: Rigby.

#### **INTERMEDIATE**

Bunting, E. (1988). “How Many Days to America?” Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Jeffers, S. (1991). “Brother Eagle, Sister Sky.” New York, NY: Dial.

Say, A. (1990). “El Chino.” Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Stanek, M. (1989). “I Speak English for my Mom.” Niles, IL: Albert Whitman.

Yee, P. (1991). “Roses Sing on New Snow.” New York, NY: MacMillan.

Zemach, M. (1976). “It Could Always be Worse.” New York, NY: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.

#### **ADVANCED**

Crew, L. (1989). “Children of the River.” New York, NY: Dell.

Fritz, J. (1987). “Shh! We’re Writing the Constitution.” New York, NY: Putnam.

Spier, P. (1986). “The Star-spangled Banner.” New York, NY: Doubleday.

### References

Ansin Smallwood, B. (1992). *Children’s literature for adult ESL literacy. ERIC Digest*. Retrieved from <https://www.ericdigests.org/1993/adult.htm>

## CHECK IN/CHECK OUT FOR LIBRARY BACKPACK

Backpack #: \_\_\_\_\_

Student's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher : \_\_\_\_\_

Date checked out: \_\_\_\_\_ Date checked in: \_\_\_\_\_

---

Backpack #: \_\_\_\_\_

Student's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher : \_\_\_\_\_

Date checked out: \_\_\_\_\_ Date checked in: \_\_\_\_\_

---

Backpack #: \_\_\_\_\_

Student's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher : \_\_\_\_\_

Date checked out: \_\_\_\_\_ Date checked in: \_\_\_\_\_

## BACKPACK EVALUATION

We are familiar with the school's backpack program:                      Yes                      No

We have used the backpack program:                                              Yes                      No

If yes, the materials were helpful for our child/children:                      Yes                      No

The materials were helpful for other family members:                      Yes                      No

We enjoyed the materials:                                                              Yes                      No

We would use the materials again:                                                      Yes                      No

We would like to see other resources in the backpacks:                      Yes                      No

Suggestions: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

EXAMPLE POSTER



**We Need You!**  
School Literacy Backpack Program



**School Literacy Backpack Program**

We are currently seeking donations for our School Literacy Backpack Program to aid English Learning (EL) students and their families. We are collecting books, learning aids, and financial donations. Please consider giving and assisting families within our school and community.

# Family Mentors

The Family Mentor Program is one way to join existing EL families with newer EL families in the community (preferably both families would have the same first language). The mentor family serves to help the new EL family acclimate and assimilate to the school environment. Mentor families are also advocates for these families. This may mean communicating with the school on the behalf of the family.

## Replication of Program

The steps outlined here will help you successfully replicate this program.

- Solicit mentor families (see [“Letter for Potential Mentor Families”](#)).
- Advertise through school communications, back-to-school nights, and parent-teacher organizations.
- Provide potential families with an overview of requirements/obligations (see [“Mentors”](#)).
- Invite potential families to training and program overview meetings.
- Hold training (see [“Mentor Training Presentation”](#) and [“Mentor Training Tip Sheet”](#)).
- Conduct evaluations (see [“Evaluation of Training Sessions”](#)).
- Match families (see [“Mentee Information Sheet”](#)).
- Hold initial meet-and-greet for mentor families and mentee families.
- Consider quarterly meet-and-greets to assess the effectiveness of the program and to evaluate the progress of relationships. Solicit feedback (See [“Program Evaluation Survey”](#)).
- Revise program as needed.

**Consider adding some kind of incentive for mentor families. This could be a pizza night, school gear, water bottles, or other giveaways.**

Consider adding some kind of incentive for mentor families. This could be a pizza night, school gear, water bottles, or other giveaways. Additionally, consider offering some type of special recognition at the end of the school year, in the form of a certificate or other type of public acknowledgement.

## Mentors

A mentor is an advocate, a coach, a supporter, and a listener. In your program, you may wish to have an entire family mentor another family, or an individual of a family mentor an individual of another family.

### Things for You to Consider

- Establish how often mentors should check in with mentees. In the beginning, it is advisable that mentors check in once a week. As the year progresses, mentors should check in every other week.
- Establish a reporting system of mentor/mentee meetings and correspondences.
- Understand that some mentees may not feel comfortable with additional paperwork.

- Consider having mentors write down dates and any issues that need to be resolved. See sample table.

Date	Meeting Time/Place	Concerns/Topics to Address

- Consider hosting Family Mentor Program receptions before or after school events to build a community of mentors/mentees.

### Mentor Responsibilities

- Complete training
- Encourage attendance at school events: Invite mentees to all events
- Make mentee aware of resources available: Share school and local community resource lists with mentees
- Seek out other resources, if needed: If mentees are new to the neighborhood, they may be in need of services, such as public services related to housing or utilities
- Establish a line of communication between mentee family and school
- Advocate for mentee family

### *Mentor Training Tipsheet*

When generating effective training sessions, it is important to:

1. Consider how to effectively communicate the goal of the mentoring program.
2. Identify successful strategies for cross-cultural conversations.
  - a. During training, try an ice-breaker like the nondominant hand activity, in which everyone takes notes using their nondominant hand. After a period of time, 10–20 minutes, ask participants how it felt. They may describe how they felt during the experience as “painful, child-like, unintelligent, annoyed, impatient, uncomfortable...” Let them know that this is how many EL families feel using their nondominant language.
  - b. Other tips for cross-cultural conversations:
    - i. Smile.
    - ii. Use gestures.
    - iii. Give an appropriate wait time after asking a question.
    - iv. Consider drawing terms that may be unfamiliar to the mentee.
3. Anticipate questions from mentors.
  - a. Where can I go to get information on literacy programs? Citizenship classes?
  - b. How can I best advocate for a child if I am not their parent?
  - c. If the parents feel their child needs additional services, how can I assist with that?
4. Follow up with mentors with resources for any questions they may have.
5. Determine ways to build the confidence of mentors.
  - a. Ensure mentors have all training materials.
  - b. Ensure mentors are familiar with resources available to EL families.
  - c. Encourage mentors to collaborate with one another, teachers, and school personnel.

6. Consider principles of adult learning.
  - a. Adults want to see a reason for learning.
  - b. Adults are goal oriented.
  - c. Adults should have sufficient background knowledge of those they will be working with.  
Carefully read the Mentee Information Sheet. Ask your Program Coordinator any questions you may have.
7. Customize materials for your population. Create an “About Our Program” handout that includes your history, mission, and goals. Add in key staff members, contact information, policies, and requirements.
8. Create a comfortable learning environment, include relevant content, use humor.
9. Model mentoring (make eye contact, be a good listener, restate key ideas, facilitate problem-solving).
10. Give feedback and ask for feedback.

## Mentor Matching

When matching mentors, establish a matching process. Will families be paired by grade level? Language or culture group? Neighborhood? (See “[Mentor Match Worksheet](#)”)

Typical criteria for matching include race, gender, common interests, and similar schedules for ease of setting meeting times. A popular strategy is also the “natural” approach. This involves all potential mentors and mentees meeting in a relaxed, social environment.

Create a setting where mentors move around and speak to all potential mentees. At the end of the session, survey mentees regarding the top three mentors they enjoyed speaking with. Matching in this manner allows for a very natural and comfortable first meeting and gets both mentors and mentees involved in the process. If there are an unequal number of mentors or mentees, consider group mentoring. One mentor family could meet with two or three mentees.

**Typical criteria for matching include race, gender, common interests, and similar schedules for ease of setting meeting times.**

# MENTOR TRAINING PRESENTATION

## Mentor Training

Sample

1

## An Effective Mentor ...



2

## Stages of Mentoring

**Build a rapport**

- Listen
- Restate what you hear
- Use positive language and gestures

**Build trust**

- Show interest, be consistent, withhold judgment, keep things confidential

**Build Support**

- Find resources, share resources, evaluate the effectiveness of the resources for mentee family

3

## Meeting

- Set a meeting place, somewhere easy for both parties to get to
- Be sure to reiterate the purpose of the mentoring program
- Have some questions ready
  - Think about What or How questions rather than Yes/No
- Keep the conversation going by asking follow-up questions

4

## Mentoring

- Make sure you understand what is said
  - "Did you mean that..." or "What I heard you say is..."
- Respond neutrally without approving or disapproving
- Show your mentee that what he or she says is valued

5

## Working with Problems

- When your mentee presents a problem:
- Be sure the problem is defined
  - Brainstorm options with the mentee
  - Seek out resources to help resolve issue
  - Next meeting, check to see if problem has been resolved

6

## Challenges with Mentoring

- You don't have to respond right away. If you don't know the answer, give yourself time to find it.
- Set boundaries. Agree to call or meet at certain times.
- Contact school for answers to questions you may not have.

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## Benefits of Mentoring

- Meet new people
- Experience a new culture
- Make a difference
- Encourage diversity
- Be a steward of the school and community

8



## LETTER FOR POTENTIAL MENTOR FAMILIES

Dear Parents,

Family, school, and community each play a vital role in your child's education. We are implementing a Family Mentor Program for our English learners to better acclimate them into our school and community, and we would like to invite you to participate in the program as a mentor. The Family Mentor Program pairs our school families with new families. As a mentor family, you will play an instrumental role in making our community and our school stronger.

We are hoping you will attend the meeting outlined below to find out more about the program, the time commitment, and the role of the mentor family.

Meeting date:

Time:

Location:

Thank you for your consideration,

## MENTOR MATCH WORKSHEET

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_

When being matched with a mentor/mentee, rank the following 7 items in order of importance, 1 being the most important and 7 being the least important.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Have a prior relationship
- \_\_\_\_\_ Have same first language
- \_\_\_\_\_ Children in the same grade
- \_\_\_\_\_ Children in the same class
- \_\_\_\_\_ Children have similar interests
- \_\_\_\_\_ Live in same neighborhood
- \_\_\_\_\_ Available during the same time of day

Preferred meeting day(s): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Preferred meeting time:      Morning      Afternoon      Evening

Preferred method of meeting:      Face-to-face      By phone      Skype/Facetime

## PROGRAM EVALUATION SURVEY

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The mentoring program was helpful.				
I have a better understanding of the school and community resources available to me.				
I am more likely to attend school events.				
My mentee was able to answer my questions, or find the answers.				
My mentee was on time, courteous and helpful.				
Overall, I would recommend this program to a friend.				

# Family Field Trips

Family field trips are designed with two purposes.

1. To build partnerships among schools, teachers, and EL families that help foster learning.
2. To increase awareness among EL families regarding services in the local community.

Family field trips allow parents and EL families to participate in school activities that benefit not only the children, but also the EL families. Field trips within the community allow EL families to gain a better understanding of the community services and how to use those services.

## Replication of Program

The steps outlined here will help you successfully replicate this program.

1. Identify locations within the community that provide services for EL families, or could benefit EL families (see “[Community Services](#)” for suggested list).
2. Identify resources needed for field trip (e.g., buses if transportation is necessary, permission slips, liability disclosures, chaperone checklist).
3. Advertise field trip in native languages.
4. Complete field trip checklist (see “[Family Field Trip Checklist](#)”).
5. Evaluate effectiveness of field trip (see “[Family Field Trip Evaluation](#)”).

## Community Services

### *Suggested List of Community Services*

- Literacy Volunteers of America
- Local college, adult education classes
- Translation services
- Immigration services
- Churches that offer ESL classes
- Immigrant and refugee offices/centers
- Community centers
- Libraries

Family field trips allow parents and EL families to participate in school activities that benefit not only the children, but also the EL families.

## FAMILY FIELD TRIP CHECKLIST

### Family Field Trip

Location: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Goal of field trip for children: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Goal of field trip for parents/families: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Measure of success for children: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Measure of success for parents/families: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**EXAMPLE:**

*Location:* Local restaurant

*Goal of field trip for children:* To understand how to order in a restaurant

*Goal of field trip for parents/families:* To understand how to order, pay the bill, tip

*Measure of success for children:* Students successfully order

*Measure of success for parents/families:* Parents successfully order, request check, pay bill, and calculate tip.

## FAMILY FIELD TRIP EVALUATION FOR CHILDREN

### Family Field Trip Evaluation for Children

Trip: \_\_\_\_\_

I learned about: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Here is a picture of what I liked:

### Family Field Trip Evaluation for Parents/Families

Trip: \_\_\_\_\_

I learned something new on this trip.	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
I found the information helpful.	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
I enjoyed this trip.	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Going on the trip with my child/children was a good experience.	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
We will use/visit the field trip location on our own now.	Agree	Neutral	Disagree

If you did learn something new on this trip, please let us know: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Increase Involvement of EL Families at School Events

One of the greatest challenges in education today is increasing the attendance of parents and families at school events. When working with EL families, this challenge becomes even greater. Language barriers, work schedules, and lack of babysitting services all influence decisions to attend. Several successful strategies have been implemented in schools. These strategies have not only increased EL family attendance, but also deepened the partnerships between the school and the EL families.

## Family Engagement

According to researchers Ferlazzo and Hammond (2009), there is a distinct difference between parent involvement and parent engagement. They define parent involvement as beginning with the school: “The ideas and energy come from the schools and government mandates. Schools try to ‘sell’ their ideas to parents” (p. 6). However, parents initiate engagement: “Ideas are elicited from parents by school staff in the context of developing trusting relationships. . . . More parent energy drives the efforts” (p. 6).

When families engage, they are more invested in the school and in seeing the school and the community succeed.

## Events and Tips to Increase Family Engagement

### 1. Celebrate Students’ Home Countries

Sponsor a “Country of the Month” bulletin board throughout the school. Have a visible school bulletin board highlight one country each month. If, for example, Vietnam is the country of the month, the board can introduce others to the location, language, popular foods, and holidays of Vietnam.

Then, each individual classroom could follow up with classroom bulletin boards highlighting that same country through potential readers, holidays, historical events, and so on. In a first-grade classroom, students could have a bulletin board on the dragon boat festival and design their own dragon boat. Change the bulletin boards monthly. Ensure that bulletin boards highlight the native countries of new students.

Alternatively (or in addition), have an area in your school where you display maps of all the areas where your EL families come from.

### 2. Provide Transportation

Provide transportation to school events, such as back-to-school night, assemblies, and parent-teacher conferences. Run the school bus route for school events, just as it is run in the morning and afternoon for school pick-up and drop-off.

### 3. Offer Babysitting Services

Offer babysitting services during school-sponsored events. Babysitters can be high school students.

- a. Arrange babysitters in various locations throughout the school, and allow parents to drop children off in babysitting rooms.
- b. Consider offering babysitters community service hours.

### 4. Celebrate Multicultural Holidays

Ask students from the country of the holiday being celebrated to perform a song or dance. Students from the country highlighted could share stories related to that holiday with other children, or teach a song or dance.

### 5. Use Students' Native Languages

Add welcome signs in your EL families' first languages at the entrances to your school, and decorate the signs with flags from your EL families' countries. When making school announcements, consider greeting (saying "good morning") in a new language each week.

**When families engage, they are more invested in the school and in seeing the school and the community succeed.**

### 6. Host an International Luncheon or Dinner

This could be done at the classroom level, at the grade level, or with the entire school. If running the country of the month bulletin board, consider having an international luncheon or dinner after every four countries. Have foods focus on those countries highlighted.

## Reference

Ferlazzo, L., & Hammond, L. (2009). *Building parent engagement in schools*. Denver, CO: Linworth.

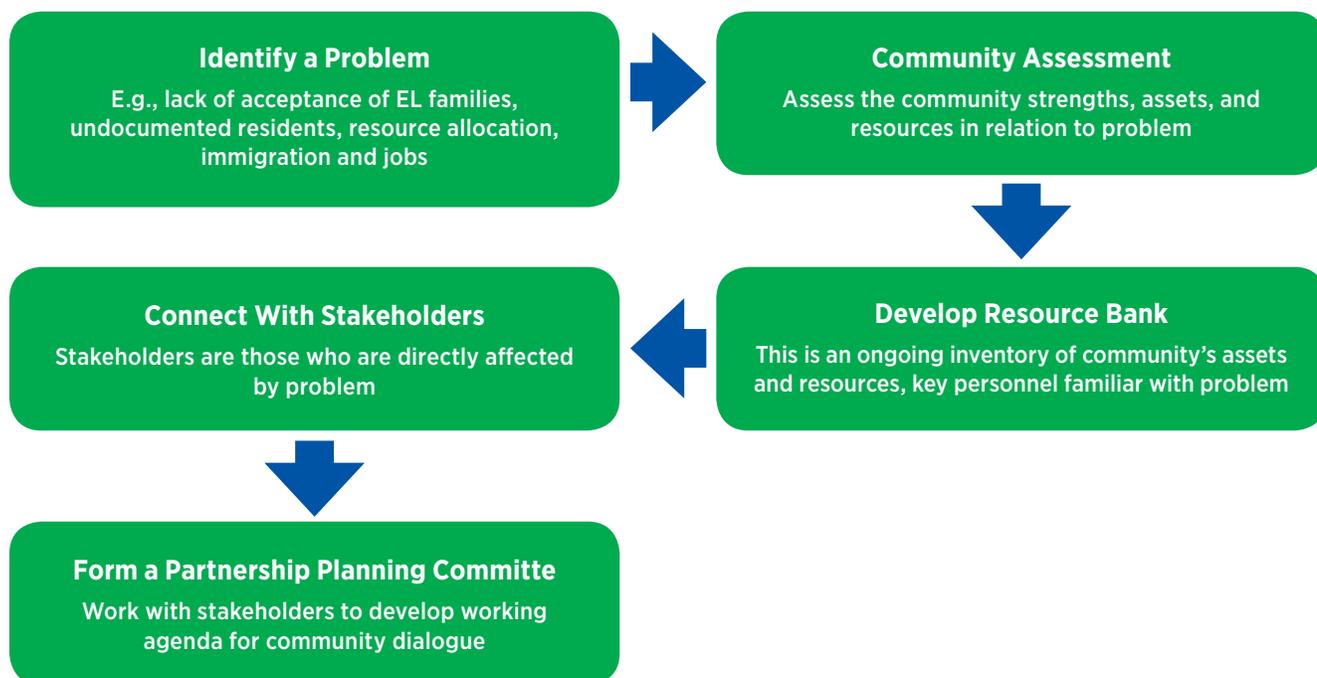
# Hosting a Community Dialogue Session on Cultural Diversity

Bringing awareness of the needs, challenges, and advantages diverse families offer within your community helps to engage EL families, increase community awareness, and build bridges between schools and communities.

## Program Development Replication Guide

1. Identify a theme (e.g., immigration, bilingualism).
2. Identify key personnel within community to serve on a panel (e.g., mayor, government officials, school board members, teachers, community members). Send invitation (see [“Invitation to Potential Panelists”](#)).
3. Determine agenda (see [“Framework for Determining Agenda”](#)). You can have, for example, each panelist speak for a short time, then open up the floor for questions, or have a moderator open with a question and then have panelists share their ideas.
4. Advertise.
5. Host the panel (see [“Community Dialogue Panel”](#) sample template) below.
6. Evaluate (see [“Community Dialogue Panel Evaluation”](#)).
7. Determine future needs/potential topics for future panels.
8. Offer future sessions based on feedback provided.

## Framework for Determining Agenda



## INVITATION TO POTENTIAL PANELISTS

Dear [ name ],

On behalf of [ school name ] I would like to invite you to be a panelist at our Community Dialogue meeting on [ topic ] on [ X date or dates ] at [ time ]. Given your role in the community, we hope that you will be able to join us for the event.

We would be honored if you would accept this invitation. Please let me know at your convenience if you will be able to join us for the event, and please do not hesitate to contact me via email at [ email address ] or call me at [ phone number ] if you have any questions about the event.

Sincerely,

## COMMUNITY DIALOGUE PANEL

Theme: \_\_\_\_\_

Invited members: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Key Questions for panelists: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### FORMAT

Targeted opening                      5–8 minutes

Introduction of panelists            \_\_\_\_\_ minutes

Questions for panelists              \_\_\_\_\_ minutes

Panelists closing remarks          \_\_\_\_\_ minutes

Q&A period from audience members \_\_\_\_\_ minutes

Targeted closing                      \_\_\_\_\_ minutes

## COMMUNITY DIALOGUE PANEL EVALUATION

Theme: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

This conversation helped you to think about this topic in new ways.

Strongly agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly disagree      No opinion

You learned from your peers during this conversation.

Strongly agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly disagree      No opinion

The moderator asked relevant and interesting questions on the topic.

Strongly agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly disagree      No opinion

It was valuable to you to participate in this program.

Strongly agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly disagree      No opinion

It is important to have programs like this one in your community.

Strongly agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly disagree      No opinion

Would you participate in this kind of program again in the future?

Yes      Maybe      No

What types of themes would you like to see in the future? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Please write any additional comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Provide a Resource Guide for EL Families

A resource guide outlines all the services available for EL families to meet their linguistic, cultural, and community needs.

## Program Development Replication Guide

1. Identify key resources within your community. These may include:
  - Library services
  - Bilingual services
  - Adult ESL classes
  - Literacy classes
  - Citizenship classes
  - Translation services
  - Immigration services
  - Cultural community centers
2. Determine the best place to host the resource guide. This may be on your school's website or as a document to be handed out on parent's night, provided to EL families as they register for school, sent with grade reports, or all of the above.
3. Consider having the materials translated into the languages represented at your school.
4. Publish the resource guide and make it available in the way(s) you determined.
5. Assess the use of the information via parent surveys.
6. Update information quarterly to include new school initiatives, programs, and policies.

## SURVEY

Please indicate how often you access each of the resources listed below.

	5 times a month or more	About 2-4 times a month	Once a month	Never
Library services				
Bilingual services				
Adult ESL classes				
Literacy classes				
Citizenship classes				
Translation services				
Immigration services				
Cultural community center				

*Note:* Modify the services based on those in your community.

# Establish an Adult Resource Center for EL Families

Offering EL families resources can greatly impact their involvement in the school and their children's success. Consider establishing a small area in your school where EL families can find the resources they need to not only be successful within the school, but within the community as well. Establishing a small area in the school's library to house resources for EL parents is an economical and effective way to establish a resource center.

## Program Development Replication Guide

1. Determine the best area to host family resources. (This may be a virtual location. If hosted via the web, be sure to have accurate directions printed in the native languages represented in your community for easy access for families.)
2. Determine the materials needed for the resource center (see "[Adult Resource Center Materials Checklist](#)").
3. Advertise and publish hours and materials available to EL families.
4. Evaluate the use of the Adult Resource Center by surveying EL families when materials are returned (see "[Evaluation of Adult Resource Materials](#)").

*Consider having this translated, and available in all native languages.*

## Adult Resource Center Materials Checklist

Here are some suggested materials for your Adult Resource Center.

- Adult ESL textbooks
  - Alta ESL Book Center ([www.altaesl.com](http://www.altaesl.com))
  - Cambridge University Press ([www.cup.org](http://www.cup.org))
  - New Readers Press ([www.newreaderspress.com](http://www.newreaderspress.com))
  - Oxford University Press ([www.oup.com](http://www.oup.com))
  - Pearson Education ELT ([longmanhomeusa.com](http://longmanhomeusa.com))
  - ProLingua ([www.prolinguaassociates.com](http://www.prolinguaassociates.com))
- Guide to Naturalization (<https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/files/article/M-476.pdf>)
- Citizenship study materials (<https://www.uscis.gov/citizenship/teachers/educational-products/100-civics-questions-and-answers-mp3-audio-english-version>)

- Basic literacy materials
- Information on local services
- Civic flashcards
- If a computer is available, links to:
  - Dave’s ESL Café ([www.eslcafe.com](http://www.eslcafe.com))
  - ESL Pod ([www.eslpod.com](http://www.eslpod.com))
  - Boggles World ([bogglesworldesl.com](http://bogglesworldesl.com))
  - English Listening Lesson Library Online ([www.elllo.org](http://www.elllo.org))
  - USA Learns ([www.usalearns.org](http://www.usalearns.org))
  - VOA/Voice of America, Learning English ([learningenglish.voanews.com](http://learningenglish.voanews.com))

## EVALUATION OF ADULT RESOURCE CENTER MATERIALS

I have used the materials in the Adult Resource Center. Yes      No

The materials were helpful. Yes      No

If you answered “yes,” how were the resources helpful? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

If you answered “no,” how could they be more helpful? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I learned from the materials. Yes      No

Do you have any resource that you can contribute? If so, what? Yes      No

Suggested resources: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Would you recommend this Adult Resource Center to others? Yes      No

Other Suggestions for the Adult Resource Center: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Provide a Tip Sheet for School Personnel

## Tip Sheets

### *Tip Sheet for Teachers*

While English language teachers may have a strong understanding of the best ways to work with ELs and their families, many other teachers may have little or no experience in working with EL families. To ensure success in all classes, provide teachers with a tip sheet on how to best engage ELs and their families in the classroom (see “[Teacher Tip Sheet: Working With English Learners](#)”).

### *Tip Sheet for School Personnel*

It is important everyone who works in your school has a clear understanding of best practices when working with EL families. The “[Staff Tip Sheet: Working With English Learners](#)” contains general tips that will help your school staff work with ELs in your school. Staff includes administrative assistants, librarians, media personnel, technology department staff, school nurses, and support staff.

Additionally, staff personnel may have questions that are common to working with ELs (see “[Frequently Asked Questions: English Learners](#)”).

## TEACHER TIP SHEET: Working With English Learners

English learners (ELs) bring a wide variety of skills into our classrooms. It is important to recognize and support these skills. It is also critical to remember that language acquisition occurs at different rates for all individuals. Young learners may appear exceptionally quiet as they take the needed time to work on simultaneously developing fluency in two languages. While language acquisition may occasionally present a challenge, ELs are often high achievers because they are working toward bilingualism.

1. Have the students share pieces of their culture. Survey students to assess their interests and determine cultural tidbits that may be of interest to the other students.

*Surveys:* For K-2, ask students to draw a picture of their favorite holiday or family tradition, and then ask students to share with the class. For above second grade, have students complete a short description of what they would like other students to know about their culture. It can be a favorite holiday, cultural tradition, or story.

2. Consider a culture-of-the-month bulletin board.
3. Be aware of students' native language and English proficiency. Consider the linguistic challenges that might exist for the students.
4. Use clear, simple language. Avoid figurative language.
5. Create a visually rich language environment.
6. Utilize pair and group activities.
7. Recognize that ELs may take a bit longer to process and, therefore, may take a bit longer to answer questions.
8. Familiarize yourself with your students' cultural background and that cultural differences might occur, ie. language, holidays, customs, traditions, dos and don'ts.
9. Integrate students' native languages into the classroom. Have the students teach everyone how to say "Hello" in their native language.

## STAFF TIP SHEET: Working With English Learners

1. Use clear, simple language. Avoid figurative language.
2. Recognize students' native language. Ask them how to say "Hello" or "How are you?" in their native language.
3. Recognize that ELs may take a bit longer to process, and, therefore, may take a bit longer to answer any questions.
4. Familiarize yourself with your students' cultural background and that cultural differences that might occur, ie. language, holidays, customs, traditions, dos and don'ts.
5. Be patient.
6. Provide a comfort zone.
7. Create opportunities to highlight cultures.
8. Smile.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: English Learners (ELs)

1. Where do our ELs come from?

Answer: [Fill in countries based on school demographics.]

2. What can I do to make these students feel more comfortable?

Be sure to be welcoming at all times. This may be as simple as smiling and greeting new students. Ask students about their native countries, show empathy, and help them gain confidence with their new language by practicing simple everyday phrases, such as greetings and small talk. “What’s your favorite sport?” “How are you doing?” Consider asking students to teach you how to say “Hello” or “How are you?” in their native language.

3. How long does it take for these students to learn English?

Learning a new language differs for all students. It is important to create a warm environment that is understanding of the challenges of living in a new culture and being surrounded by a new language. Keep in mind, we all smile in the same language.

4. Who can I contact if I think an EL is struggling outside of the classroom?

[School to fill in.]

5. Where can ELs access resources to them assimilate, gain a better understanding of, and adapt to American culture?

Libraries are a potential “safe” place for many ELs. ELs often find themselves in the library, browsing through bilingual books and books in their native language, and admiring picture books that highlight American life. Stocking your library with a wealth of diverse readers can support a new EL’s acculturation, but also help them to gain English language literacy skills. Books and booklists are provided by [ColorinColorado.org](http://ColorinColorado.org) and [NEA.org](http://NEA.org).

6. Are there translation services available so that I can better communicate with the family? If so, how can I arrange the service?

[School to fill in.]

# Develop a School Action Plan

Having an action plan that establishes goals, objectives, outcomes, tasks, and timelines can help a school formalize activities that can aid in the success of ELs' education and in the inclusion and engagement of EL families. An action plan can also help a school better advocate for ELs and their families. Consider following these steps when developing an action plan:

1. Create an Action Plan Development Team. Members of the team could include ESL or bilingual teachers, leadership teams within the school, and parents of former and current ELs.
2. Have the team brainstorm and work through the Advocacy Action Plan Guide.
3. Share the work of the Action Plan Development Team with the school's stakeholders and solicit input.
4. Revise the plan based on the input of the stakeholders.

## ADVOCACY ACTION PLAN GUIDE

This guide is to help you design and create an action plan to reach, connect, engage, and advocate for EL families. It has been created under a Kellogg Foundation Grant through TESOL International Association. This guide has been adapted from the American Library Association's Advocacy Action Plan Workbook (2009).

### Step 1: Determining the Issues

What are the issues most important to you and your school? Be very specific. Avoid generalizations like, *EL families aren't involved*. Here is a good example: *Not enough EL families attend back-to-school nights*.

List three key issues here:

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Step 2: Your Vision

Looking at your issues, what would your school and community look like if these issues were resolved? Create a vision statement that encompasses this vision.

Vision Statement: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## ADVOCACY ACTION PLAN GUIDE *(continued)*

### Step 3a: Setting Your Goals

Considering your issues and your vision, what are your goals to accomplish this vision? List as many as you need to.

Goals: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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### Step 3b: Determining Goals Within Constraints

Look at your goals from Step 3a. Are they feasible? Given your current budgetary and personnel situation, are they obtainable? If they are not obtainable, cross them out.

Final Goals: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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## ADVOCACY ACTION PLAN GUIDE *(continued)*

### Step 4: Laying Out Your Plan

Always keep your vision in mind. Place it at the top of your plan.

#### *Rationale*

List each goal and a rationale for that goal (include any evidence). Outline the steps needed to reach that goal, the timeline, the personnel, any resources, checkpoint measures, and final assessment measure to demonstrate goal was met.

#### *Determine Key Personnel*

What groups or individuals would be most supportive of your goals? Is there a teacher that could serve as a teacher leader and help put your plan into action? What tasks would be beneficial for this person to handle?

Vision: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Goal 1: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Rationale: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Key Personnel: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Action Steps	Timeline	Person(s) Responsible	Resources Needed	Checkpoint Dates/Notes	Measurement

## ADVOCACY ACTION PLAN GUIDE *(continued)*

### Step 5: Determining Your Key Message and Advocacy

- A. What key decision makers would you like to engage in this process? Who would you like to hear your message? Why are these issues important to your school and your community?
- B. What is the most important thing you want others to know? This is your key message, one that is consistently repeated. Your key message should be no more than 15 words. Think about something you can post on your website, use as a tagline, and add to school newsletters.

Key message: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Step 6: Determining How to Get Your Message Out

Brainstorm possible ways to get the message out. Some options:

- Newsletter
- Website
- Letters to the editor
- Op-ed pieces
- Presentations

## ADVOCACY ACTION PLAN GUIDE *(continued)*

### Step 7: Building a Team of Advocates

#### *Committees and Task Forces*

To be effective in meeting your action plan and getting your message out, you may need to establish a committee or task force. Here are some questions to help you get started:

- Who could serve on the committee or task force?
- With what will the committee or task force be charged?
- When should they begin and end work?
- What measures could be used to assess their effectiveness?

#### *Checklist for Advocacy*

**Talk, talk, talk:** Share your key message with everyone.

**Stay informed:** [www.tesol.org](http://www.tesol.org) and [www.cal.org](http://www.cal.org).

**Get to know your key decision makers and staff:** Share your success stories.

**Highlight your work:** Use your newsletter or website—these are great places to share success stories.

**Plan events:** Share what your school and community

**Use your built-in advocates:** your EL teachers and staff.

**Get press:** Put out publications for your community

**Build your network:** Create a phone tree or email list of like-minded advocates!

### Reference

American Library Association Advocacy Institute. (2009, January). The advocacy action plan workbook. Chicago, IL: American Library Association.



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## About TESOL International Association

Founded in 1966, TESOL International Association is a professional community of educators, researchers, administrators, and students committed to advancing excellence in English language teaching for speakers of other languages worldwide. With more than 12,500 members representing more than 150 countries, TESOL fosters the exchange of ideas, research, and peer-to-peer knowledge, and provides expertise, resources, and a powerful voice on issues affecting the profession. Through professional development programs, its international conference, special interest groups, and publications, TESOL engages tens of thousands of professionals to collaborate globally and create a world of opportunity for millions of people of all ages who want to learn English. For more information, please visit [www.tesol.org](http://www.tesol.org).

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