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REEd Framework for Bilingual Family-School Partnerships

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Introduction and Purpose

The most significant reform of the U.S. education system has centered on improving student achievement. For years, the focus has been on common standards, assessments, teacher and administrator accountability systems, and 21st century teaching and learning. More recently, family engagement has been given a higher priority and is considered an integral part of education reform efforts. **Family engagement is a process used to build positive, goal-oriented relationships with families. Effective family engagement is mutually respectful, sustains families' cultures and languages, and includes genuine efforts to understand each family's beliefs, values, and priorities.** We purposely use the term *family* to be inclusive of the full range of household types and family structures to which students belong, including those with parents, extended family members, and additional or alternative caregivers. We use the term *engagement* to signify active involvement that balances power and opportunity between educators and caregivers.

Much research documents evidence that engaging families in the education of their children results in positive academic outcomes for students in general (Fantuzzo, McWayne, Perry, & Childs, 2004; Farver, Xu, Eppe, & Lonigan, 2006; Lee & Bowen, 2006; McWayne, Campos, & Owsianik, 2008; Raikes, Green, Atwater, Kisker, Constantine, & Chazan-Cohen, 2006), and for bilingual students in particular (Durand, 2011; LeFevre & Shaw, 2012; Jeynes, 2012). The positive effects of family engagement in education are recognized by state and federal education agencies with family engagement expectations included in state teaching standards (Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2009) and in federal law (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

It is important to note that experts differentiate between family involvement and family engagement. Family involvement is school-centered and includes promoting ideas to parents about problems and solutions educators have identified, as well as the criteria used to evaluate the success of those initiatives (Ferlazzo & Hammond, 2009). Conversely, family engagement, which is often left out, is parent-centered and includes school staff eliciting ideas from families through trusting relationships, with a focus on the needs and priorities that emerge from the school community (Ferlazzo & Hammond, 2009). Both can be positive and necessary for supporting student success, with family involvement being considered as a step toward family engagement (Ferlazzo & Hammond, 2009).

Despite its importance, populations with historically lower levels of school engagement are often left out of such efforts (Mapp, 2003), including bilingual learners (Housel, 2020), with minority immigrant families reporting more barriers to school engagement than US-born White families (Turney & Kao, 2009). While the importance of engaging all families cannot be understated, the engagement of bilingual families is of particular consequence. In order to engage bilingual families, educators must first understand the institutional barriers and personal biases that could be contributing to a lack of family engagement (Housel, 2020). Factors that particularly affect bilingual families include caregivers' self-perceived level of language proficiency (Sibley & Dearing, 2014; Vera, Israel, Coyle, Cross, Knight-Lynn, Moallem, Bartucci, & Goldberger, 2012; Turney & Kao, 2009), conflicts with schedules, transportation, and child care (Tarasawa & Waggoner, 2015; Sibley & Dearing, 2014; Turney & Kao, 2009), and feelings of frustration and disrespect (Olivos, 2012, p. 104; Sohn & Wang, 2006), among other factors. Families that belong to non-dominant groups in the community can feel marginalized by the education system (Housel, 2020; Vera et al., 2012). In particular, bilingual families report feeling intimidated by academics in English and find it challenging to support their children with schoolwork (Alvarez, 2014). These feelings of exclusion can act as barriers to participation and can lead some bilingual families to disengage from the school (Vera et al., 2012; Mapp, 2003). Further, some bilingual families may have different perspectives than teachers on what it means to engage in their child's education (Kim, 2009) and some may be unaware that they are expected to be involved at school (Turney & Kao, 2009).

Educators can ameliorate these barriers and improve participation by being explicit about how families can engage (Housel, 2020), and by providing access and opportunities for multilingual stakeholders through the use of cross language communication practices (Baker, 2011). Bilingual families in particular find support through social networks that help them navigate the school system, and consequently lead to greater family engagement (Durand, 2011). Educators should encourage and facilitate interactions that act as bridges between home and school (Alvarez, 2014) and that build trusting relationships (Shiffman, 2019).

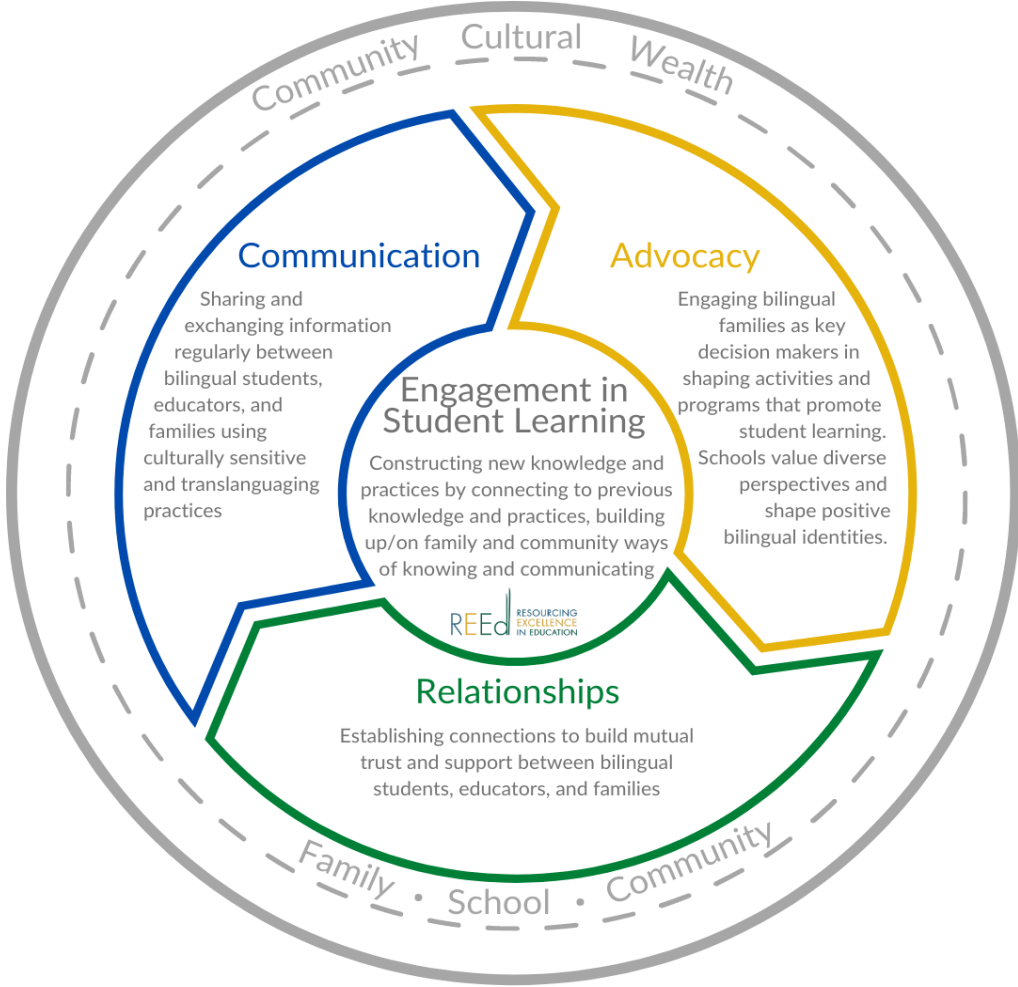
To empower families of emergent bilinguals to actively engage in their children's school experience and support their academic success, educators must understand that *all* families want their children to be successful in school. Moore (2011) asserts that schools should operate from a strengths-based model, versus a deficit model, when encouraging family engagement. This may prove to be a shift for some educators from focusing on what families are *not doing* to acknowledging what families *can do* and *already are doing* to help their children succeed (Moore, 2011). How bilingual families engage with the school, however, may look different than how monolingual English-speaking families engage, and may not respond in the same way to traditional engagement efforts (Housel, 2020, Turney & Kao, 2009). For example, several studies document that while a US-born family may feel comfortable advocating for the learning needs of their child, some immigrant families may view this behavior as disrespectful to their child's teacher (Housel, 2020; Vera et al., 2012; Mapp, 2003). Other studies suggest educators may be unaware of bilingual families' efforts to engage in their children's education because they include less visible strategies such as attending adult English classes to model the value of education (Sibley & Brabeck, 2017), minimizing time spent on chores to make space for homework completion, or moving to a new home to attend school in a more desirable district (Tarasawa & Waggoner, 2015).

Caregivers remain a largely untapped resource when it comes to improving student learning outcomes for bilingual students (Ishimaru, Torres, Salvador, Lott, Williams, & Tran, 2016). The framework we describe here is designed to support educators to engage more effectively with the

multilingual communities they serve. The REEd Framework for Bilingual Family-School Partnerships (Figure 1) conveys a dynamic approach to family engagement that promotes reciprocal communication, empowering advocacy efforts, and trusting relationships in service of student learning. The REEd Framework includes tools and resources for practicing educators to engage bilingual families in their children’s school experience by developing lasting partnerships for success and leveraging family language and cultural practices for student learning.

Figure 1

The REEd Framework for Bilingual Family-School Partnerships



Note. The REEd Framework prioritizes leveraging and respecting bilingual families’ home languages and cultures to build relationships, communicate, and involve families as key decision makers. Communication, Advocacy, and Relationships work synergistically to enhance Student Learning. When schools connect home languages and cultures to language and learning at school, the result is increased student achievement.

View of Bilingualism and Bilingual Learners

We use the term emerging bilingual instead of English Learner to refer to students who are in the dynamic process of developing bilingual competencies (Escamilla et al., 2014) and to emphasize the value of bilingualism (García, 2009). The term English Learner, though still often used in administrative documents, positions students who are learning English as a second or an additional language as having a deficit, or gaps, in their knowledge. On the contrary, positioning students as emergent bilinguals suggests value in their linguistic and cultural background, their ways of knowing and communicating, as important contributions to the classroom and resources for learning (Viana, 2020). When necessary, to refer to administrative documents and policies, we use the term “bureaucratically identified English Learners” to clarify that this is not our preferred term or the view of students established in the REEd Framework.

Importantly, the REEd Framework taps into research and theory on the bilingual practice of translanguaging to foster engagement with bilingual families and communities, a feature lacking in many current frameworks for family engagement. The REEd Framework offers a bridge from theory to practice for engaging emergent bilingual families using a translanguaging approach to increase student learning. Translanguaging is the “process of making meaning, shaping experiences, gaining understanding and knowledge through the use of two languages” (Baker, 2011, p. 288) and can be understood in two key ways. First, translanguaging is the normal language practice in which bilingual people make flexible use of all of their linguistic resources to construct and communicate meaning (García, 2011). It is the standard way bilingual families and communities communicate. It is an innate practice of bilingual people that is enhanced over time with experience (Wei, 2018). Second, translanguaging *pedagogy* refers to the ways teachers and schools can strategically tap into translanguaging practices to maximize student learning by leveraging multiple languages to negotiate meaning, improve comprehension, and foster language development (Creese, 2010).

Benefits of translanguaging in the classroom include promoting deeper understanding of content as well as developing language practices and cross-linguistic connections, improving students’ skills in both of their languages, and facilitating communication and collaboration between school and home contexts (Baker, 2011). For these reasons, we include translanguaging practice and pedagogy as an integral feature across the elements of our framework.

Although some of the resources summarized in this document are framed with a deficit view of bilingual learners, we view a primary purpose of our work as advocating for biliteracy, sustaining and leveraging home language practices to learn, communicate, and make connections. Importantly, our view of biliteracy and translanguaging includes an understanding of language as both “a human right” and as “a resource for learning” (Ruiz, 1984) and must be situated within an asset-based multilingual school culture. Moreover, keeping two languages separate can create a linguistic hierarchy (Ruiz, 1984; Garcia, 2011). Asking students and families to leave their home language at the door devalues their identity and sends a message that their home language and culture is less important. Translanguaging challenges the notion that one language is more powerful or valuable than the other, therefore highlighting the importance of flexible language practices, and an inclusion of all stakeholders. Following Ruiz, we firmly posit bilingual families must be “seen as a source of specialized linguistic expertise that is useful for themselves, their communities, and society as a whole” (Ruiz, 1984, pg. 28).

Theoretical Framework

The REEd Framework for Bilingual Family-School Partnerships consists of three key components: communication, advocacy, and relationships. These interrelated components serve as levers to foster student learning. We situate the REEd Framework within two theories that frame our understanding of family engagement: Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence (Epstein & Sanders, 2000), and Yosso's community cultural wealth model (Yosso, 2013).

Home, school, and community contexts represent overlapping spheres of influence, and these spheres act upon children, conditions, and relationships (Epstein & Sanders, 2000). The families, schools, and communities that are most effective at educating children have a shared mission and cooperative goals around children's learning and development (Epstein & Sanders, 2000). Overlapping influence means the sharing of responsibilities, where neither educators nor families alone bear the burden of maintaining engagement (Epstein & Sanders, 2000). These spheres can be influenced by external factors such as home, school, and community policies, practices, historical contexts, and developmental conditions, as well as internal factors including lines of communication and social interaction between home, school, and community participants (Epstein & Sanders, 2000). The interactions between families, schools, and communities strengthen social networks and build social capital that can be accessed within the spheres to further maintain productive partnerships (Epstein & Sanders, 2000). Moreover, expending social capital can lead to improved experience, climate, and conditions for all stakeholders in the education system (Epstein & Sanders, 2000). We consider the community in which educators and families live and work to be integral to the engagement process and encourage the use of resources in the community to support student learning. The REEd Framework includes a suite of tools that educators can use to engage with families, community members, and organizations to strengthen partnerships and improve outcomes for students. These interactions can help develop and sustain the social capital that exists among these overlapping spheres.

Yosso (2013) expands the notion of leveraging social capital to improve outcomes for students by including additional forms of capital that, when combined, create a greater assortment of assets and resources from which to draw. Yosso (2013) outlines at least six forms of capital, termed "community cultural wealth" that are developed and nurtured in communities of color and often go unnoticed by educational institutions. These include aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistant capital. The REEd Framework can be used to access the many forms of capital that educators, families, and communities share, including those that are sometimes unrecognized or underappreciated. For example, navigational capital can be vital to families who are new to the United States and who may be unfamiliar with the ins and outs of the educational system. All forms of capital are beneficial, indeed vital, for student success. Whereas forms of capital are acquired by individuals, cultural wealth is meant to be shared within a community (Yosso, 2013). Cultural wealth sees communities of color as "holders and creators of knowledge" (Delgado Bernal, 2002, p. 106). Therefore, we view the notion of community cultural wealth as key to engaging families in their children's education, and the leveraging of overlapping spheres of influence as a structure in which stakeholders interact, thus sharing their combined wealth to strengthen relationships, maintain communication, and encourage advocacy, all in service of the shared mission of improving student learning.

To design the REEd Framework, we reviewed several available frameworks for family engagement, including those from state and federal sources, and research organizations (Head Start, 2021; Michigan Department of Education, 2020; Epstein, Sanders, Sheldon, Simon,

Salinas, Jansorn, & Williams, 2018; California Department of Education [CDE], 2017; Garcia, Frunzi, Dean, Flores, & Miller, 2016; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). We also reviewed the research literature on family engagement, with a particular attention to research that focuses on emergent bilingual students and their families and how schools can best meet their unique needs. In our review of the frameworks and research on family engagement, we surfaced several promising features that had a.) widespread consensus on their importance, b.) a research-based impact on student achievement, and c.) particular attention to the needs of bilingual families. Generally, we found that the currently available frameworks either did not focus explicitly on bilingual families in the early elementary age group or did not have an explicit focus on student learning. Some frameworks we found to be more comprehensive but did not include readily usable suggestions for educators. Our goal in designing the REEd Framework was to fill these gaps and to create a user-friendly framework (that was easy to remember) for educators that would drive the design of the accompanying tools and examples to impact family engagement practices in schools.

While most frameworks for family engagement include some suggestions for engaging families of students identified as English Learners, what sets the REEd Framework apart is that it was designed specifically for bilingual families and the schools that serve them from the start. At the heart of our work is the goal of exploring the talents, strengths, and experiences of bilingual learners and their families. While engaging with families in their home language is an afterthought in some frameworks, often limited to suggestions for asking for translation services from the district, the REEd Framework posits that in order to engage with families in rich and meaningful partnerships to the fullest extent possible, educators must be willing to explore new ways and new technologies to engage with families in their home language. Moreover, many other frameworks for family engagement, while providing useful tips for communicating with parents, do not focus explicitly on the role of family engagement in *supporting student learning*. The REEd Framework maintains an explicit emphasis on succinct practices that engage families and teachers as equal partners in teaching and learning *with* bilingual students.

Of particular importance to the California schooling context, the REEd Framework aligns with the four principles outlined in the California English Learner Roadmap (CDE, 2020). To develop an assets-oriented, responsive school setting as outlined in Principle One, educators will need to build trusting *Relationships* with students and families. Principle Two lends itself to the central focus of the REEd Framework, which is the engagement of stakeholders to improve *Student Learning*. To fulfill the effective system conditions described in Principle Three, educators can turn to the Framework's *Advocacy* component and work to respond to their community's needs and to continuously improve. Finally, Principle Four details the importance of systems alignment and articulation. To fulfill this goal, educators will need to rely on *Communication* to align practices and create pathways for student achievement. Additionally, educators can use the REEd Framework to enact the California English Learner Roadmap principles by aligning the elements of each principle with Framework components. For example, Element 2.G. of the Roadmap describes programmatic choices students and families should have to support their growth. These choices can be supported through two-way *Communication* practices and *Advocacy* efforts, thus integrating multiple components of the Framework.

In the sections that follow, we review the research that supports each component of the REEd Framework: Communication, Advocacy, Relationships, and Engagement in Student Learning.

Communication

Families can support student success by engaging in regular communication with their child's school. By communication, we refer to the **sharing and exchanging of information regularly between bilingual students, educators, and families using culturally sensitive and translanguaging practices**. In a meta-analysis of family engagement programs that include bilingual learners, Jeynes (2013) identified four kinds of family engagement that most positively influenced student outcomes: family reading programs, daily homework checking programs, collaborative programs in which teachers and families work as partners to improve student outcomes, and programs that foster increased communication among educators and caregivers. Ongoing communication is necessary for family engagement initiatives to be successful.

There are many purposes for communicating between educators, families, and students. For teachers, regular communication increases their ability to understand family views on student learning (Epstein, 2010). For families, communication with the school improves their understanding of educational programs and policies, and helps them monitor their child's progress (Epstein, 2010). For students, communication with teachers and their caregivers increases awareness of their own progress and the steps they need to take to improve academic achievement (Epstein, 2010). Translanguaging may facilitate home-school connections, in particular if the home language is one other than the language taught in school (Lewis, Jones, & Baker, 2012). When translanguaging is used by the student to communicate with caregivers, the student reprocesses content learned in school, which can lead to deeper understanding, thus prompting the student to expand and extend what was learned in one language at school through discussion in the home language (Baker, 2011, as cited in Lewis, Jones, & Baker, 2012).

Educators can support students and families with communication policies that meet their specific needs. Schools should identify different modes of communication, including use of technology, families can use to contact staff and develop a system of regular, two-way communication between teachers and caregivers (Halgunseth, Jia, & Barbarin, 2013; Houk, 2005) with teachers allocating time during the school day for home-school communication (Breiseth, Robertson, & Lafond, 2011). Communication practices should include developing ongoing relationships with community organizations that can support home-school communication (Breiseth et al., 2011) and experimenting with different formats for meeting with families including individually, in groups, and at various locations outside of the school environment (Halgunseth et al., 2013). Educators should also reach out to families to inquire about caregivers' preferences for receiving communication from the school (e.g. by phone, email, or text message) and in which language they prefer to communicate (Breiseth et al., 2011). Web-based tools, such as email and teleconferencing, are uniquely powerful two-way communication mechanisms. The Harvard Family Research Project found that internet-based family-school communication was correlated with higher student academic achievement and higher educational expectations, even when controlling for prior achievement and other forms of family-school communication (Bouffard, 2010). Teachers can now send out group emails to parents with periodic updates about what the class is learning. Some teachers have websites with more details about curriculum, upcoming assignments, and even examples of student work. These tech tools allow families and teachers to be more connected than ever before. Parents can know more about what their children are learning and can be more engaged in their education, including engaging in their home languages through the use of translation tools.

However, a crucial concern for school-family communication that engages bilingual families is digital equity. Digital equity includes making sure students and families have equal access to technology, like devices, software, and the internet. Having digital technologies in the home provides families with options that open lines of communication between school and home. However, schools may need to offer parent classes and teacher training in order to utilize digital tools to their full advantage for family-school communication. Parent training may start with equipment basics if needed and then move on to more advanced topics, such as how to check students' progress online, communicate with teachers, and encourage online safety and digital citizenship (Boss, 2016). Other ideas to engage families with educational technology that support home-school communication are family tech nights that show parents how to use the technology and why the school uses it, and inviting parents to student-led tech talks. The bottom line is that schools need to be attentive to the particular devices and understanding of educational technology available to families, work to increase the availability of devices and WiFi where needed, and provide family-friendly training. Schools also must provide ongoing information and communication in a variety of ways, so families without access to technology can receive the same information.

Research has documented great value in media content that serves as a springboard for conversation and activities, as well as content that promotes joint media engagement between parent and child (Lee & Barron, 2015). The next generation of digital equity programs should engage parents in every stage of the process, work to develop parents' familiarity with the platforms, and increase their confidence in using them alongside their children (Katz & Levine, 2015). This growing reliance on tech-based communication is informed by research that shows digital outreach can help parents stay informed, become more involved, and be better positioned to help with kids' schoolwork—all factors driving better student engagement and performance (Minero, 2017).

Communication in multiple languages is a realistic need in many schools, and districts legally must provide translated school information and materials for the families they serve (Halgunseth et al., 2013). It is also necessary for districts to create a translation process that is “formal, steady, and reliable” (Houk, 2005, p. 64) including hiring bilingual staff, when possible, who can act as interpreters during meetings such as parent teacher conferences, special education meetings, and parent education events (Breiseth et al., 2011). With the development of new technology, schools can find other means to communicate with families when interpreters are not available. When translation software is being used, it's important that native speakers verify, when possible, that the translation is correct and written in the proper dialect. Software programs that can translate typed texts, handwriting, cameras that photograph text and translate it, and voice-to-text capabilities can be a helpful start. Other applications allow teachers to text messages in English that are then received by the family in their home language. Likewise, the family can respond to the teacher in their home language and the message is automatically translated to English on the teachers' device. Many of today's technological tools provide translations in other languages. Schools and teachers should review multilingual accessibility features of any tools they consider for family engagement, and ensure teachers and families receive the training necessary to leverage it for maintaining school-family communication across languages.

Importantly, while a great deal of two-way communication can take place using translation software, not *all* school-related documents and communication with families can or should be translated using translation software. The U.S. Department of Justice and U.S.

Department of Education require that schools provide information to “limited English proficient” parents in a language they can understand, including in part, enrollment information, report cards, student discipline policies, special education services, grievance procedures, and permission forms. For these and other specific communication requirements, it is not enough for schools to use translation software or bilingual school staff. Instead, they must use specialized interpreters and translators with the appropriate training. For information on these requirements, see the U.S. Department of Education’s School’s Civil Rights Obligations to English Learner Students and Limited English Proficient Parents.

The basis of a school or district’s overall communication strategy should be to establish personal connections with students and families. Educators should strive to establish rapport with caregivers in a welcoming school environment and make use of culturally sensitive practices to communicate effectively (Garcia et al., 2016). These practices include assuming good intentions and inviting families to share about their cultures and traditions. Educators should also recognize the role that identity and cultural backgrounds may play in shaping relationships. Things to consider when making connections with families can include: What countries are your families from? What languages are spoken? Have your families experienced war or other traumatic events? Are there specific experiences in their lives that the school should know? We recommend districts provide training in effective communication strategies to support educators in this endeavor. Additionally, a district’s communication strategy should be regularly evaluated. This evaluation should include the identification of current communication strategies, assessment of their effectiveness for cross-cultural communication, and the determination of additional communication strategies that may be needed (Garcia et al., 2016).

Advocacy

Schools and districts can partner with families in more meaningful ways that go beyond traditional roles, thus giving them opportunities to be true advocates. **Family Advocacy is a process of engaging bilingual families as key decision makers in shaping activities and programs that promote student learning. Schools value diverse perspectives and shape positive bilingual identities.** Empowering families to become active participants in the planning process of school decisions where implementation of ideas is valued and welcomed is key. Educators should consider the kinds of decisions families can make and how teachers and schools can elicit and incorporate their input.

Family advocacy can include giving advisory and mentorship roles to families. Some examples of empowering families as advocates in their child’s education include involving them in parent focus groups, committees, and utilizing family feedback to inform decision making at all levels. Schools can create panels or committees with the purpose of addressing families’ questions and concerns, and for educating families on important information needed to navigate the school system (Breiseth et al., 2011). Ferlazzo and Hammond (2009) suggest that the purpose of organizing focus groups or committees with families playing a key role is to succeed and solve issues. The issue focused on should be specific and non-divisive, and should have a better than fifty percent chance of being successful (Ferlazzo & Hammond, 2009).

In one Illinois District, caregivers on a Bilingual Parent Advisory Committee assisted the district in reviewing grant applications and activities, organized Spanish classes for the community, reviewed assessment data, and organized school events (Yturriago, 2006). Ishimaru and Takahashi (2017) suggest that parent meetings can even be broken into smaller discussion

groups, with a leader selected for each group. These groups can be formed for the purpose of making decisions, such as selecting new reading programs or surveying families to get ideas and opinions about school programs and events.

School and district personnel should strive to include parents and caregivers as valuable team members with diverse perspectives to share. Educators should strive to learn from families' experiences and find out what they think will be valuable to future parents who are new to the community and the U.S. school system (Breiseth et al., 2011). Teams should be made up of individuals who reflect the diversity of the district to help ensure that a multitude of voices are represented (CDE, 2017). Practices such as translanguaging may encourage families to join in on decision making endeavors because they can draw upon their own, and other team members', linguistic resources to improve communication and understanding, and to help solve problems (Baker, 2011; Wei, 2018). **Using language as a resource allows families to be intellectually engaged and become active participants (Ruiz, 1984).** Additionally, district personnel who have roles in different programs, such as English Learner services, Title I intervention, and classroom and special education teachers, should be included to increase the likelihood that family engagement activities integrate into and across district initiatives (CDE, 2017). Family members who are encouraged to participate in advocacy roles can become parent leaders and can be a great resource for recruiting and mentoring additional parents to engage with the school, thus increasing participation among marginalized groups (Breiseth et al., 2011).

In one example, Rodela (2016) examined a preschool and parent education program in Oregon for Spanish-speaking children and their parents. Mothers of the preschoolers attended weekly workshops focused on literacy, culture, and family-school engagement. These mothers began as volunteers, then worked as teaching assistants or parent facilitators and some eventually became lead teachers (Rodela, 2016). In this example from Oregon, family leadership was nurtured from the beginning, therefore securing a major role for families in school leadership (Menken, 2017). Being in a school leadership role has had a positive impact on families' dealings with their own children as well. Furthermore, caregivers who are group leaders have helped bridge the gap between families and teachers at school. Many families have expressed that they feel more comfortable interacting first with families who are group leaders than interacting with school staff (Warren, Hong, Rubin, & Uy, 2009).

Empowering families through advocacy sends the message that their input is valued and is not simply a mechanism for approving of the decisions already made by school staff (Houk, 2005). It is important for educators to be aware that encouraging parent advocacy includes receiving feedback that can be difficult to take in, and this challenge may require some sensitivity and cross-cultural understanding (Breiseth et al., 2011). If this challenge is not addressed, it's possible that caregiver critiques of schooling could be silenced, and critical individuals might be viewed as troublemakers (Dyrness, 2009). One example to encourage family advocacy would be to have a greeter in front of the building each morning and afternoon, allowing for informal conversations and feedback from families. Another option would be to host topic-specific forums or discussion groups that address specific community concerns. Surveys and comment boxes that are easily accessible could be useful for those families wishing to express their views anonymously. Administrators should try to give families the support they need and discover ways to empower them to participate in the school and the broader community. Families can be the school's best allies (Auerbach, 2010).

When educators plan family engagement activities they should seek to partner with bilingual families during the planning process (McWayne, Melzi, Limlingan, & Schick, 2016).

When parents help to shape the events and programs that support their students they will be even more invested in seeing these efforts succeed (Breiseth et al., 2011). In the case when caregivers become leaders, their roles change. Instead of being in a role of stagnant passive receiver of knowledge, they can begin to help drive educational change and perhaps contribute to program development. Parents in leadership roles can help shape initiatives that truly reflect the concerns, needs, and values of emergent bilinguals and their families (Warren et. al, 2009).

Relationships

Few can argue the importance of establishing relationships between educators, students, and their families. **School relationships require establishing connections to build mutual trust and support between bilingual students, educators, and families.** Building relationships with students and their families includes important understandings on the part of educators. Teachers and administrators should have knowledge of the families they serve including an understanding, and value of, their language, backgrounds, and cultural traditions (Epstein & Salinas, 1992) and the necessary training in order to engage diverse families and communities (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Educators should recognize their families as a vital part of the school community (Epstein & Salinas, 1992). In addition, educators must also acknowledge that not all families are homogenous and will likely require different strategies to engage them in their child's education (Epstein & Salinas, 1992). Translanguaging, for example, can be a useful practice for accommodating the needs of diverse populations. Humans think beyond language itself and use other resources besides language to construct and communicate meaning such as feelings, experience, memory, gestures, expressions, images, and culture (Wei, 2018). Thus, translanguaging allows bilinguals to use creativity to comprehend and communicate as they break norms of linguistic behavior (Wei, 2018). Using flexible approaches like translanguaging may help families to feel valued and encourage their participation.

Epstein and Salinas (1992) researched different ways in which families and educators engage such as assisting with parenting skills development, two-way communication, volunteering at the school, participating in shared decision-making, supporting learning in the home, and coordinating community resources. The extent to which families choose to engage with their child's school is influenced by several factors including the caregiver's perspective of their role in the child's learning, the caregiver's self-perceptions about their ability to help the child be successful, and the opportunities the caregiver has to be involved in the child's school experience (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). These choices represent only some of the factors that shape family engagement levels, with other factors including but not limited to the cultural groups to which the family belongs, the gender to which the caregivers subscribe, the family's socioeconomic status, and the caregivers' workplace restrictions that may limit involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Schools should be engaging with families who have traditionally stayed on the side lines as well as families who expect regular and direct participation and communication. Flexibility and differentiation are needed for all the possible family situations and family expectations. Brainstorming ways around limitations is of utmost importance.

In spite of potential limitations, educators can encourage families to engage in their child's educational experience. Teachers and administrators should create a school environment and climate in which all families and students feel welcome (Epstein and Salinas, 1992). Educators should reach out in particular to individuals who have historically been less engaged

on campus to begin to create a bond of trust. Educators will have established trusting relationships with families when they build partnerships in culturally responsive ways, ensure families feel a sense of belonging at school, and collaboratively plan and carry out family engagement activities (CDE, 2017). It is important that educators establish relationships with students and families to better understand their needs, expectations, and motivations when it comes to education. These can differ greatly from family to family, and across cultures, socioeconomic status, and length of time in the United States, among other factors (Greenberg & Rodriguez, 2007).

When building relationships with families, it is important to be familiar with their cultural traditions. This will provide teachers a base from which to build upon their students' background knowledge, create educational opportunities for other students, and foster a sense of respect among students for their peers. This will also aid in avoiding miscommunication (Breiseth et al., 2011). When scheduling events, it is important to remember cultural or religious holidays. This can assist in preventing large numbers of students from missing important instructional time, exams, and school events (Breiseth et al., 2011). For example, in one California district, Back to School Night was scheduled on Rosh Hashanah, making participation difficult for one group of families. Oversights like this one can have a damaging effect on school-family relationships.

Educators can partner with families to coordinate and collaborate within their child's educational program including gaining clarity on the connection between school-based learning and learning that can be supported in the home (Greenberg & Rodriguez, 2007). When staff members build relationships with families through home visits and communicate in the family's preferred language, they can identify family strengths, needs, and interests regarding advocacy and leadership, as well as make families feel welcome and respected in the school community (Mapp, 2003). When planning a home visit it's important to set clear expectations for the reason of the visit, respect cultural norms of the home (e.g. covering your body or possibly being prepared to remove shoes) and to be encouraging and listen without taking notes. Upon departure consider giving the families information on upcoming school events (Ernst-Slavit & Mason, n.d.). Families and school staff should be equal partners. Trusting relationships between educators, students, and caregivers can positively impact family engagement by recruiting and organizing families to help and support the school, and can improve student learning by helping families create home environments that support their students (Epstein, 2010). Once positive relationships are built, families feel respected, cared for, and are better able to share their ideas and concerns (Auerbach, 2010), thus reinforcing their value to the community.

Engagement in Student Learning

The literature is clear that families are rooting for their children to succeed, but their engagement with schools can have even greater influence than encouragement alone. Family engagement has been shown to positively impact children's development in key areas including early literacy (Durand, 2011), language skills (Fantuzzo et al., 2004; Farver, et al., 2006; Raikes et al., 2006), social-emotional skills (Fantuzzo et al., 2004), and academic achievement (Jeynes, 2012; Lee & Bowen, 2006; LeFevre & Shaw, 2012; McWayne et al., 2008). For family engagement to have such positive effects it is important that methods for engaging families are integrated with student learning goals (CDE, 2017). Student learning outcomes are considerably improved when educators and families work in concert on meeting children's needs (McWayne et al., 2016; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Studies show the positive outcomes of family engagement on learning

can be achieved regardless of students' race, ethnicity, language, or socioeconomic status (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). However, if we are to close the opportunity/achievement gap, we must focus specifically on meeting the unique linguistic and cultural needs of historically underserved populations of emerging bilinguals with methods for teaching and engaging families that go beyond "good teaching for all" (de Jong & Harper, 2005).

To maximize the positive effects of family engagement on academic outcomes, methods for engaging families must be integrated with student learning goals (CDE, 2017). While student learning is backgrounded in many other frameworks for family engagement, student learning is at the core of the REEd Framework. Communication, Advocacy, and Relationships should be developed cohesively to work in *service of* Student Learning. **We view learning as the process of constructing new knowledge and practices by connecting to previous knowledge and practices, building up/on family and community ways of knowing and communicating.** It consists of making connections between prior and new knowledge, developing independent and critical thinking, and the ability to transfer knowledge to new and different contexts. Importantly, new language practices develop in relation to the language we already have (García, Johnson, Seltzer, & Valdés, 2017). Thus, facilitating opportunities for students to develop stronger connections between the home language and language of instruction is vital if we are to maximize learning. The ultimate goal of family engagement is to improve student learning, which may require a shift in thinking and practices around current family engagement endeavors. This shift entails going beyond traditional family engagement roles, such as volunteering in the classroom, and focuses instead on partnering with families to support their children's learning.

It's important for educators to understand and acknowledge that families and caregivers want their children to be successful, and are motivated to help them achieve academically (Mapp, 2003). Research shows that families understand that their own engagement with school matters for their child's chances at success (Mapp, 2003). Families provide their children with encouragement to do well in school and regularly convey the importance of a quality education (Mapp, 2003). Unfortunately, these and other engagement attempts often go unrecognized by educators, therefore resulting in missed opportunities to connect with families and build on these efforts (Mapp, 2003). Additionally, the desire to engage with school may be hindered by external circumstances that can act as barriers to engagement, such as a lack of access to multilingual services or misunderstandings of the U.S. educational system (Housel, 2020). Educators must make themselves aware of such barriers and partner with families to alleviate them.

Families can employ strategies that help build consistency between home and school (Mapp, 2003). Caregivers can support learning in many ways, such as assisting with homework and engaging in meaningful conversation with their children (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Mapp, 2003). It can be helpful for schools to support learning at home with curricular materials that bridge the home-school connection (Epstein, 2010). This connection can also be strengthened through school-home translanguaging practices. One such example is the language brokering students do for their families by helping to communicate school-related content in the home language (Alvarez, 2014). This practice helps students increase their literacy repertoires (Alvarez, 2014), and taking on the role of language broker has been shown to improve student test scores (Dorner, Orellana, & Li-Grining, 2007) and academic achievement (Acoach & Webb, 2004; Buriel, Perez, De Ment, Chavez, & Moran, 1998).

The connection between home and school can be further enhanced when educators incorporate the experiences of students and their families into their school day. Teachers can build on students' background knowledge to support their understanding of content and to foster

language development. Seeking students' background knowledge and cultural capital helps teachers maintain a climate of respect in the classroom and offers students opportunities to learn about and praise their own culture and that of their classmates (Gay, 2018; Breiseth et al., 2011). When students link old learning with new learning it's easier for students to retain the information in question. Families can help activate that background knowledge and gain insight into their children's strengths and weaknesses. Instructional approaches that support these efforts are those that view culture as an asset and incorporate multicultural information and resources across the curriculum (Gay, 2018). When educators acknowledge the legitimacy of students' cultural heritage, instruction can be more effective (Gay, 2018).

An important aspect of student learning is student identity. The way students see and position themselves (e.g. as smart or not, good at school or not) and their personal investment in learning are essential both to success in school and to the process of acquiring another language in particular (Norton, 2000; Peirce, 1995). Drawing on Fielding and Harbon (2013), we define "bilingual identity" as seeing oneself as part of a community who uses two languages in meaningful ways, shaping the way individuals see themselves, think, communicate, and understand the world. In one study, Fielding and Harbon (2013) found elementary students' individual and life experiences contributed to their bilingual and bicultural identities. However, data indicated students were less likely to identify as bilingual than bicultural. In a study of first-graders, García-Mateus and Palmer (2017) found that students' bilingual identity was co-constructed through linguistic interactions between teachers and students, and Flores Banuelos and Banes (in press) found that creating opportunities for students and families to discuss and share their ideas about what it means to be bilingual contributed to kindergartners' positive self-perception. Providing students and families opportunities to reflect on, share, and better understand their emerging ideas about bilingualism allows students to validate their own linguistic experiences and those of others.

Importantly, these studies show that it is possible for classroom teachers to create learning experiences in which students and their families examine, shift, and co-develop positive bilingual identities. Further, because school is the primary place in which societies negotiate what counts as knowledge, who may define and display knowledge, and in which language (Heller & Martin-Jones, 2001), teachers have a responsibility to consider how their interactions with students and families may directly or indirectly impact students' bilingual identities, and to act with intentionality. Thus, the ways educators engage with families and in what language, as well as the ways home language and language practices are welcomed, valued, and discussed in school, should intentionally create opportunities for students to learn about and develop their own bilingual identity.

Family engagement leads to positive benefits for students, caregivers, and schools, including improved academic performance and improved family-teacher relationships. Students whose caregivers were involved in school during their elementary years experienced lower rates of high school dropout, were more likely to complete high school on time, and had higher grades (Barnard, 2004). It is clear that when strong family engagement is present, the result is increased student learning. In order for family-school partnerships to succeed, the adults responsible for children's education must learn and expand their thinking, just as they support learning and growth among students.

With student learning as the center of the REEd Framework, we aim to support schools and teachers in leveraging the rich linguistic and cultural knowledge of students and families in service of learning.

Conclusion

Positive family engagement can be a driving force for student success, particularly among bilingual families. When families are given the opportunity to be active participants in their school communities, the result is increased student learning and overall student success. Giving families a voice empowers them to make decisions and take an active role in their child's education. School districts can use the REEd Framework to foster and sustain family engagement and strengthen relationships, communication practices, and opportunities for family advocacy. All stakeholders should commit to establishing and maintaining family-school partnerships for the benefit of all students, and leveraging the REEd Framework and associated resources is a first step in this direction.

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