

Empowering the Immigrant Family as Partners in Education – What You Need to Know

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Goals

- ▶ Learning about your immigrant population.
- ▶ Cultural factors to consider.
- ▶ What can be done to make them feel welcomed and partake of the educational system.
- ▶ Q & A

Introductions

- Name
- Title
- District
- Immigrant populations in your district

Learning & Understanding Your Immigrant Population

I Learn America



“The heart is over there and the body is over here.”

Statistics

Nassau

- ▶ Of foreign born individuals
50.2% are from Latin America
30.7% from Asia
15.9% from Europe

Suffolk

- ▶ Of foreign born individuals
58.1% are from Latin America
20.6% from Asia
18.1% from Europe

Prepared by the New York Office for New Americans using 2015 American Community Survey 5-year estimates.

Statistics

cont.

Nassau

Top 5 Languages of Limited English Proficiency Individuals

1. Spanish
2. Chinese
3. Italian
4. French Creole
5. Korean

27.9%

of Population Speak a Language
Other Than English at Home

Suffolk

Top 5 Languages of Limited English Proficiency Individuals

1. Spanish
2. Chinese
3. Polish
4. French Creole
5. Italian

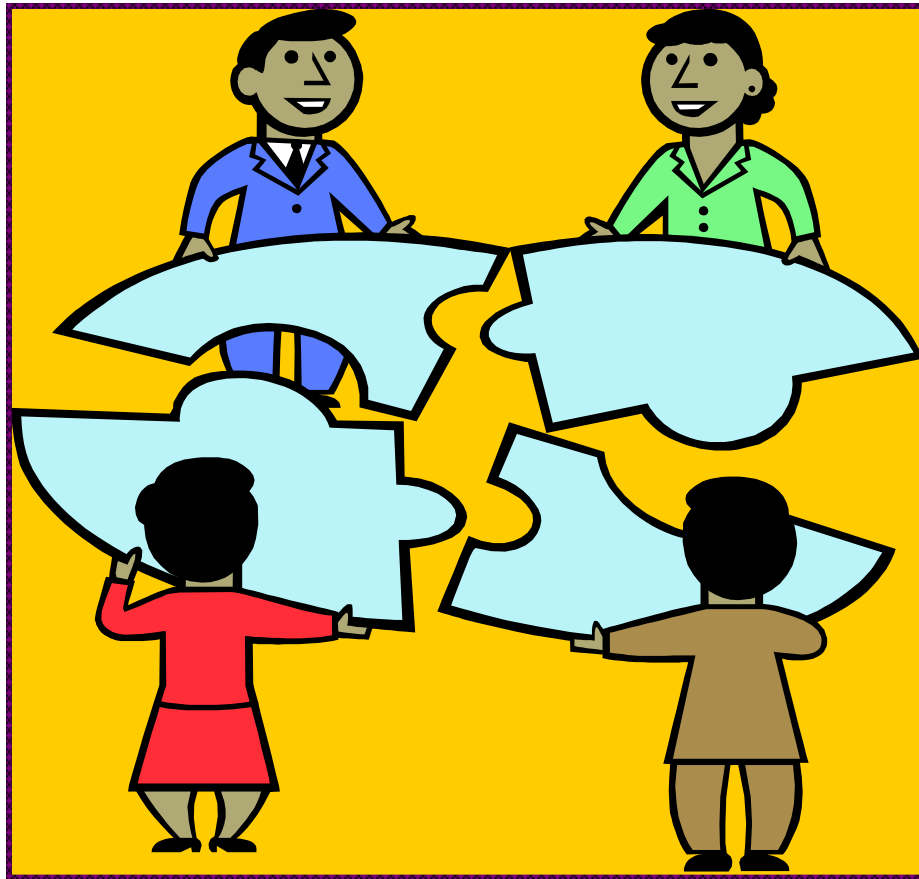
22%

of Population Speak a Language
Other Than English at Home

Prepared by the New York Office for New Americans using 2015 American Community Survey 5-year estimates.

“BE WHERE THE
IMMIGRANT PARENTS
ARE AT”

Families are Like a Puzzle



Parents

Aunts/
Uncles

Children

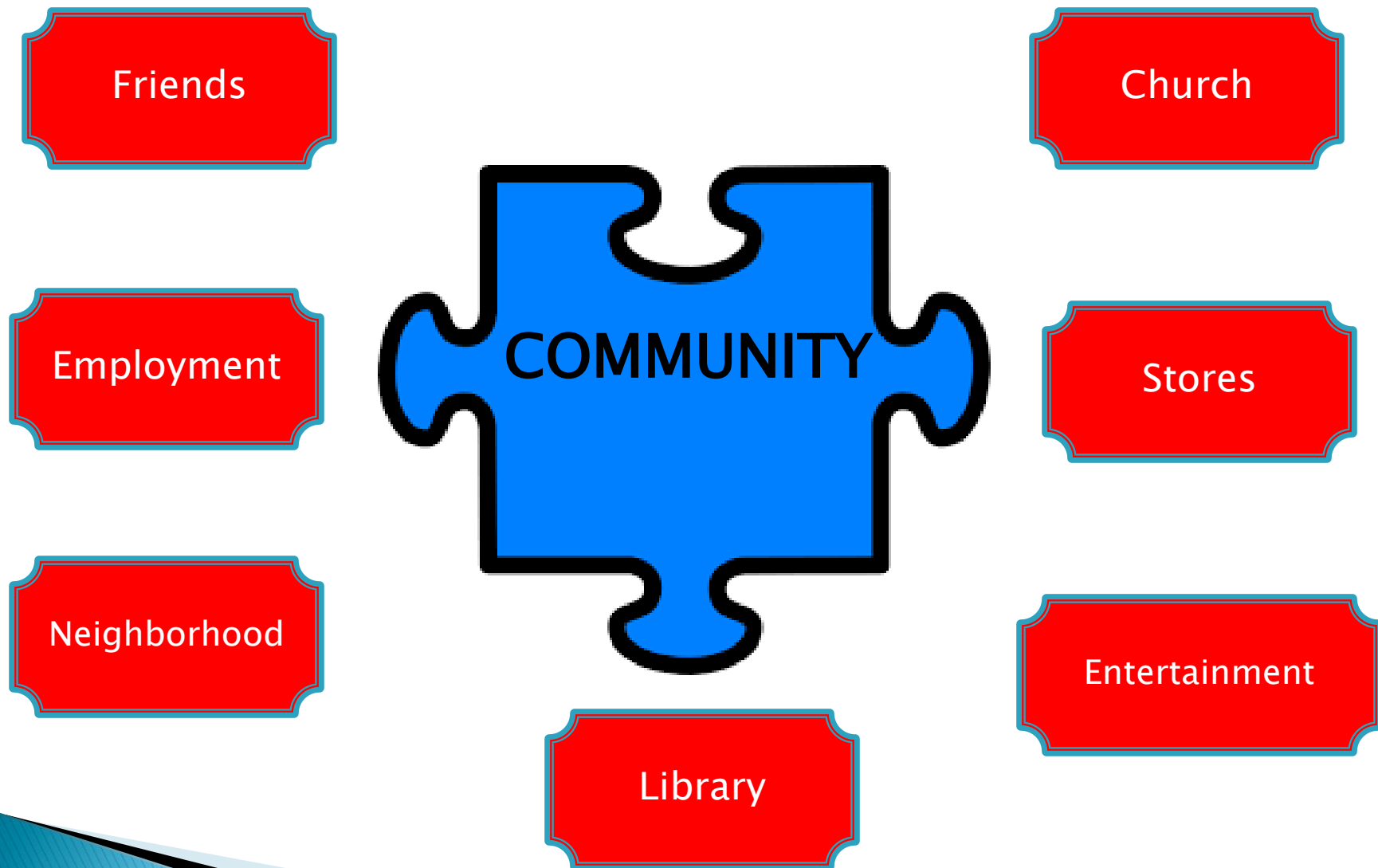
Cousins

Family

Grandparents

Step-
parents

Step-
children



Language

Child-rearing

Food

Beliefs

Music

Idioms

Culture

Dress

Teachers

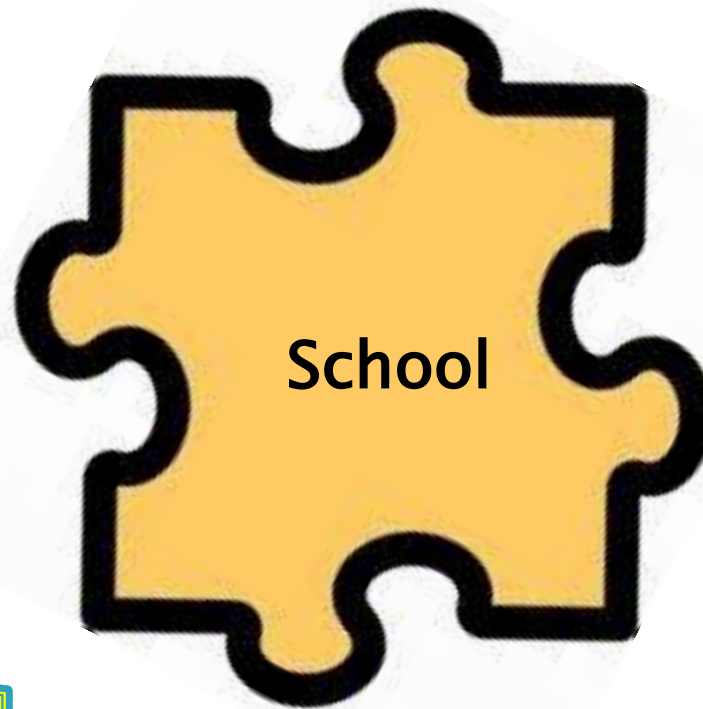
Directors

Learning

Students

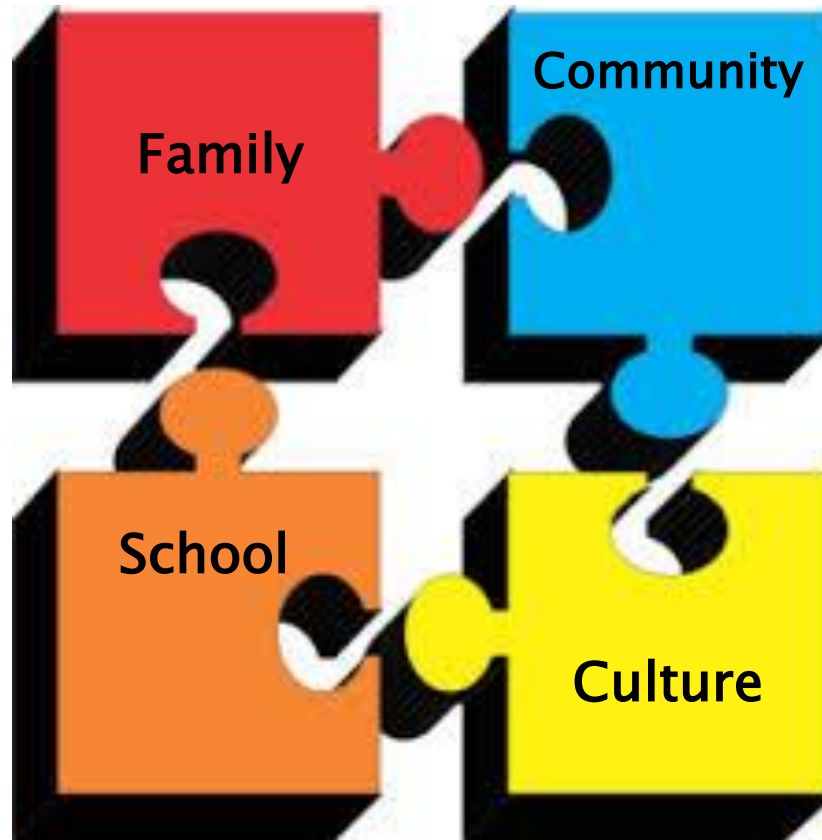
Behavior

Tests

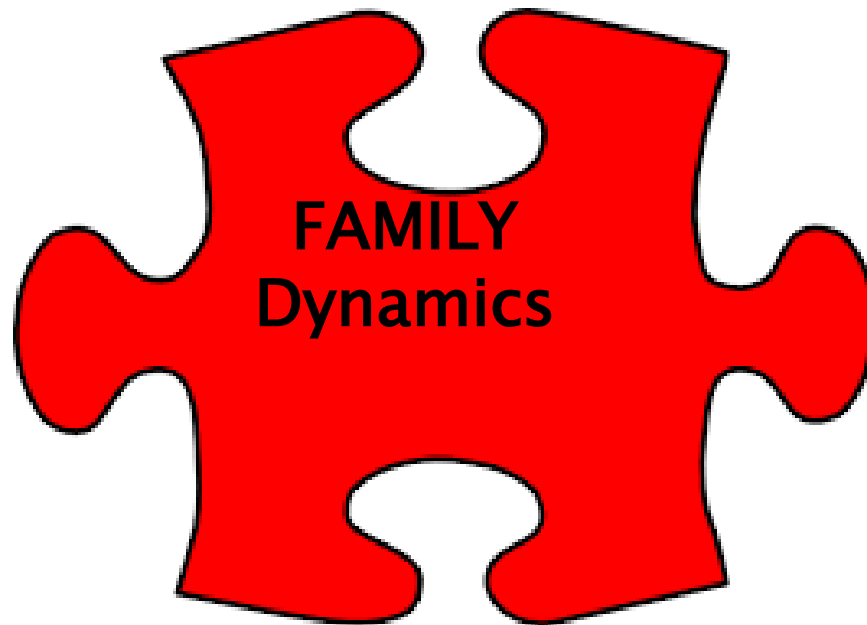


Homework

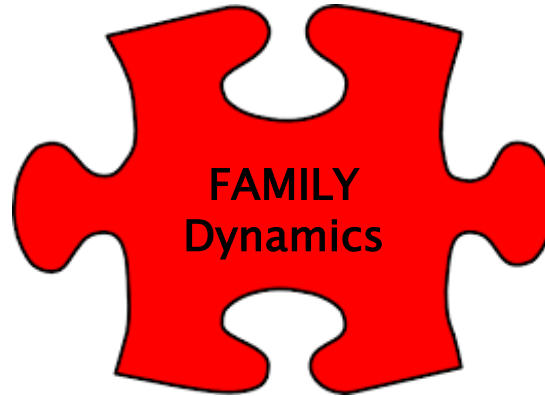
The Immigrant Family



Understanding the Immigrant Family



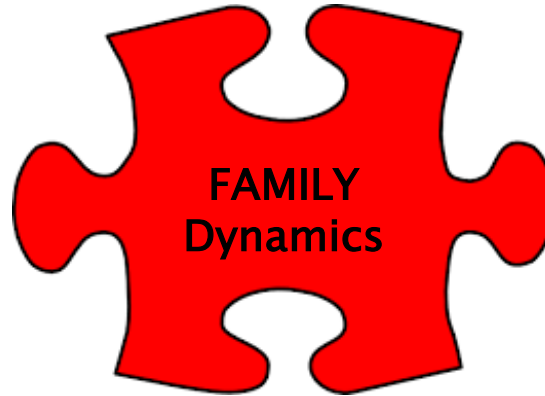
Understanding the Immigrant Family



Possible Challenges:

- Separation / reunification of family members
- How is everyone adjusting?
- Marital status
- Are both parents working?
- Child care issues
- Educational level of parents
- How long have they been here?

Understanding the Immigrant Family



Possible Challenges:

- Changes in socioeconomic status
- Acculturation level of family members
- Traumatic stress
- Dealing with memories of war, torture
- Identity crisis for family members that can lead to emotional distress.

Understanding the Immigrant Family



What do you know about their community?

Understanding the Immigrant Family



What do you know about their community?

Community resources:

- Is there is large community or limited community?
- Do they have a social network support system?
- Do they feel welcomed or discriminated against?
- Do community stores reflect their culture?
- Are there churches that meet their spiritual needs?

Understanding the Immigrant Family



What should you know about their culture?

Understanding the Immigrant Family



What should you know about their culture?

- Language spoken
- Values
- Child-rearing practices
- Power structure
- Beliefs
- View of American culture & education
- How they honor their culture

Cultural Bereavement

Most if not all immigrants experience this but adults feel it more intensely and for a longer duration.

Nine Cultural **Assumptions** School Liaisons May Make

1. The concept of "normal" is universal.
2. The goal of engaging is to support individual growth and development.
3. School liaisons know all they need to know to understand the client.

Nine Cultural Assumptions Liaisons Make

4. Clients understand linguistic abstractions, like fairness, truth, justice, good and evil.
5. Independence is desirable and dependence is not.
6. People with problems are assisted more by formal (professional) counseling than by informal support systems (family, friends).

Nine Cultural Assumptions Liaisons Make

7. Liaisons need to help the individual adapt to social/ educational institutions.
8. Here and now is more important than historical background.
9. We already know our biases and culturally learned assumptions.

Cultural Differences & Communications

Listening and speaking are universal.

1. Communication styles and patterns, including body language which may differ from culture to culture. With most second language learners you need to **give them time to process the information, to think and develop their response.**
2. Listen attentively and understand that some will nod their heads, some will not respond, some will say, “Yes, yes” but are they really understanding?

Cultural Differences & Communication

Cont.

3. Direct eye contact maybe different.
4. Personal space.
5. Family decision-making process?
6. Break things done into smaller chunks to make it easier for them to understand.

It is impossible for you to know everything about another culture but be attuned to their body language and facial gestures. If you sense that they reacted negatively to something you said, ask questions, explore for understanding.

Cultural Differences

Cont.

How is the concept of time different, if any?

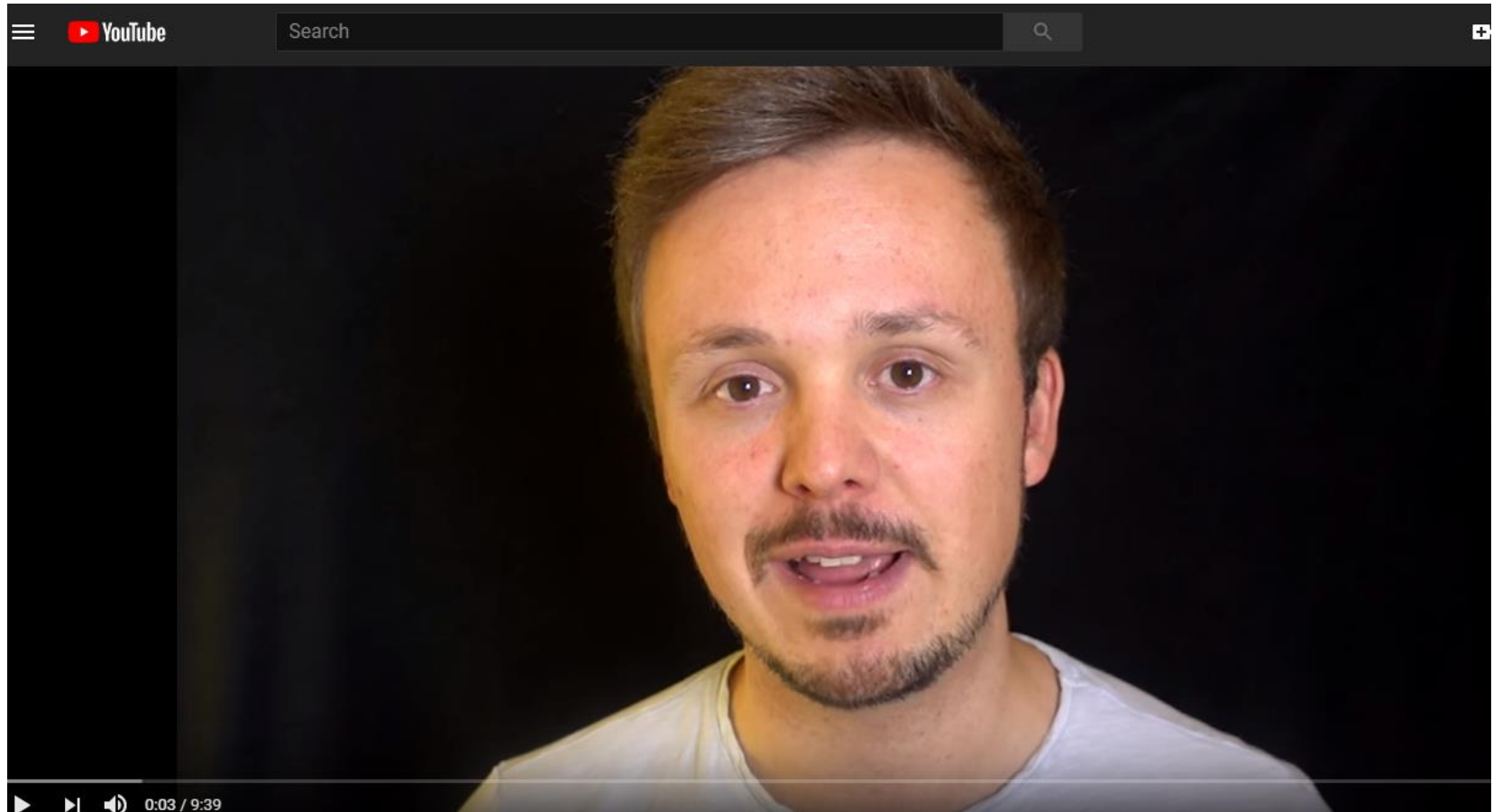
Cultural Differences & Communication

Cont.

The Use of Cultural Broker

- ❖ A person who is totally bilingual and bicultural and can help bridge the gaps between the school and home.
- ❖ They are more than just interpreter but also a mediator.
- ❖ ENL teachers, parent liaisons, school social workers, psychologist, etc.
- ❖ They can be the broker between the child and parents as the child becomes more Americanized.

Weird American Customs



Understanding the Immigrant Family



What do they know about the school system?

Understanding the Immigrant Family



What do they know about the school system:

- Does anyone speak their language?
- Do schools here have the same expectations as schools in their native country?
- What is the Code of Conduct?
- What grade is passing?
- Homework policy?
- What is parent involvement and how much is expected?
- Who should they contact with any questions? Who's in charge?
- How does lunch work, etc.?

What Can Be Done to Engage Immigrant Families

“Parent Involvement” vs. “Parent Engagement”

Becoming the Bridge



CONNECTING WITH ENL FAMILIES

Areas to Cover

1. Learn about your ENL population
2. Create a welcoming environment for families
3. Make a personal connection with families
4. Integrate cultural traditions of your ENL families throughout the school
5. Show that you value families' native language

CONNECTING WITH ENL FAMILIES

1. Learn about your ENL population

- ❖ Find out the numbers of countries being served from administrators.
- ❖ Do a Google search on the culture.
- ❖ Find out about authority roles.
- ❖ Find out what holidays are important to them.
- ❖ Never generalize that all are the same from the same country.

CONNECTING WITH ENL FAMILIES

2. Create a welcoming environment for families

- ❖ Communicate important information in native language.
- ❖ Post signs in multiple languages.
- ❖ Display student work on the walls.
- ❖ Display student and family photos on the walls.

CONNECTING WITH ENL FAMILIES

2. Create a welcoming environment for families (cont.)

- ❖ Make sure parents know how to get into the building, especially if doors are usually locked during the school day.
- ❖ Display the maps and flags of your students' native countries.
- ❖ Display a large map in the front lobby where parents can mark their native countries with a pin.

CONNECTING WITH ENL FAMILIES

2. Create a welcoming environment for families (cont.)

- ❖ Enlist a bilingual morning greeter to welcome students and families.
- ❖ Ensure that your bilingual staff and volunteers are visible throughout the building.
- ❖ Create a parent room (such as a lounge or classroom) with bilingual information and magazine subscriptions, a bulletin board, a lending library, and a computer.
- ❖ Have community resource information available.

CONNECTING WITH ENL FAMILIES

2. Create a welcoming environment for families (cont.)

- ❖ Include bilingual books in the school library and classrooms.
- ❖ Consider playing music in the front entryway or lobby.
- ❖ Encourage teachers to create a welcoming environment within the classrooms.

CONNECTING WITH ENL FAMILIES

3. Make a personal connection with families

- ❖ Hold a special back-to-school event or picnic for ENL families in which they have time to meet you, other school leaders, their children's teachers, and school staff.
- ❖ Create a welcome Brochure or DVD in multiple languages. This may even be a great student project!
- ❖ Provide staff the opportunity to learn some common phrases in your families' languages, as well as cultural gestures.

CONNECTING WITH ENL FAMILIES

3. Make a personal connection with families (cont.)

- ❖ Visit local neighborhoods to meet families.
- ❖ Connect new families with a contact person who speaks their language as soon as they enroll in the school for guidance and information.
- ❖ Create an “ambassador” program in which students and parents are trained to give tours.

CONNECTING WITH ENL FAMILIES

3. Make a personal connection with families (cont.)

Ask what they need and how the school
can do things differently.

Ask them if there are any workshops
they would be interested in attending.

CONNECTING WITH ENL FAMILIES

4. Integrate cultural traditions of your ENL families throughout the school

- ❖ Schedule around important cultural or religious holidays.
- ❖ Incorporate cultural displays year long.
- ❖ Have an “**International Night**” where they can take pride in sharing their food, dance, indigenous outfits or native dress, etc .

CONNECTING WITH ENL FAMILIES

4. Integrate cultural traditions of your ENL families throughout the school (cont.)
 - ❖ Avoid scheduling important events such as conferences or tests on major holidays and celebrations that large numbers of students are likely to miss.
 - ❖ Share these dates with the entire staff.
 - ❖ Share information about cultural celebrations with teachers so that they are able to positively support them and incorporate them into lessons.

CONNECTING WITH ENL FAMILIES

4. Integrate cultural traditions of your ENL families throughout the school (cont.)

- ❖ Even a simple memo that explains why students will be out and offers some ideas for follow-up activities will be helpful.
- ❖ Encourage teachers to start with children's books, which often have background information and activities, such as these titles about Ramadan, Chinese New Year, and Día de los muertos.
- ❖ Learn about, recognize, and celebrate special events or holidays throughout the school.

CONNECTING WITH ENL FAMILIES

4. Integrate cultural traditions of your ENL families throughout the school (cont.)

- ❖ Invite parents to share food, activities, and music at school events and in the classroom.
- ❖ Encourage students to share traditions in school assemblies, talent shows, potlucks, and fairs.
- ❖ Be mindful that students who are fasting may be less energetic in the afternoon. If possible, avoid school-wide parties or food-centered activities during these times.

Three Families Journey



7:34

Immigrant families are the “Epitome of Resiliency”

With support, understanding and acceptance, they
not only survive but they thrive.

Resources

Services for Newly Arrived Immigrant Children and Families Resource & Referral Guide By Long Island WINS

Contact : Maryann Slutsky, Executive
Director

516 333-7331 or mslutsky@longislandwins.com

- Advocacy
- Basic Needs
- Child & Family Welfare
- Education
- Faith-Based Services
- Health & Dental
- Mental Health
- Legal

Resources

A Guide for Engaging ELL Families: Twenty Strategies for School Leaders

Written for Colorín Colorado
by Lydia Breiseth Manager, Colorín Colorado
with Kristina Robertson and Susan Lafond
August 2011

Getting to Know Our Families' Cultural and Social Assets: The View from Dearborn, MI

By [Nadra Shami](#)
(2017)

I am only one....

**“I am only one, but still I am one.
I cannot do everything,
but still I can do something;
And because I cannot do everything
I will not refuse to do the
something that I can do.”**

Edward Everett Hale (1822-1909)

On behalf of immigrant youth & their families
who have inspired me to do this work,

Muchisimas Gracias