

# Connecting Families and Schools

**An assessment tool for educators  
working with culturally and  
linguistically diverse students**

The Countywide Working Group for  
Latino Student Success

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with School District Representatives from  
Portland, Reynolds, Gresham-Barlow, Centennial, Parkrose,  
David Douglas, and Multnomah Educational Service District

## **Family involvement is crucial to the success of all students**

Families whose home language is not English face larger obstacles than most in order to become involved in their child's education. This tool was developed using research based best practices on the importance of family involvement for students for whom English is not their home language.

### **The tool is versatile**

The assessment can be completed by individual teachers or administrators or by staff working as a group. There are at least three suggested uses for the tool: as an evaluative measure, as a guide to improving family involvement, and finally and perhaps most significantly, **to promote reflection and discussion among staff.**

### **Connecting Families and Schools has been endorsed by the following parent and community groups:**

The Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO)  
The African Community Center of Oregon (ACCO)  
The Latino Network and the Concilio for Latino Education (CLE)  
The Slavic Coalition  
The Portland Schools Alliance  
Community and Parents for Public Schools (CPPS)

# I. Preconditions for Family Involvement: School Staff and School Environment

	Yes		No	
	In Place	Could Improve	Could Do It	Not Possible Now
<b>School Staff:</b>				
1. Understand the importance of the family's role in their child's education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Understand the customs and cultural history of immigrant families	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Recognize the strengths of families raising children under adverse circumstances	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Have personal contact with parents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Creating a welcoming environment</b>				
5. School signage is adequate, clear, and in multiple languages	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. All staff can access language interpreters in person or by phone on the spot	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. School invites new parents to visit the school before the start of the year, meet the teachers, view the classrooms etc	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Staff is welcoming to parents and helpful in directing them where they need to go	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Family members are actively encouraged to visit and/or volunteer in the class, especially in primary grades	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Family members are invited to join their child for meals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. School displays reflect the diversity and multi-culturalism of the student population	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**For the following items, please rate your school's engagement as either basic, advanced, or excellent:**

12. Staff Trainings on Cultural Competency
  - \_\_\_ **Basic:** Staff trainings and discussions at the start of each year during a regular staff meeting
  - \_\_\_ **Advanced:** two or more staff trainings a year on cultural competency
  - \_\_\_ **Excellent:** In addition to ongoing training, staff uses self-reflective tools on a regular basis to identify potential for cultural bias
13. Contact Between Teachers and Families
  - \_\_\_ **Basic:** Families are invited in their home language to attend back-to-school night and parent teacher conferences
  - \_\_\_ **Advanced:** Teachers have a minimum of one face to face with the family of each of their students
  - \_\_\_ **Excellent:** Teachers have multiple in-person contacts with family members
14. Parent Notification of Important Meetings
  - \_\_\_ **Basic:** Families are notified of important meetings in writing
  - \_\_\_ **Advanced:** Families are notified of important meetings in writing in their home language
  - \_\_\_ **Excellent:** In addition to written notification in their home language, parents receive a follow-up phone reminder
15. Parents as Classroom Volunteers
  - \_\_\_ **Basic:** Family members are informed in home language of how/when they can volunteer in their child's class
  - \_\_\_ **Advanced:** Family members are actively recruited to volunteer in their child's class
  - \_\_\_ **Excellent:** Family members who volunteer are provided with some training and an appropriate role in the classroom

## II. Familiarizing Families with the System: How Do Schools Work?

	Yes		No	
	In Place	Could Improve	Could Do It	Not Possible Now
<b>Orienting Families on an On-Going Basis</b>				
16. School staff develops regular community contacts to communicate important information to families, including housing complexes, stores, libraries and radio	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. Principal hosts informal gatherings and invites new and existing families	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. School holds orientation in appropriate languages at the beginning of the year and throughout, which explain:				
a. How families can access a person who speaks their language when they want to communicate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. How and when families can communicate with teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. School schedule and critical dates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Absence and tardy policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Specifics on how to register their child for sports and other activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. When to expect report cards and how to interpret them	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. The role and contact information for counselors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. Behavior policies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. Testing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. Dress codes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. Vaccinations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. New families are paired with more established families for mentoring	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. Principals make themselves available to parent meetings as requested	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

For the following item, please rate your school's engagement as either basic, advanced, or excellent

21. Parent/Family Orientation

\_\_\_\_\_ **Basic:** orientation information is in the family's home language, is mailed to each family and they are actively encouraged to attend a one-time orientation meeting

\_\_\_\_\_ **Advanced:** the orientation is done in person at the start and middle of the year and outreach to families is active and culturally appropriate

\_\_\_\_\_ **Excellent:** Orientation and informational meetings are held in appropriate language on a regular basis and outreach is active and culturally appropriate

### III. Families as Partners: Involving Families in Student Learning

	Yes		No	
	In Place	Could Improve	Could Do It	Not Possible Now
<b>Parent/Teacher Conferences</b>				
22. Teachers arrange a family conference early in the year to learn about the child, to orient the parent to classroom policies, and to share academic information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23. Sufficient numbers of language translators (not children) are available for non-English speaking parents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24. Language appropriate childcare is available	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25. Teachers establish method for families to communicate directly with teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26. Families participate with teacher in helping children set academic goals each year	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**For the following item, please rate your school's engagement as either basic, advanced, or excellent**

27. Parent/teacher conferences:  
 \_\_\_\_\_ **Basic:** conference is scheduled and a written notification in the family's home language is sent home  
 \_\_\_\_\_ **Advanced:** Each parent receives a phone call, in the family's home language, to schedule the appointment  
 \_\_\_\_\_ **Excellent:** If a parent does not come into the conference, the teacher either conducts a phone conference or makes a home visit with an interpreter if necessary

#### On-Going Family Involvement in Academics

28. Principals and teachers regularly send home:				
a. Notes to celebrate successes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Folders of completed student to be reviewed regularly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Specifics about how to create a positive learning environment at home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
29. Teachers distribute a homework log to families with instructions in the family's home language on how to help their child with homework (Family level of involvement may range from sitting with the child while he/she works to actually assisting the child)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
30. Classrooms produce bilingual newsletters for families on a regular basis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
31. A school representative (this may include community partners) visits the home of all new elementary students and middle and high school students who are having problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## IV. Parents as Leaders in Education: Developing Leadership Skills in Family Members

	Yes		No	
	In Place	Could Improve	Could Do It	Not Possible Now
<b>Provide Access to Tools Families Need to Help Their Children (may involve collaboration w/ community partners)</b>				
32. Create and promote learning opportunities for families in the school: e.g. ESL, computer, and/or in home language literacy classes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
33. Offer and promote family involvement classes using evidence based curriculum such as “Parents as Partners” to increase familial knowledge of: educational systems, school expectations, social/emotional development of children, and how families can support education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Provide Leadership Opportunities and Training</b>				
34. Offer culturally appropriate leadership training classes for family members	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
35. Actively recruit immigrant family members to participate in leadership roles in the school, and provide:				
a. interpretation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. childcare	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. mentoring	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Please complete the following identifying information:

- The tool was completed by:  An individual staff person  
 Group of staff  
 \_\_\_\_\_

### Please complete the following evaluation information:

	Yes		No	
	In Place	Could Improve	Could Do It	Not Possible Now
Please review the tool and total the number of checks in the following categories:	_____	_____	_____	_____
Please review the tool and total the number of checks in each of the engagement categories:	Basic _____	Advanced _____	Excellent _____	