



Embracing Equity: *Building Authentic Relationships with Families*

Building trusting and authentic relationships between families and educators is a critical practice in order for children to flourish and thrive in their educational environment. This can be done by fostering a view of family engagement that centers families and communities, draws on their wisdom and funds of knowledge, prioritizes the building of trusting relationships, and challenges power imbalances through shared leadership.

Connect Early and Often

Get in touch with families before the school year begins and prioritize relationship building. Use these conversations to gain insight about your students' strengths, areas of growth, and lives outside of school as well as the families own hope and fears. Additionally, ensure you have the correct spelling and pronunciation of the names of children and families as well as up to date and preferred methods of communication.

Recognize Key Relationships

The central figures in your students' lives may stretch beyond the legal guardians listed in the school's paperwork. When connecting with families at the beginning of the year, be sure to ask if there are any other adults who should be included in the email/text list for updates and information.

Use Inclusive Terminology and Materials

All communication should be critically analyzed for assumptions about household resources, family traditions, cultural practices, political affiliations or other life circumstances (for example, consider using "families" vs. "parents" or "mom and dad"). Furthermore, be mindful of word choices and avoid using jargon and/or unidentified acronyms to avoid communications that reflect power over partnership.

Use Home Languages

Family materials should be provided in students' home languages. When translation is needed, a school-provided translator should be employed. *Be especially mindful that you are not implicitly neglecting to connect as frequently with families with whom you do not share a first language.*

Pictures are Worth a Thousand Words

- Snap pictures (with consent) of your students' joyful engagement on the first day of school and send it via text or email to their families before the day ends — this can build trust and help to ease a families' first day jitters.
- Frame pictures of children and their families throughout the classroom or create a photo album in the class library — families can share pictures or you can use pics from Open House or Back to School events at the beginning of the year.