

Engaging Families and Using Community Resources to Strengthen Relationships

2021 WASA/OSPI New Director Preconference
Scott Raub, Special Education Family & Community Liaison



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

July 23, 2021

OSPI Special Education Family & Community Liaison

- Serve as point of contact for families and community members with questions about how special education process works
- Offer guidance on formal dispute resolution options and other special education procedural safeguards
- Offer guidance on working productively with school districts and navigating the public education system
- Serve as point of contact for Non-Public Agencies (NPAs) and State Needs Projects (SNPs) and partners
- Does **not** attend IEP meetings, conduct investigations, mediation, or provide legal assistance



The Challenge for Special Education : Blending Involvement with Engagement

Focus on what school personnel need to move beyond parent participation/involvement towards more meaningful and authentic engagement with families

“Even though many educators are aware of the value of family engagement, they may lack training in how to go about it, particularly when trying to involve families in the daily instructional or Individualized Education Program (IEP) process. [...] Strong home–school partnerships based on ongoing dialogue and engagement can help alleviate many of the concerns of both families of children with disabilities and educators.”

*[Family Engagement and Children with Disabilities: A Resource Guide for Educators and Parents](#),
Global Family Research Project (formerly with Harvard University - HFRP)*



The Challenge for Special Education : Blending Involvement with Engagement

Consider what parents and families need to become equitable partners in the special education process

“Without attention to training and capacity building, well-intentioned partnership efforts fall flat. Rather than promoting equal partnerships between parents and schools at a systemic level, these initiatives default to one-way communication and ‘random acts of engagement’ such as poorly attended parent nights. [...] The Framework reveals that, in order for family–school partnerships to succeed, the adults responsible for children’s education must learn and grow, just as they support learning and growth among students.”

[Partners in Education: A Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships](#)

Dr. Karen Mapp & Dr. Paul Kuttner



The Challenge for Special Education: Blending Involvement with Engagement

Involvement

- An act of inclusion or participation
- Doing something to or for someone
- Leading by talking/telling
- One-way communication

Engagement

- An act of commitment or partnered interest
- Doing something with someone
- Leading by listening
- Two-way conversation



The Challenge for Special Education : Blending Involvement with Engagement

Identifying ways to bridge gaps between educators and parents in order to build trust with one another

- [Person/Student-Centered Planning and IEP Meetings](#)
- Cultural Brokers

“Cultural brokers are individuals who act as bridges between schools and diverse families. [...] Reciprocal cultural brokering strategies involved building programs and supports driven by family needs, issues and priorities, rather than by educator assumptions about what parents should know and do.”

[Building Relationships Bridging Cultures](#) research brief by Dr. Kathryn Torres, Nathanie Lee, and Christine Tran
[Equitable Parent-School Collaboration](#), University of Washington

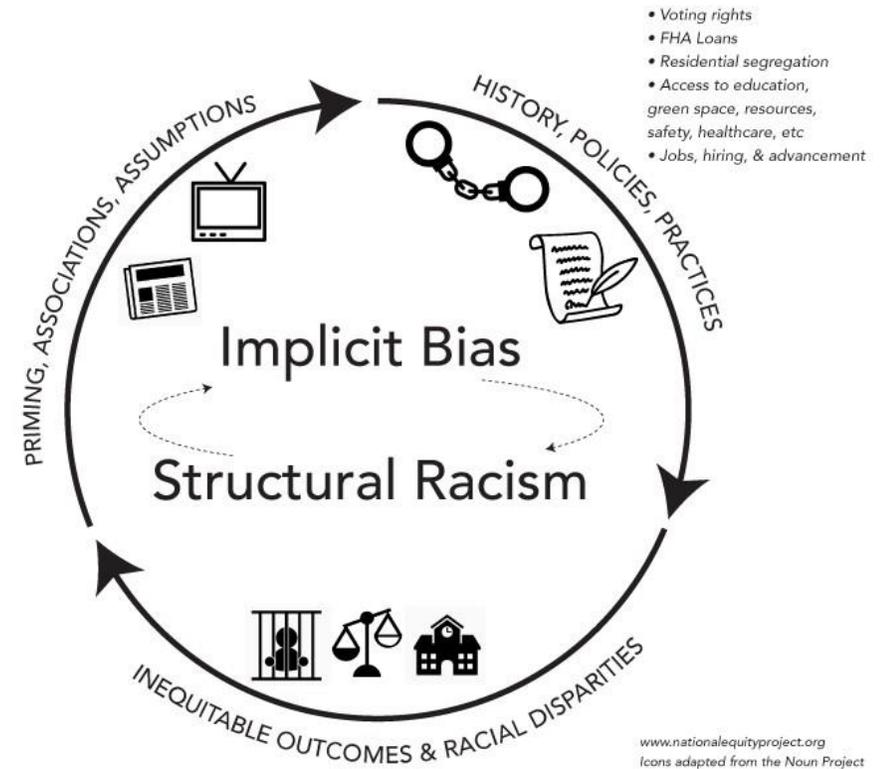


Adopting an Intersectional Approach

Intersectionality refers to the social, economic, and political ways in which identity-based systems of oppression and privilege connect, overlap, and influence one another ([Teaching Tolerance, 2016](#))

Consider how the Covid-19 pandemic has an impact on families with students receiving special education services

- Supporting home-based instruction
- Language access
- Access to technology
- Access to health care
- Access to childcare
- Access to postsecondary transition services
- Change/Loss of work and income
- Meeting basic living needs



<https://medium.com/national-equity-project/implicit-bias-structural-racism-6c52cf0f4a92>



Beliefs Survey

How much do you agree with the following statements? Select one answer for each statement.
Answer as honestly as you can... all responses will be anonymous.

| | | | | | |
|----|---|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| 1. | All families have dreams for their children and want the best for them. | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
| 2. | All families have the capacity to support their children's learning. | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
| 3. | Families and school/program staff should be equal partners. | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
| 4. | The responsibility for sustaining and building partnerships between school, home, and community rests primarily with school/program staff, especially school/program leaders. | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |

Source: Ron Mirr, Scholastic, rmirr@scholastic.com, 319-430-4315



Engagement Through the Lens of Equity

Examine your current practices and consider:

- Does your process tend toward doing to or doing with families?
- Does the staff do more talking or more listening?
- Is the emphasis on one-way communication or on two-way conversation?
- What values does your process reflect and represent?
- Is your vision for special education services confined to school grounds or buildings, or does this vision encompass equitable outcomes across the entire district and/or community?



Resources for Continuous Learning/Thought about Family Engagement

- Website: [Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships \(Version 2\)](#)
- CADRE Webinar: [To Trust or Not to Trust? Understanding the Science of Developing and Nurturing Trust in Family-Professional Partnerships](#) (August 26, 2021; 11:30am-12:45pm PST)
- Report: [Family Engagement Framework Workgroup](#)



If you ever start to feel overwhelmed, know that you are not alone...

Q3 What information do you need to feel most prepared to begin your new position?

RESPONSES

Priorities to focus on within the first few months of the job

Relationship building and developing a culture of change.

Tricks of the trade ... relationships, communication, priorities ...

It's easy to become overwhelmed with advice-fatigue. The most important things for me are around the must-dos and the who-to-contact when questions arise.



If you ever start to feel overwhelmed, know that you are not alone...

Q3 What information do you need to feel most prepared to begin your new position?

RESPONSES

This is hard. I think the one thing I need to be most prepared is confidence. I'm not quite sure what to expect around finance especially so I have some anxiety there.

All of it

More information on leveraging finances for maximum effectiveness.

The network or "village" I have started to create...



Five Things to Remember About You as a New(er) Special Education Director

5. You Start This Journey at the Beginning of Wherever You Are Right Now
4. You Lead by Your Example
3. You Do Not Need to Know Everything
2. You Are Not Alone
1. You Got This ... Trust Yourself



