

School & Community Engagement

Establishing optimal
relationships between
educators, parents and students
through dialogue

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“Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers. The teacher is no longer the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow.”

Paulo Freire

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- Establishing Rapport/Alliance: Dialogue!
 - Invite Trust
 - Show Genuine Interest
 - Cultivate Empathy
 - Nurture the Relationship
 - Commit to Open Communication

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- Common challenges faced by educators connecting with culturally diverse students and their families:
 - Language Barrier
 - Cultural Illiteracy
 - Shyness vs. Prejudice
 - Communication Deficits

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- **Courage to overcome language barriers:**

Invite trust by showing effort to communicate

- 1) Model appropriate and respectful communication with the parental figure.
- 2) Utilize technological resources such as translation applications for mobile communication devices.

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- **Curiosity can overcome cultural illiteracy:**

Inform yourself: Become a teacher-student!

- 1) Show genuine interest about your student's language and culture. It only takes a few minutes to research your student's cultural and linguistic background.
- 2) **BEWARE** of stereotypes! Educators, like most human beings, often respond to students and their families based on prevalent cultural biases in the dominant culture.

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- Overcoming stereotypes:

Empathy leaves no room for biases

- 1) Under “stereotype threat” the fight, flight, freeze mechanism is activated and the capacity to think clearly vanishes.
- 2) Creating a safe environment for positive interactions foster mutual learning. Both sides can benefit from open-hearted exchanges, paved with mutual respect.

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- Shyness vs. Prejudice:

Commit to communication – become a teacher-student!

- 1) “I don’t know” versus “I know exactly what is going on...”
- 2) Becoming aware of automatic responses fueled by blind assumptions: Sometimes a negative past experience can unfairly obscure a new situation.
- 3) Beginner mindset: new situations present new opportunities for learning about different individuals within the same culture.

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- Communication Deficits:

Empathic attunement

- 1) Listen with intent – use reflective listening tools.
- 2) Refrain from giving advice. Give examples of how “sometimes students often succeed when...” or “families usually improve communication when...”
- 3) Patience-acceptance: Keep kindness in mind!

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“Dialogue cannot exist, however, in the absence of a profound love for the world and for people.”

Paulo Freire