

TRANSCRIPT

Structuring Meaningful Home-School Partnerships With Families of Young English Learner (EL) Students

PRESENTERS Maria Paredes, WestEd
 Linda Espinosa, University of Missouri
 Melanie Packham, WestEd

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[Title Slide: *Structuring Meaningful Home-School Partnerships With Families of Young English Learner (EL) Students*]

ERIC HAAS

Welcome everyone. We are very happy that you could be here, especially those of you who are on the East Coast where it's much closer to dinner time than it is here in California. [Slide: *Goals for the webinar*] I want to start out by giving an overview of the goals and the general agenda that you're going to see and participate in today. First of all, during this webinar you're going to learn about three main things: about the foundations of effective partnerships between school and home that can enhance the learning and language development of young English learners. We're also going to have discussion on academic and linguistic skills and the dispositions that students need to succeed in school, and ways that families can support that. Lastly, successful outreach efforts to engage families in this learning and supporting the skills necessary for EL students to be successful in school.

One other thing that I want to emphasize today—because this is a focus on pre-K to early elementary—different segments of the field used different language. There's a mix between dual language learners, or DLLs, and English learners, and it usually depends on which side of the kindergarten divide you're involved in. For this webinar we're going to use those terms interchangeably. So “DLL,” “dual language learner,” and “English learner” will mean the same things for us today.

[Slide: *What we'll cover*]

Next, we have four main things that are going to go on today. We have three speakers—expert presenters. First, we're going to have Maria Paredes, who's going to talk about and present on the purpose and structure of family engagement from a school perspective and a school-structured program. Linda Espinosa is then going to present on the knowledge and skills that young EL students will need for school success and also discuss how families can help support these efforts. And then the third presenter will be Melanie Packham, who will talk about field-

sharing examples. She's a practitioner who works here at WestEd, and she's going to talk about specific examples of how to create strong home-school partnerships.

And then mixed through all of this there are going to be Q&A sessions. We're going to have five minutes at the end of each presentation where my colleagues Elizabeth and Min and I will monitor the chats, and we will post some of the questions that come up during the chat during each presentation. So please do your best, send us as many questions or comments as you want. The three of us will be following those chats, and then we will use those to present your main questions during the Q&A at the end.

Also during these presentations, there will also be some surveys and some polling chats that we will ask you some prompting questions. [Slide: *Who is participating?*] So we will ask you to fill those out as well, and I want to start out with the first poll to get some feedback on who's here today, and you should see that poll, I think, pop up in your chat box in just a moment.

[Slide: *Who is participating?*] So we have—wow, we've got about a quarter of the people are coaches and trainers, a fifth of the people are teachers, another fifth are administrators, a few parents, some researchers. Lots—about a quarter from public schools, yeah. About another quarter at the district level. This is quite a balanced group. So, yeah, lots of different people here. And again, welcome and thank you very much for coming.

[Slide: *More Is Not Always Better: Structuring Home and School Partnerships*]

So, the first person we're going to hear from today is Maria Paredes. Maria works here at WestEd in our Comprehensive School Assistance Program. Maria has experience in teaching college students, middle school students, and adults in both basic education and English as the second language during over a decade of work, and this has fueled her passion to understand and improve family engagement in education. And through her experience, her research, and curriculum instruction and assessments, and her deep understanding of the English learner community, she's created a model for family engagement and how schools and the education system in general can best engage with families to improve student outcomes. And it's named the Academic Parent-Teacher Teams, or APTT, and the APTT is a structured approach for family engagement that's really produced remarkable results over the years, and Maria is going to talk to you a lot about the philosophy and the specifics of that.

MARIA PAREDES

Thank you everybody for joining us this afternoon. It's really a pleasure to join a very diverse, large group of educators and thank you for having me. [Slide: *Student Learning Time*] I want to start my presentation with a way to set a foundation for what I am going to talk about next. This pie signifies the learning time of an average student between ages 5 and 18 and it is based on 6 hours of instruction, 180 days per year. The yellow area signifies 8 hours of sleep, 365 days a year. Again, the 12% is the 6 hours of instruction, 180 days. And the 55% represents awake time away from school.

This is very significant because this is, for me, what really triggers a love and a desire to improve and change family engagement in schools. I know that this tells me that 12% is not

enough; that students really need an integrated approach from all the adults in their lives. So it's really important that we work together and strengthen that school and home partnership. So you can think of family engagement and everything that I am going to be saying as filling the gap between that 12% and that 55%—in other words, how we bring schools, families together. I hope that this is as significant to you as it is to me and it really helps shape the work that I have been doing for many, many years.

[Slide: *Schools share responsibility in engaging families*]

Schools are extremely important in modeling the type of engagement that we want families to engage in at home with their children, so it's really important that what we do with families and how we do it is explicit, is clear, and is consistent. So we have to really plan for stellar and coherent and aligned activities with families.

[Slide: *Family engagement has been blurry*]

So I'm going to be talking here from experience. I spent many years as Director of Family Engagement in a school district in Phoenix, Arizona and, in taking over this position, one of the things that I knew is that families were coming to our schools, families were interested in...in being involved. We had a lot of different activities, a lot of different events that we were inviting families to, and families were attending all these events. Our events ranged from open house, welcome back to school, parent-teacher conferences, festivals, volunteer opportunities, PTAs, PTOs, "cafecitos" [coffee chats]; we had all kinds of programs that were being given by outside agencies. We had really a huge assortment of opportunities for families.

So families were receiving invitations to all of these different activities, and we felt like we were on a pretty good path, until we really did an inventory of these activities. And what we found was that, in most schools, we were actually inviting families to over 30 events in any given year. So most of the activities that families were invited to had two- or three- or five-week sessions that they needed to come to. We were basically just doing what the research called "random acts." We had a lot of things; we thought that more is better, and this was, in fact, costing us a lot of time and we were not really sure if we were actually getting any results.

So this was...it was blurry. We weren't really sure; we didn't have a specific path. So this was the beginning of really taking a deep look at what we were doing with families and whether those events and those activities had any result or any effect on how families support their children's learning. So that was the beginning of things.

[Slide: *Family engagement in focus*]

It was really helpful to me before I started—really looking into the research and making sense of what family engagement really is. So it felt like before I was working without a compass, with no direction. I had to really read the research, look at the studies, look at evidence in the field and really come up with my own compass: something that I could guide my department and my district with. So the first thing was, we first have to figure out—what is family engagement, really, and why are we doing this?

So the first thing was finding the family engagement definition that really provided that map, that focus. And that is: family engagement is family and school partnerships to drive student learning. That's what we do as educators and that's what families want schools to do and that is the reason for us to come together as educators and families in partnership, is to drive toward learning. So this really helped provide a focus and to evaluate the activities and the efforts that we were doing across the district with this lens. The point was to drive student learning, so this gave us an idea of how to prioritize activities and do less and do it deeper, with more meaning, with more intention, and to be a lot more professional about how we interacted with families.

So it's really important...among the things that started to change was really building the capacity of our staff in the district and my capacity as the director about what family engagement was and how we can improve on the...really the things that we were already doing and how could we put on hold or pause on the things that were really not aligned with this definition and this purpose. By building the staff capacity through professional development and technical assistance, then we would be able to build the capacity of families and learn together and create an environment where we were all following a direction that was clear and that was consistent with the family engagement definition.

It was really also important to realize that we weren't going to do anything too different. We were just really going to use really good instructional strategies and share those with families. So teachers were already very good at their instruction and they were constantly receiving training and support to improve those instructional strategies. So it's really important that we created a seamless integration of how teachers teach children and how teachers share concepts and strategies and activities with families. This seemed to be a very seamless transition. It was also important that this coming together, the common goal was, "What do we need students to learn? What do we need students to practice in the school and practice in the home? What do we need students to be able to do really well through repeated practice?" And so it was really important to sort through that so that those learning concepts could be made family-friendly and that we can all share; teachers and families could share the things that they do to help students learn at home, in the community, and in the school. So creating this transparency about what we want students to be learning and practicing on an ongoing basis.

Again, I talked a little bit about prioritizing engagement efforts. We took a good look—a really honest look—at everything that we were doing and we really needed to put it through that lens of, "Is it meeting our definition of family engagement? Is it intentional? Is it professional? And is it strategic? Is this event going to get us the result that we're looking for?" Ultimately, engage in a very structural approach to engagement and collect the data, analyze the data, and evaluate results—that was also a critical shift in our practice in family engagement.

[Slide: Engaging families for results requires a system that incorporates ongoing training and support]

Based on all of the learning and all of the research, I developed Academic Parent-Teacher Teams, or APTT; and APTT, again, as Eric said earlier, it's...it's a framework for supporting this very structured family and school partnership. This is the backbone of partnerships. This is

where it all starts. And as we get really good at APTT, then we can add other things that enrich the partnership. So I'm going to talk a little bit about what APTT is and I want to ask you—there are a lot of you attending this webinar and I would like you to go to the panel on the right and either click on the check mark or on the x and tell me if you are familiar or if you have heard of APTT before. Go ahead and check. Thank you so much. So a few of you have experienced or have heard of Academic Parent-Teacher Teams. So I'm going to tell you a little bit about this.

[Slide: *Academic Parent-Teacher Teams (APTT)*]

The purpose of Academic Parent-Teacher Teams in our district was to really improve how we engaged families and to incorporate all the learning from research and to put it all into one practice, into one structure, into one model. So it is a framework that aligns what students are learning at the grade level, the data that we need to share with families, and how parents and teachers come together to share that so that family learning at home can be enriched, can be aligned to what kids are learning in the classroom. So that's really what APTT is. It's a framework. [Slide: *The APTT model*] So I'm going to share with you what it looks like, just the outline of the APTT model. And I also wanted to bring up that this takes the place...it sort of updates our traditional parent-teacher conference model. This would take the place of that. So we have team meetings and we have individual sessions in the APTT model. So we have three team meetings during the year, and team meetings are a time when the teacher in the classroom invites all the families in the classroom to participate together in this workshop, or APTT meeting, and it lasts an hour and 15 minutes exactly. So it's just the family, the adults, and the teacher together.

And then we have an individual session, which is a lot like a traditional parent-teacher conference with a little bit more focus, and this includes the student, the teacher, and the student's family. So we spread these team meetings and individual sessions through the year to make sure that we have ongoing communication. You can have more team meetings if your district, if your state, allows for more time spent on family engagement, but this is the minimum and this would take the place of traditional conferences in terms of the time spent on communication and collaboration with families.

[Slide: *The Team Meeting Structure*]

I'm going to tell you a little bit what happens during a team meeting. This is what makes Academic Parent-Teacher Teams really different and what makes them effective...is that...is there are 6 essential elements in APTT, and I'm going to show you how those come together. So we start every team meeting with a team building activity. The idea of bringing all the families together is to create a team out of the classroom, is to create this team atmosphere, to get to know each other, to develop trust, to develop strong relationships. So we always start by getting to know each other. We follow this with introducing what we—what I—call a “foundational grade-level skill,” and that is a concept that is critical to the child in that developmental stage or age or grade depending on...we're talking about preschool or kindergarten.

And we share data with families about...on that foundational grade-level skill. So we would have selected a skill, assessed the children, and then we have this data ready for families to review and to understand. Based on that data and based on those...on the skill we are sharing with families, the teachers would present two activities that families are going to learn and take home with them and practice with their children between team meetings. So it depends on the concept; the teachers will explicitly model and use really good instructional strategies to make sure that families are absolutely clear on how these activities are done, how fun they can be—these are activities that really bring the family together and make for a really fun learning time at home.

After the families have seen how teachers model these activities, the families start practicing the activities with other families in the class so that they can get really good at it. And then the last thing they do in the meeting is, the teacher guides them on how to set a SMART goal, a 60-day SMART goal. So in these team meetings, they build relationships, they learn a foundational grade-level skill for that particular stage of the child, and—so that the parents understand why the skill is so critical, why it is important and how it is a foundation to the next level of learning in that area—and they learn how to interpret data graphs and how to read the graph and how to interpret the data—very important. And again they model some activities, the demonstration of activities, and families practice and they set goals. These are critical components and the research tells us that these are what make meetings or lessons stay with families. This is what makes it a best practice. This idea of what a team meeting looks like is...I have maybe come across clear to you. So this is what we train teachers to be able to do, this is what we help them plan for, and this is what they receive support on.

[Slide: *Partners in Education: A Dual Capacity Building-Framework for Family-School Partnerships*]

So as the last slide on my presentation I want to bring to light...in December of 2013, the Department of Education released the Dual Capacity Building Framework that has become the national map for how we understand family engagement and family-school partnerships. What is really great about this is that it really defines the problem and states what the ultimate results are. And the whole document just walks you through how to build conditions in your school, all based on developing capacity of administrators, of teachers. This is a new way of engaging families, this very structural approach and a very developmental approach. So it's really important that we are clear that teachers need to be given the opportunity to learn how to do this. This is never a part of what we learn in school as teachers or what we learn in school to become administrators. This is a brand new field that has a lot to offer but really has to be brought in with plenty of training and support.

So I want to bring this up to you; it is a wonderful article to really look through carefully and share it with your staff and have a conversation about this shift in how we build family-school partnerships. There's a lot of information there. Academic Parent-Teacher Teams, or APTT, is highlighted in this national model; Academic Parent-Teacher Teams had a lot to do with informing this national framework. So I invite you to take a deep dive into this really helpful document, share it with your staff, and then come to your own conclusions about how you start

creating that shift with your school, your staff, your families, and your students. Thank you so much.

ERIC HAAS

Thank you, Maria. That was very helpful. One of the questions that came up was: How are team meetings organized? Are they organized by grade levels? Are they organized by bigger units? How do you generally break those up?

MARIA PAREDES

Generally, they are organized by classroom, so it's really important that the teacher becomes a team with the families of the children in that classroom. In some instances in the middle school, sometimes we create a whole grade-level APTT meeting; it just...it really depends on your environment.

ERIC HAAS

Okay, thank you. Another question that came up was: Schools often do a variety of activities. Some are purely social just to sort of get people involved and in the door, and some are much more academic related, much more what sounds like you do with the APTT. How do you see that balance being most effective, between sort of more social and more academic in terms of getting families engaged?

MARIA PAREDES

I think that there is a place for the social activities. I would just be very careful that the social activities do not outweigh the academic activities because we have to really create a partnership that is based on how we help this child be most successful. And I also think that there is a way to do both sometimes together—that you can have a social activity that really is still with learning. So I really don't think that they have to be mutually exclusive. And, again, sometimes we have fun together and that's okay, but I think families need to be able to leave meetings in the school with a very clear notion of what they are taking away and what they are going to implement at home with their children. That's a very important job that we have to do for family engagement.

ERIC HAAS

Thank you. Another question I had is: Are there specific language or cultural issues that need to be addressed, either through staff development or types of activities or certain resources, for schools or communities that have a large EL population?

MARIA PAREDES

Yeah, it's really important that we plan ahead in terms of having interpreters participating in activities so that we can really be inclusive of as many languages as we can and to make sure that families feel really welcome and that they are able to participate in their native language, if possible. I really think that most schools do a really good job with that; really, they know their community really well and they plan ahead of time to really use district resources or

other resources within their agencies to ensure that there is interpretation and that interpretation is expertly done. Sometimes, people resort to having a child translate or someone who might not necessarily know the academic language or the specific words that need to be given to the families. And so it's really important to plan ahead for that.

ERIC HAAS

Okay, thank you. I have one more main question during this time and that is: Some people wrote in that their school already does something close to your sort of random acts of family engagement, but they think their school needs to be better at developing a systemic system for doing this, you know, following some of those guidelines. Is there any advice you would have on how to convince school leadership and fellow teachers to adopt a more systemic approach?

MARIA PAREDES

I think that sometimes it becomes the fact that some educators other than the district leadership are really more knowledgeable about family engagement and best practices. And so I really think that it has fallen on our shoulders to look for ways that we can provide some professional development, some presentations, some information sessions to leadership—to do article studies, to do book studies, and really start inserting these conversations about the outcomes that we have uncovered from the very effective family-school partnerships. And bringing this evidence to the table is critical because I think we have often left family engagement as the feel-good area of education and not necessarily as a viable area for increasing student learning success and achievement. And so I think it's important to start bringing good presentations, good information sessions, all the evidence that we have collected and bring this as a resource for discussion and capacity building with our administrative teams in our districts or in our agencies.

ERIC HAAS

Great. Thank you, Maria. And thank you for answering those questions and your presentation. [Slide: *Capitalizing on Home Strengths and Supporting School Readiness for Young Dual Language Learners*] We're now going to move to our second presenter, and that is Linda Espinosa. She's going to talk about information about the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that young English learners, or DLLs, will need to be successful in school. She's also going to share some of the important contributions that families can make in this effort. Linda Espinosa is an Emeritus Professor of Early Childhood Education from the University of Missouri at Columbia. She's published extensively in this field—in terms of journal articles, book chapters, training manuals—all on how to establish effective educational services for low-income minority families and children, especially those who are acquiring English as a second language. She also has tremendous practical direct experience working with Hispanic and Latino families—again, especially low income and a lot of that in our state of California here—as both a school administrator and as a program director. Very pleased that Linda can join us again to present today, so Linda, welcome.

LINDA ESPINOSA

Well, thank you very much for having me. Thanks, Maria, for presenting that overview and a framework—a very explicit framework—about how to structure school-family engagement activities. What I’m going to talk about is really how to capitalize on the home strengths of language minority families and how to help them support school readiness in their young dual language learners. [Slide: *What is the greatest barrier or challenge to meaningful home-school engagement with families of dual language learners?*] The first thing that we’d like to do is do a little poll to find out from our participants, then, what you experience as the greatest barriers or challenges to meaningful home-school engagement with families of dual language learners.

MELISSA JOSUE

And response is coming in—language, home language, attendance, one or both parents cannot assist with lessons at home. Several people mentioned language and attendance.

LINDA ESPINOSA

Yeah, I think that’s a really prominent issue that sometimes weakens our ability to form these strong partnerships with parents. [Slide: *Working with families has been a cornerstone of effective early childhood practice for decades*] Okay, I’m going to move forward now and talk a little bit about what do we know about early childhood and successfully engaging with families who come from linguistically diverse backgrounds. I mean, first of all, in the early childhood field—and that’s the field I’ve been in for 35 years—the outreach and effective partnerships with parents that we’ve been...that’s been a cornerstone of early childhood education for, you know, decades and decades. Ever since Head Start was established in 1965, family engagement, family involvement, even parental employment practices were central to the provision of Head Start services.

I think what’s new now—in this century, if you will—is that we have an increased attention all across the educational system, from early childhood through K-12, about the needs to engage with families, and we have better research that tells us about the benefits of strong and effective family engagement practices—both the benefits to the children and then, procedurally, how to engage with families so that we can engage them, sustain that engagement, and that we can provide that support for children to promote school readiness goals. So for a long time we have known that effective family engagement is linked to improved child outcomes; we just happen to have better research now that shows us how it’s linked to literacy, cognitive language, math, social-emotional skills, long-term academic achievement.

The other thing that we have learned—particularly, say, in the last 5 to 10 years—is the critical role that families play in maintaining and sustaining the home linguistic and cultural strengths of the family. And schools can do a huge service to both the children and the families, and supporting school achievement goals by helping families understand this role and how to promote it. So to work effectively with young dual language learners, we must establish strong, meaningful, and respectful partnerships with families. And in the Latino community, when

things break down, often times Latino families will say “es una falta de respeto”—or that it’s the fault [lack] of respect—that they didn’t feel they were respected, and so they felt that that particular relationship wasn’t satisfying and they weren’t gaining enough to continue in it. So we’re going to talk about that a little bit more—what do we know about this effective family partnership?

[Slide: *Features of effective family partnerships*]

First of all, I think the other thing that has surfaced in the literature is that...this collaborative orientation...that we’re working with families. We’re not telling families how to educate their child or how to raise their children or what they need to do for us. But, in fact, what...I think of it as in terms of having the goals of increasing the presence of the home in the school and increasing the presence of the school in the home. So a collaborative partnership where we truly make an effort to listen to and learn from, because families have reservoirs of knowledge that can help us as we structure these educational activities. So some of the features of that would be: mutually decide upon the goals and activities, a joint decision-making. It’s not a one-way street; it’s really regular two-way communication, and we both gain from it. And that’s a little bit...I’ve worked in the K-12 systems and I’ve worked in early childhood systems—and that’s a little bit of a shift in orientation for schools because sometimes we feel that we always know what’s best for children, and we will... [Pause in the audio]

Hi, I’m back, I’m sorry. I must have cut out. Where did I cut out? Do I need to back track or should we just go on?

MELISSA JOSUE

Go ahead and go on.

LINDA ESPINOSA

Okay. So the features of effective family partnerships—how do we capitalize on family strengths, both the cultural and the social capital that all families bring into this partnership? First of all, I think we just have to recognize that families have strengths. They have social networks that they can rely upon; typically, dual language families have extended networks, so they will have grandparents and aunts and uncles and older siblings that can be sources of strength and resources to, again, support this school readiness goal.

Sometimes schools are not always as informed about dual language family strengths as we would like. So one of the things that we know...all families—particularly Latino, dual language families—have very high educational aspirations for their children. They very much support high-quality education, early childhood education, and they want their children to go to college. They want their children to have a better life. They are, if properly engaged and motivated, more than willing to help with homework, and to help support these school readiness goals.

So some of the parenting strengths that we found are that the families are strongly committed to family—family values, family orientation, extended families with high levels of support. They

have a tendency to have an educational positivism or “esperanzas”—high hopes and wishes and dreams for the educational achievement of their children; culturally embedded styles of parenting—typically affectionate and nurturing, which shows up in the children’s social-emotional strengths when they enter kindergarten, when they enter our programs; and they have language abilities—the potential for bilingualism of the young children, which we have found is a long-term cognitive, linguistic, and social and economic benefit for that child and the families.

[Slide: *Common barriers to the DLL family engagement*]

So what are some of the barriers to family engagement? Language issues—we mentioned those, and you obviously are experiencing those, and I’m going to talk a little bit about how to address that in a minute. The other issue is this cultural mismatch. Families may not have any experience with traditional school-related participation. Not all countries have the same values around family-school participation, and if families are recent immigrant families from other countries they may feel their role really is not to interfere with the schooling process. So their lack of participation may be due to respect—that they respect the teacher’s role and it would somehow be intrusive to come to school and voice opinions or to request information from the teacher.

So these cultural mismatches can sometimes interfere or create misunderstandings between families and schools. What we have also found is that there are schedules—immigrant families often work two and three jobs, so traditional afternoon scheduling of meetings often doesn’t work—transportation, child care, etc., all of these things can be solved. Low parental education...particularly in the early childhood arena, when parents have low educational levels themselves, they may feel intimidated—even though we don’t think we’re intimidating, coming to the school and engaging with professionals can be experienced as intimidating, and sometimes cultures of schools are not that welcoming. DL parents have frequently communicated that they didn’t feel that their ideas were as strongly valued as professional ideas and so they were reluctant to continue to spend the time and energy because the culture of the school simply didn’t support that engagement.

[Slide: *First step*]

So what do we do about all of this? And one of the things that we recommended and developed as part of our Los Angeles Unified School District Transitional Kindergarten Program—and it can be during that early individual session that Maria talked about—but it would be an individual structured conversation with families where you collect information on the child’s earliest language experiences, their current language opportunities, family feelings, and family interests and talents. And the main thing about this is to start that conversation, listen to parents, record what they say, and use that information as you’re then planning. Of course, this has to be in the family’s preferred language so that it’s effective, and we may need to bring in interpreters, and I’m sure you are all familiar with that experience. But underlying this early conversation is both the need to collect information as well as establishing this rapport, respect, and common focus on the child’s well-being, so they can trust you as the school representative.

[Slide: *Sample Family Languages and Interest Survey*]

I included in this PowerPoint a sample of one of the Family Languages and Interests Survey that we had developed. I'm not suggesting that you have to use this, but you need something to start with that can start...that can help you move through the conversation. And we also found that it's really important to do this face-to-face. Several of the items in there are very predictive of English...children's English language development—who is their primary caregiver, what language do they speak, and what are the family preferences about maintaining home language. [Slide: *Recognize home language as an asset*] So, as a result of that conversation, then, we would help a family see that that home language is an asset. So continued conversation, continued support through storytelling, whatever families do—that is going to help the child acquire English and succeed in the English academic school system.

[Slide: *Helping families support their children's school readiness*]

So, how do you help them support their children's school readiness? Basic home structures and routines—and again, this is sometimes eye-opening for parents—that everything you do all day, every day—from setting the table, to folding laundry, to preparing to go outside, whatever it is—you can...those are learning opportunities, and you can do that in your home language because that will support the child's eventual acquisition of English. And we have to start this very early so that the families know and understand the most important thing is to continue those language interactions and it should be in the language that the family is most comfortable in.

[Slide: *Building literacy skills: Vocabulary, AK, PA, early writing, print concepts*]

Every state has early learning and development standards where they outline what it is children are expected to know and learn by kindergarten entry. Those are the same for dual language learners, but the child might only know those things in their home language. So they may not know, for instance, how to count in English or their colors in English. So we have to find opportunities for them to show us what they do know, whether it's in their home language or English or both. [Slide: *Build social capital and networks*] And, again, families can support us as we are promoting these early childhood literacy goals, and that means helping families interact with and learn from their same language peer groups in the community. And, again, schools can facilitate that and communication among families.

One of the things that we have found out is that the more social capital—or the more that families interact with and engage with other families from their community that speak the same language—the higher their parent participation is in the schools.

[Slide: *Promising approaches*]

Some of the promising approaches are *Abriendo Puertas*—I don't have a lot of time to go into it but we have...that's probably one of the most widely adopted family engagement approaches with the best literature on it and it's...I think it's in 30 states right now. The other one is Home Instruction of Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPOY); they have a Latino version—Spanish version—of the program and they have good outcome data. [Slide: *Promising approaches*]

AVANCE parent education in three states; through their program—which is mainly home visitations—mothers and children made gains. And Project Flame, family literacy program, where families were instructed on how to improve literacy scores. And Literacy for Life, an intergenerational literacy program which incorporated grandparents as well as extended family members.

[Slide: *Conclusion*]

So, in conclusion, some educational experts have called dual language parents a great untapped resource. Their concern for their children, commitment to family, respect for education, and desire for a better life have rarely been capitalized on by the educational establishments, so...that's the way I like to think about it: a great untapped resource. And together we can achieve so much more for children. Thank you.

[Slide: *Q&A With Linda Espinosa*]

ERIC HAAS

Thank you, Linda. That was great. We have some questions that we have been gathering, so I'm going to jump right into those. The first one that someone wrote was, how—and you sort of answered parts of this—but, you know, how would you address a cultural mismatch, if you're seeing that, let's say between, mostly, let's say White native-English-speaking teachers and an English learner community? And, specifically, what would be the role of schools and teachers in ending or resolving this mismatch?

LINDA ESPINOSA

Right, that's an excellent question. The...I think the first thing...and in our schools we were really designed to address a low-income, primarily White population of families. One of the things that we have to do is recognize that we probably don't know about the cultural values of the family and that's why that initial conversation is so important, because that's when the family gets to talk to us and tell us about their values and tell us about what they want for their child. So I think the first thing is really to open up and embrace what it is the family is going to tell us and not pretend that we know everything. So we get to know a little bit about those cultural practices and habits and what they do, and we appreciate what it is they bring into the school and how we can communicate more effectively with families. But it has a lot to do with attitudes and opening up. Not that we know all the cultures or know all the languages, but we're very interested in the family helping us understand those things so that we can better plan for the child.

ERIC HAAS

Great. Sort of following up on that, do you have any advice or suggestions on how to help EL parents become either better at or more comfortable with asking for what they want or what they need to participate? How do you facilitate sort of their capacity to do those things?

LINDA ESPINOSA

I think that's a really interesting arena because oftentimes parents feel reluctant to individually approach the school. But when parents have a community of...people that they talk to that provide them with information about how to register, how the school works, then I think that there is often, I think, strength in numbers, so that they can come as a group. And I think that's where those team meetings, where you're meeting with all of the parents and maybe even more of the staff and you can actually elicit from the parents as a group what are their issues, what are their experiences, what are their preferences, etc. So I think that community building, team building exercise would help us help dual language families find their voices in that school context.

ERIC HAAS

Great. So that...it seems that there needs to be a balance, sort of like what Maria was saying, between individual interactions with families and parents and more group settings, so you get the benefit of both.

LINDA ESPINOSA

I'm sorry, I just want to say, too, that these can be very informal. I mean, you can do informal sessions so that that's an opportunity for them to meet each other and to talk with each other, so that even though they're not directly goal setting by the school, there might be opportunities for that family social networking to identify issues that you can facilitate.

ERIC HAAS

Right, okay. And we got another question that someone asked that I've been wondering about for decades, and that is: Students spend, you know, more than half of their time outside of school; school is just one part of their lives. Do you have any ideas or advice on how schools can connect with other community partners, such as libraries or churches, or how do we get the whole community involved in this conversation?

LINDA ESPINOSA

You know, one of the things that we did in California was we shifted our orientation from being just school to family; really thought of ourselves as brokers among all of the other cultural and educational resources that the community had. So that we help families both identify where the ESL classes were, maybe even help them register, we help them learn the bus schedule, we help them identify where the appropriate book reading activities in the library might be. So that we do see ourselves not just as an isolated school, but as in one member of a community that is interconnected and that can provide that support for the families and for the child, him or herself. I mean, it's just...it's kind of recognizing that as part of our role and then acting on it.

ERIC HAAS

Thank you. I just have one last question and this one's very specific: one thing or form that every...or step that every EL parent, and really every parent, has to go through is filling out the Home Language Survey. But it could be either especially daunting or it could be a great opportunity to begin that dialogue for EL parents. Any advice on maybe using the Home Language Survey, perhaps in a face-to-face or other way, to help begin that dialogue?

LINDA ESPINOSA

Well, in my experience, the Home Language Surveys are typically two or three questions and so it's really not enough to plan from and to give us the kind of information that I think would be useful for teachers. So, I mean, I would never say rule that out, but what I would say is expand it with something that gives you deeper, more detailed information about this child and the family and do that face-to-face and do it early in the year.

ERIC HAAS

So, as we move forward from sort of the most foundational and Maria's discussion of sort of purpose and structure, and then to Linda talking a little bit more about some specific activities to support those types of engagement, we're going to now move to Melanie Packham, who is going to talk a little bit more about some of the specific family engagement strategies that she's used from more of a school or education end.

[Slide: *Effective Outreach: Stories From the Field*]

Melanie is a family engagement facilitator that works with the APTT program, which is part of our Comprehensive School Assistance Program at WestEd. Melanie provides districts and schools with her expertise and experience in the area of effective family engagement and school improvement. She does everything from providing training, technical assistance, and coaching, and all of this is focused on building the capacities of schools and districts to effectively engage families and communities as knowledgeable members of the academic team. So, really, as a lot of people have been commenting and asking questions about—a lot of this must start with the schools and the educators first. And Melanie, before she came to WestEd, worked for 18 years with the New Haven Unified School District here in Union City, California. So Melanie is going to share some promising practices for engaging families in this work, and again, we hope that you will continue to share in the chat about ideas you have and questions for Melanie. So, Melanie, welcome.

MELANIE PACKHAM

Thank you so much, Eric. [Slide: *As I share, please type into the chat area*] I want to get started with a quick poll for all of you, and in the chat area, if you could just give me some ideas about ways that you currently help family members understand the importance of their role in the child's school success, or ways that you organize orientations or information sessions about school success, or maybe some of the specific skills or knowledge you want students to have as they move into the next level or grade. How are you helping share this information with families currently?

So I see that there's ELAC meetings...and I wanted to send out—while you are typing those in—I wanted to put a shout out also for our next webinar that's coming at the end of September. There has been a lot of commentary in the chat asking for more practical ideas of how to help carry out increased family engagement with our DLLs. And so hopefully you will tune in for that second one. And that's a lot of what I want to share with you today as well as some more of the...what it looks like at the field level. As Eric said, I was a teacher for 18 years, and a large chunk of that was in a kindergarten classroom in a Title school, so I'm very familiar with working with DLL students. I see, you know, all materials in English and Spanish, open house English and Spanish, telling the parents that they are their child's first teacher—all excellent examples of helping families understand the importance of their child's role.

[Slide: *Family engagement = Shared responsibility*]

What I want to talk about today, specifically, is creating a shared partnership between the families and the schools. And really letting families know, as Maria said earlier, the definition of family engagement is parent-teacher collaboration that drives student learning and achievement, and letting the parents know that they are welcome into this partnership. There is a study from the *Journal of Educational Psychology* that shares that effective family engagement between kindergarten and 5th grade, high levels of participation, closes the achievement gap in literacy regardless of the parent's education level or home language. And I think that's really key that we share these types of studies and information with families and really try to increase their self-efficacy and lower their effective filter about being a partner in the school environment.

Teachers are going to benefit when families apply new learning to academically support their children. As Linda was saying, it's so important that the families support their children's school readiness, and it's our job as educators to really help these families by supplying them with the information and the skills and the resources to really increase that learning time. So as Maria was sharing that pie graph with you, you saw that there is 55% of the time outside of the classroom when the children are awake. So what we're trying to do with family engagement is really capitalize on that 55% in a very strategic way and give the families specifics about what the students need to learn in preschool, in kindergarten, that will support them academically—that the families can support the teaching that's happening in the classroom. So that's one way that the families will benefit from the teacher expertise and, of course, the students are going to benefit from the increased learning time.

There's a wonderful article from the Harvard Family Research Project called *Family Engagement in Anywhere, Anytime Learning*. If you haven't already read that, I highly recommend it. It really talks about the benefits that students get from the increased learning time and really capitalizing on the parents and the families being the child's first teacher—and it doesn't necessarily matter what language they're speaking—really sharing with families repeatedly how valuable you are, they are, as an educator in their home language, and really building up the importance and the value of bilingualism and increasing that learning time and the conceptual understanding in their home language and what a natural transfer that will be to their English academics as well.

[Slide: *Invite families to team meeting*]

So what I want to do is sort of walk you through some of what Maria was speaking about earlier with the APTT model and what that might look like in a preschool or kindergarten class. So I have chosen a skill that we'll be talking about and I will walk you sort of through why these pieces are important and how that might look and why you might do it. So the first thing you would want to do as an educator is really organize your family engagement plan for the year. What are some key foundational skills that it's really important for your children to learn at that grade level that the families can support you with? What are the essential skills that they need to learn? And share that with your families.

You need to begin with effective family outreach and inviting all family members, as—I think it was Linda who said earlier—in some cultures, it's typically the mother who is involved in the child's education and it might be an issue of respect where the family is not questioning the educational system or questioning the teacher. And so it's our job as educators in this country to let families know that that's okay, and to teach them that they are all welcome. And so, really, beginning with your effective family outreach, trying all different types of outreach, including indirect that we're typically used to with the fliers and the calendars and the notes, etc., having those translated into any language that's represented in your class—I saw a lot of you are already doing that with English and Spanish—making sure that it's accessible to all families. And also including direct outreach, that face-to-face invitation—the phone calls, the student invitations, getting your students involved with inviting the families and making sure that the families understand the purpose of the meeting and how important their attendance is.

Something else to consider is to provide child care at these meetings. What we know about adult learning is that when there's a child, especially their own child, in the room, families are more inclined to pay attention to their child than they are to the presenter and the information being presented. So it's really impactful if you can provide child care so that the families, the adults, have total focus on what they are trying to do. And, again, as Linda said, to provide interpretation in every language—and to provide professional interpretation is helpful so that the person translating has familiarity with the academic vocabulary and the content that's being provided.

[Slide: *Building a Team Environment*]

We heard some of this just now from Linda, and I was so happy that she was talking about this team environment and somehow, you know, sometimes there is that safety in numbers. So really building that classroom team. DLL, or English language learner families, they really benefit from social networks. And in some instances that's because of the survival mentality, and they are communicating with each other and informing each other. And the same goes in the classroom environment—adults really learn from one another, and adult learning is very social and it's an interactive phenomenon and there is research out there by Étienne Wenger that supports that. Families—they love to collaborate and support each other, and really building on that cultural capital that the families of a variety of cultures are bringing to the table. If you can build a safe team environment in a classroom meeting, families become very

sharing with their knowledge: “Oh, in my culture and in my country we learn multiplication this way,” or, “This is how we learn the alphabet where I’m from,” or, “This is how, you know, my parents read to me here,” and really encouraging an openness and a sharing network within the classroom meeting can become very, very powerful. And then they begin to trust each other and the teacher. I’m not suggesting a meeting where the teacher is the main facilitator and it’s sort of a sit-and-get—that’s typically, like Linda was saying, that’s what we’re accustomed to, in very one-way communication in the educational system. And what I’m suggesting is that we make more of a collaborative environment and that the families can build on each other’s knowledge and cultural capital as they bring it to the table. Parents really are an untapped resource and building that team environment creates a real openness for them to help and share with each other and also to negotiate the entire school system.

[Slide: *Team building activity*]

So as an example of something that you might want to do as a team building activity, this is just a really quick idea. It’s called Mingle, Mingle and it’s sort of like musical chairs. You really want to, first of all, tell the families why you’re doing a team building activity; that ensures much greater success. Sometimes they will be very quiet and very shy, especially English language learner families. So it’s important that, just like in any good teaching, the teacher is modeling what we want the family to do. But getting them up and out of their chairs, playing music is also very invigorating and they can walk around the room and then when the music stops they find a partner, whoever they’re standing next to, and they share something about their child. And repeat this a few times so that the families are getting to know multiple families around the classroom.

And any kind of a team building activity that sets the tone for positive, supportive meeting is going to be beneficial for the families to sort of come out of their shell. And getting the families to talk or share something about their child rather than themselves also will ensure great success as well. So that’s just a fun example of something that you could do for team building, but really making them active, out of their seats, and talking about their children, those types of ideas really help make a successful team building activity and start to set the foundation for that strong network in the classroom.

[Slide: *Introduce a skill*]

Once you are...have that strong network you will want to...as I said early, you would have a family engagement plan set out with your skills that you would want to share with the families. And typically it’s a good idea—and what sets APTT in particular apart from a traditional back to school night or open house that can be really overwhelming and full of skills and information and requirements for the entire grade level, is to think about focusing on one skill or possibly two skills that are essential at that grade level. And tell the families why that skill is important, what is it...where does it fit on the grade-level continuum, and why does that student need to know that before they can learn something else.

So, for example, if you’re talking about shapes, right? You would talk to the families about why identifying shapes is so important for pre-K and kindergarten, and it’s because it’s foundational

for understanding geometry and you can explain that whole progression. You would want to teach the skill to the families and let them know exactly what shape identification means and what your students are expected to do—very clearly, be explicit about what we want the students to do and know. And then share some student data with them: “Okay, so out of the five shapes, this is how many your student knows,” and give them a pre-assessment along with the benchmark so they know where their student is and where they need to go. And really emphasize your support; your family at-home support is going to be able to positively affect that student growth data.

[Slide: *Provide take-home activities*]

And this is really key—to provide some fun, engaging activities that can be enjoyed as a family to support that skill in particular. And you want to think about doing an activity that would last a long time and the families can do over and over and also something that really works with their oral language development and possibly something at the younger grades that they can do orally. So if you’re talking about shapes, go on a shape walk and have the students identify all the different shapes that they see in the neighborhood. You want to begin that activity and have the families practice that in the classroom, so again, have the families up and out of their seats and they are practicing with each other and they are talking about shapes and they are pointing and identifying, maybe talking about how one says it in one language and one says it in another. And really provide strategies that support that engagement with each other. As Maria was saying, you know, there is research out there that says that it’s really key that the families practice what you want them to do with their children inside the meeting, and they’ll be much more likely to support the children with it outside of the meeting. And providing the families with some activities as well, that they can take home and use with their children is really key—families love to come away with something; adult learners, they love being able to walk away with something to really enrich their home learning environment.

[Slide: *Accountability*]

And then, finally, when they’re leaving have them set a SMART goal for their child: “Okay, so my child knows this many shapes today and with my support and the fun, engaging materials that you’ve given me and my child, at the end of...”—you know, by the next meeting, whenever you set that time to be—“...my child will know this many shapes.” And really increase the accountability and communicate the high expectations that the family, that the children...excuse me, the teachers and the families have for the children. And it really...goal setting allows families to take ownership of helping the students grow. And then when they come back for the next meeting, you show them the same assessment that you have given and you show them the post data and how positively their at-home support has impacted their child. And it’s really, really amazing how quickly parent support increases the student academic achievement, especially in the lower grades. If we can engage our families to support our children, it will positively impact our teaching 100%.

So thank you and good luck to all of you, and I look forward to speaking with you and hearing from you and what questions you have now in the chat and also at our next webinar at the end of September. Thank you.

ERIC HAAS

Thank you, Melanie. I know we're getting very tight but I did want to ask one or two questions. One of them somebody asked—and this is also something I've experienced as well—is sometimes in school it's not just one or two predominant languages, but you have dozens, sometimes 30 or more, languages. How do you find ways of supporting home languages, whether it's translations or other things, when you have so many in one school? Any advice?

MELANIE PACKHAM

Well, typically those numbers are really large within a school, but when you're looking at a classroom setting that number can often be a lot smaller. You might have 30 languages in a school, but maybe more like 7 or 8 in the actual classroom. Again, the district that I'm from, we had 90 different languages and dialects. And in my 18 years' experience, I think the most I had was like 8 in one classroom. So I recommend working with the district, first of all, the district office, to let them know ahead of time when your meetings will be and garner as many interpreters as you can.

And then work with the family—if there is not an interpreter available—work with the family on bringing perhaps a neighbor or another family member with them that can help you translate. And really trying to ensure that the activities—be it the team building activity or the take-home activity—you really want to ensure that those activities that you are providing with the families, first and foremost, have been modeled so that they're very clear as to how to use them once they get home, and then, secondly, that they're accessible to all of the different languages. So especially in the younger grades pre-K and kinder, ensuring that the activities are like practicing their oral language development is really helpful.

ERIC HAAS

That's great, thank you. And I just have one more question, or a comment, for you and that is: home visits often come up as something that is very effective. At the same time, they're very time consuming. Any thoughts or advice based on your experience with home visits?

MELANIE PACKHAM

I think home visits are really wonderful when done in conjunction with something like a team meeting, like an APTT team meeting. They can be a...home visits can be a wonderful way to initially build that trust and get to the root cause of why that family might not be attending any events at the school and to extend that invitation for what's happening in the school and really build that home-to-school bridge. Ultimately, it's very powerful if you can get the families out of their home and really crossing that threshold to the school and feeling comfortable there and starting to meet and network with other families is very powerful. So I think working together with home visits and at-school activities and functions is the most effective, but really thinking about using the home visit as a means to initiate that relationship, and then sort of draw the families into the school and increase their comfort on campus, I think, is really ultimately what will be the most powerful and helpful for the families.

ERIC HAAS

Thank you very much. I wish we had more time to go into specifics but, in part, we are planning the second webinar to continue to drill down and to discuss specifics, specific activities similar to what Melanie just presented and also things... specific activities for families to do. So it's something...the second webinar, which is scheduled for September 30th, is entitled "Building Capacity for School Success and Families of Young EL Students." So the idea is, we're moving from the more general to the more specific, and we welcome all of you to come to that webinar as well.