



Our mission is to build a welcoming community and create opportunities where Latino families can belong, contribute, and succeed.

## **Best Practices for Working with Latino Families**

### **Philosophy: Asset-Based Thinking**

- Always assume that families care deeply about their child's education!
- Expand definition of engagement, get to know families and what they bring to the table.
- Position parents as experts of their child and experts of their own experience.
- Assess assets, characteristics, and needs of the community – reach out to organizations, talk to parents, ask students what they do on the weekends (where they go, where they eat, who they spend time with, etc.) Learn about values and beliefs beyond surface representations of culture.
- This work is never done. Consistently think about your own identity, values, beliefs, and how this informs your work with students and families, including how this influences power dynamics in interactions with family members.

### **Planning with Intentionality: Access vs. Availability**

- Consider the challenges that influence attendance and plan accordingly. As often as possible, offer workshops/events when families are available and provide food & childcare. If the school is not accessible to parents, consider alternate locations.
- Plan ahead – work with the school system to send home translated materials whenever possible and have interpreters present during events.
- Conduct outreach in a variety of ways and seek input from parents on what is most effective.
- Reach out to or begin identifying key parents. Whenever possible, reach out to them for input or to help you conduct outreach. If you develop parent leaders that are trusted members of the community, they can help share information or invite other parents through word of mouth.



Our mission is to build a welcoming community and create opportunities where Latino families can belong, contribute, and succeed.

- Be sure to explain educational jargon – and expand your definition of jargon! Give parents concrete ways to connect to complex concepts. Sometimes icebreakers or reflection questions can help create a meaningful bridge between the content shared and families’ goals or aspirations for their child.
- When sending materials to families, focus on essential knowledge. Remember that not all parents have high native-language literacy skills.
- Share concrete tools or strategies with parents that allow them to support their children’s academic growth. Be sure to carefully explain how these tools or strategies work. Create opportunities for parents to follow up with you on these strategies, whether that is in person or in other ways. If you see improvement or changes in the student, let the parent know.
- Have resources available to families, and when you don’t, follow up to find an answer. Be sure to consider how accessible the resource is and whether parents might need support to make use of it.

### **Nurture Positive Relationships: Mindful Interactions**

- Consider body language and cultural expectations when families come into the classroom; learn about appropriate ways to greet and welcome families.
- Create positive relationships with families– positive phone calls home, home visits, picnics before school starts, etc.
- Get to know key staff and community partners that can facilitate relationships between you and parents (but please be kind and conscientious of their time).
- Attend student events where you might meet parents (sports games are a good way to do this).
- Bring family and culture into the classroom (homework to be done with parents, sharing photographs, multicultural/multilingual books).
- When meeting with a family, convey interest in the child as a whole person – what they’re like at home, their siblings, interests, comments they make about school, study habits, what the parents wants or worries about for their child. Use the parent’s expert input to create a fuller picture of the student. This could help you interpret a child’s behavior or academic performance at school while also building trust with the family.



Our mission is to build a welcoming community and create opportunities where Latino families can belong, contribute, and succeed.

- When talking about student work, don't create a "data wall" that physically separates you from the family member. Try to sit side-by-side and inspect work together.
- When an interpreter is helping you communicate, talk directly to the parent and use your body to convey interest when the parent is talking. Avoid phrasing your conversation with language like "can you tell her/him that..." Be sure to pause often for your translator, and speak at a normal pace (not too fast but not too slow).
  - When a child or other family member is in the role of translator, think about the interaction as a three-way conversation. The dynamics need to change in this situation to be more inclusive and responsive to whoever is assisting the parent/family.
- Update parents about their child's academic progress in ways that are accessible to parents in terms of method and language.

*Most importantly, don't be afraid to reach out to local organizations when you don't have an answer or feel unsure about responding to a student's or family's question. Stay informed and verify information through a trustworthy organization before sharing information with families.*

*Additionally, given the current political environment, make sure that your colleagues, administrators, and front office staff are proactive about creating a positive environment for parents. How parents are greeted when they come to the school and the nature of day-to-day interactions can influence whether or not they see the school as a safe and welcoming space.*

Conexión Américas offers trainings on developing culturally responsive practices for working with Latino students and families. For more information about how to bring these trainings to your school, please contact Jermaine Soto, Training & Leadership Development Manager, at [jermaine@conexionamericas.org](mailto:jermaine@conexionamericas.org).

Conexión Américas offers informational workshops in Spanish for families. They include information on recent executive orders as well as information on what families can do to stay informed, safe, and prepared for future



Our mission is to build a welcoming community and create opportunities where Latino families can belong, contribute, and succeed.

immigration changes. Please contact Maria Zapata, Family Engagement Manager, at [maria@conexionamericas.org](mailto:maria@conexionamericas.org) if you are interested in offering this workshop at your school.