Toolkit of Resources for Engaging Parents and Community as Partners in Education

Part 3: Building Trusting Relationships With Families & Community Through Effective Communication

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Overview of the Toolkit of Resources for Engaging Parents and Community as Partners in Education

The *Toolkit of Resources for Engaging Parents and Community as Partners in Education* is designed to guide school staff in strengthening partnerships with families and community members to support student learning. The Regional Educational Laboratory for the Pacific (REL Pacific) developed the toolkit in response to a request from the Guam Alliance for Family and Community Engagement in Education, whose members include K-12 school staff and college faculty who work with K-12 schools. This toolkit offers an integrated approach to family[1] and community engagement, bringing together research, promising practices, and a wide range of useful tools and resources with explanations and directions for using them.

In this Toolkit, we define family and community engagement as an overarching approach for building relationships with families that support family well-being, strong parent–child relationships, and ongoing learning and development of children. This definition encompasses other existing definitions (e.g., No Child Left Behind Act, 2001) and emphasizes the importance of school staff working as partners with families to support students in multiple ways.

Description of the Toolkit Contents

Research provides more than 40 years of steadily accumulating evidence that family engagement is one of the strongest predictors of children's school success (Weiss, Bouffard, Bridglall, & Gordon, 2009). Although there is no single study that makes a definitive case for the impact of family involvement, this accumulated body of evidence links student achievement to specific family involvement activities (California Department of Education, 2011).

This toolkit, which is presented in four parts, includes information and tools that reflect these activities (see Appendix A for an explanation of tool selection). Each tool is introduced with a cover sheet that includes the purpose of the tool; the intended outcome of using the tool, the materials and time needed to use the tool; whether the tool is best used with individuals, small groups, or large groups; the tool type (see Appendix B for a description of the tool types), and the audience for the tool. Brief descriptions of the four parts of the Toolkit follow.

- **Part 1: Building an Understanding of Family and Community Engagement**
  Part 1 includes tools that help school staff build awareness of how their beliefs and assumptions about family and community engagement influence their interactions with families and how the demographic characteristics of the families served by Guam schools can provide information about what might support or hinder family engagement with schools.

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[1] The terms *parent* and *family* are used interchangeably throughout this Toolkit. These terms are inclusive of mother, father, aunties, uncles, grandparents, cousins, and any influential adult or family member involved in children's lives. The term *school community* is inclusive of the people that comprise the school community – staff, families, local businesses, churches, organizations, and agencies.

- **Part 2: Building a Cultural Bridge**
  The tools in Part 2 focus on tapping into the strengths of families and community members and helping families to establish active roles within the school community in support of student learning.

- **Part 3: Building Trusting Relationships With Families and Community Through Effective Communication**
  Part 3 tools focus on cross-cultural and two-way communication as ways to enhance family and community engagement.

- **Part 4: Engaging All in Data Conversations**
  The tools in Part 4 help school staff understand what data is important to share with families and community members and how to share such data.

Each part can stand alone or be used in conjunction with the other parts for a more comprehensive approach to family and community engagement, depending on the varying needs of the staff and school community.

Introduction to Part 3:
Building Trusting Relationships With Families and Community
Through Effective Communication

Parent and community engagement with schools in Pacific communities depends on strong, trusting relationships (Gorinski & Fraser, 2006). Part of developing such relationships is building a bridge between home and school cultures, which was the focus of Part 2 of this Toolkit. In Part 2, we discussed the importance of getting to know family and community needs and strengths and understanding the variety of roles family and community can take on when they engage with schools. Part 3 builds on the ideas presented in Part 2 by focusing closely on communication, the key to trusting relationships.

Trust is defined as "an individual's or group's willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open" (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 2003, p. 189). If families are to trust teachers and other staff members, then they must believe that school personnel are qualified, fair, and dependable, and have their child's best interest at heart (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). In most cases trust is built over time, based on interactions that occur on a daily basis and with consistent behavior from both sides. If the families and school staff do not have experience interacting with one another, then they may rely on the other person's reputation and on something they have in common, such as race, gender, age, religion, or upbringing (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). When there are few things in common between families and school staff, it will take time for trust to develop. The willingness to trust each other will be based on actions and perceptions of each other's reliability, competence, honesty, and openness.

Families who get involved in schools are typically those whose home culture most closely matches the values reflected in schools. Minority, lower-income, and families who speak limited English are often underrepresented in school-level decision-making and in family engagement activities (Brewster & Railsback, 2003). This is often the result of differing needs, values, and levels of trust rather than families' lack of interest or willingness to get involved (Antunez, 2000; Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001; Onikama, Hammond, & Koki, 2001 cited in Brewster & Railsback, 2003). Conducting outreach activities that bring school staff into homes, community centers, and villages shows respect in working with different cultures. When there are a number of school sites within the system, outreach activities should be consistent across the system. This builds families' trust in the system; they can be confident that they will be treated the same at each school site.

Description of Part 3 Sections

Part 3 addresses two important parts of communication with parents and community members: cross-cultural communication and two-way communication. Cross cultural communication involves recognizing that differences in culture can lead to confusion, frustration, and misinterpretation of messages. Families can be powerful partners in supporting the education of their children and key to this is listening to parent voice as part of two-way communication.

- **3.1 Cross-Cultural Communication in a School Community**
  When it comes to cross-cultural communication, how something is said can be just as important as what is said. For that reason, this section focuses on strategies and a tool that assist educators to examine their current use of cross-cultural communication and consider ways they might improve it.

- **3.2 Preparing Staff for Two-Way Communication With Parents**
  The focus of this section is on using effective communication strategies to cultivate trusting relationships between the school and family and community members. This section presents ideas for listening to "parent voice" and understanding the ways in which families can work together with teachers to support children's learning.

Summary of Part 3 Tools

The tools comprising Part 3 of the Toolkit are summarized in Table 3.1. The table includes the name and number of the tool, the tool type (i.e. activity, protocol/process, activity, chart, or template), the group structure (i.e., small group or large group) that is most appropriate for using the tool, and the type of participants (i.e., school staff or parents/families/community members) for whom the tool was designed.

Table 3.1: Summary of Part 3 Tools[2]

Tool Number	Tool Name	Tool Type	Group Type	Participants
3.1.1	Reflection on Building Trusting Relationships With Families	Activity	Small Group Large Group	Staff
3.1.2	Communication to Enhance Family and Community Engagement	Activity	Small Group Large Group	Staff
3.2.1	Fostering Two-Way Communication at Parent-Teacher Conferences	Activity Template	Individual Small Group Large Group	Staff

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[2] Tools are designated first by the part of the Toolkit in which they appear, next by the section, and last by the number of the tool within the section. For example, Tool 1.1.1 is in Part 1, Section 1 of the Toolkit, and it is the first tool in the section.

Section 3.1:
Cross-Cultural Communication in a School Community

Introduction

Communication is the basis for any strong relationship and is especially important for building a bridge that connects families and the community to schools (Baker & Manfredi-Petitt, 2004). In diverse communities, a particular kind of communication — cross-cultural communication — is a must to minimize the confusion and frustration that people can experience when they enter an environment where not only their language, but also their attitudes, values, and behaviors differ from that of others (Berkeley Media LLC, 1997). Under these circumstances, if no one is using cross-cultural communication skills, communication can be difficult, inaccurate, and stressful. Being skilled at cross-cultural communication involves

- understanding that there are different ways of communicating that reflect one's culture;
- acknowledging, respecting, and accommodating cultural differences in communication styles; and
- using strategies that remove barriers to communication that result from cultural differences.

As sociologist Dane Archer (Berkeley Media LLC, 1997, n.p.) states, "Culture is 10,000 different things, and we take our own culture for granted until we're immersed in another culture where the rules, language, expectations, and gestures are different." If we strive to recognize and understand the differences that separate people from two cultures, we can improve cross-cultural communication.

Key Points

- **Communication is integrally tied to cultural backgrounds.** Culture influences the ways that people communicate (e.g., the tone of voice, amount of space between speaker and listener, eye contact). Cross-cultural communication considers these differences in communication styles. If educators fail to consider communication differences, parents may be reluctant to participate in school functions because they might misinterpret or not understand what was being communicated. For example, a Chuukese parent in a study by Stoicovy and colleagues (2011) stated that "school is not communicating clearly to the home so that may be one reason why the home is not participating in some of those expectations of functions that are held at the school" (p. 13).

- **Using communication practices that are sensitive to language and cultural backgrounds encourages family and community engagement.** It is critical that schools acknowledge and view parents' cultural values as strengths (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008). This includes translating important communications into the various languages represented in the school community, making families feel welcome in the school with signs in their language, and inviting

role models from the various cultures into the classroom (Halgunseth, 2009). Being sensitive about communication practices means paying attention to how words are used. For example, it is important to be aware of words or situations suggesting that all members of an ethic group are the same. Suppose a classroom teacher schedules an event at 6:30 pm and one particular family arrives an hour late. It wouldn't be appropriate to say: "The Jones family always seems to be late. They must be (names ethnic group)." Statements such as this can encourage negative stereotypes and be offensive to an individual and cultural group.

- **There are a variety of strategies that promote cross-cultural communication.** Educators can promote cross cultural communication by asking parents early in the school year how they prefer to communicate and by translating any written information into the native language of the families the school serves (Halgunseth, 2009). Most important, educators should listen to and provide families the opportunity to give feedback on their children's progress in a manner that is culturally appropriate for them (Halgunseth, 2009). In addition to developing relationships with families early in the school year before formal parent-teacher conferences, other strategies that teachers can use to promote cross-cultural communication during parent-teacher conferences include the following:

  - Begin the conversation on a personal level rather than starting with a formal progress report.
  - Allow the personal to be mixed with the discussion of academics.
  - Show respect for the whole family, instead of only paying attention to the child who is the focus of the conference.
  - Use indirect questions or observations rather than questions that ask for information about the child at home (e.g., *"Some parents prefer to have an older child help with homework…"* rather than, *"Do you or someone else help the child with her homework?"*)
  - Discuss the student's achievements in the context of all of the students in the classroom, suggesting how the child contributes to the well-being of all.
  - Explain the goals and expectations of the school and help parents find ways in which they are comfortable supporting their children's learning.
  - Create a sense of common purpose and caring through the use of the pronoun "we" rather than "you" and "I." (Trumbull, 2011, n.p.)

Toolbox

- **Tool 3.1.1: Reflection on Building Trusting Relationships With Families**
  This tool emphasizes the ideas that trust is an important foundation for building relationships with families and trust facilitates communication. The tool also helps staff understand the various aspects of trust so that they can build trusting relationships with families.

- **Tool 3.1.2: Communication to Enhance Family and Community Engagement**
  This tool helps increase staff awareness of what communication strategies are currently being used school-wide and at the classroom levels. It also provides opportunities for staff to identify additional strategies that can be used to strengthen cross-cultural communication.

Tool 3.1.1: Reflection on Building Trusting Relationships With Families
Purpose
To raise awareness of how to build mutual trusting relationships with families
Outcome(s)
Participants will increase their awareness of the five facets of trust and how they can be used to build mutual trusting relationships with the parents.
Logistics
Materials Needed: sheets of blank paper (one per participant), chart paper, markers, "Five Facets of Trust Activity" handout Time: 45 minutes
Tool Type
Protocol   **Activity**   Template   Process   Article   Chart   Other
Group Type
Individual   **Small Group**   **Large Group**
Participants/Audience
Parents   **Staff**   Both

Tool 3.1.1: Reflection on Building Trusting Relationships With Families

Purpose

To raise awareness of how to build mutually trusting relationships with families

Directions

1. Distribute a blank sheet of paper to each participant. Ask participants to individually think about a particular parent whom they trust and write down traits the person has that makes them trustworthy.

2. Ask participants to share traits they wrote on their papers. As they share, record the traits on chart paper at the front of the room.

3. Distribute the "Five Facets of Trust" handout and explain that whether you trust someone depends on many things. In this activity, we talk about those things as facets of trust. You can think of a "facet" as a feature or characteristic of something.

4. Explain that this activity will occur in four parts and they will have opportunities to discuss their responses between each part.

5. Ask participants to individually think about the extent to which the parent they identified as someone they trust rates on each of the five facets of trust. Explain that they should use a rating scale of 1 to 5, with one meaning "to no extent" and five meaning "to a great extent." Ask them to place their rating in the column labeled "Parent I Trust".

6. Provide a few minutes for table groups to share their ratings.

7. Ask participants to think about how they would rate a parent they do not trust on each of the five facets of trust and use the same scale to record their ratings in the column labeled "Parent I Don't Trust".

8. Ask table groups to share their ratings and then explain that research has shown that when one facet of trust is high, they all tend to be high. When one facet is low, they all tend to be low.

9. Ask participants to think about how parents would rate them on each facet of trust and record the rating in the column labeled "Parent Trust in Me".

10. Ask participants to share their responses in pairs.

11. Ask participants to work on developing a plan for increasing their trust of parents and increasing parents' trust of them.

12. Ask participants to share their plan in pairs.

13. Debrief the process as a large group by asking the following questions:

    a. What did you learn about trust between you and parents through this process?
    b. Why is it important to increase trust on your part and on the parents' part?

Tool 3.1.1: Reflection on Building Trusting Relationships With Families: Five Facets of Trust Handout

Directions

Use a scale of 1-5, with 1 being "to no extent" and 5 being "to a great extent," to rate the extent to which the selected person demonstrates each of the five facets of trust[3].

	Parent I Trust	Parent I Don't Trust	Parent Trust in Me
Benevolence The confidence that one's well-being, or something one cares about, will be protected and not harmed by the trusted person.			
Reliability Confidence that you can depend upon another person to come through for you, to act consistently, and to follow through.			
Competence Belief in another person's ability to perform the tasks required by his or her position.			
Honesty A person's integrity, character, and authenticity.			
Openness The extent to which relevant information is not withheld.			
My Plan to Increase Mutual Trust Between Myself and all Parents			

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[3] Information about the facets of trust is drawn from *Trust matters: Leadership for successful schools, 2nd Ed*. (2014) by Megan Tschannen-Moran, published by Jossey-Bass. Used with permission. Tschannen-Moran provided suggestions for this activity.

Tool 3.1.2: Communication to Enhance Family and Community Engagement

Purpose

To identify current communication strategies, assess their effectiveness for cross-cultural communication, and determine additional communication strategies to implement

Outcome(s)

Participants will increase understanding of how current communication strategies aid in cross-cultural communication.

Participants will apply additional communication strategies for cross-cultural communication.

Logistics

Materials Needed: chart paper, markers, copies of *Cross-Cultural Communication Strategies* handout, sticky dots, sticky notes, fine tip markers

Time: 45-60 minutes

Tool Type

Protocol   **Activity**   Template   Process   Article   Chart   Other

Group Type

Individual   **Small Group**   **Large Group**

Participants/Audience

Parents   **Staff**   Both

Tool 3.1.2: Communication to Enhance Family and Community Engagement

Purpose

To identify current communication strategies, assess their effectiveness for cross-cultural communication, and determine additional communication strategies to implement

Directions

1. Form groups of four participants using an appropriate strategy (e.g., count off, self-select groups, or use color-coded name tags). If administrators are part of the large group, the small groups should include teachers and administrators.

2. Distribute chart paper with two columns labeled *Classroom Communication Strategies* and *School Communication Strategies* to each group.

3. Ask small groups to brainstorm and record on their chart all the communication strategies that they **are now using** at the classroom level and at the school level to communicate with families.

4. Ask groups to brainstorm and record on their chart **other strategies they could use** at the classroom and school levels to communicate with families.

5. Ask participants to review the handout, *Cross-cultural Communication Strategies*, and record any additional strategies they feel are important to include on their group lists.

6. Ask groups to identify two strategies from their lists of classroom-level and two from the school-level strategies that they consider most important to use for home-school communication.

7. Ask groups to write their prioritized strategies on sticky notes and post them on the appropriate chart at the front of the room (one chart paper labeled *Classroom Communication Strategies*; the other labeled *School Communication Strategies*).

8. Read the sticky notes to the group, combining the ones that are the same or similar, while someone writes them on the appropriate chart for the participants to see.

9. Provide each participant with four, color-coded, sticky dots.

10. Ask participants to place two dots on the *Classroom Communication Strategies* chart and two dots on the *School Communication Strategies* chart beside the strategies they think are most important to use for home-school communication.

11. Ask small groups to discuss how the prioritized items for cross-cultural home-school communication might be used at the classroom level and at the school level and to share their ideas with the large group.

12. Guide a group discussion, asking the following questions:

    a. How did participating in this activity increase your understanding of home-school communication?

    b. How will this increased understanding change how you communicate with parents in the future?

Tool 3.1.2: Communication to Enhance Family and Community Engagement

Cross-Cultural Communication Strategies: Classroom Level[4]

- Invite parents to join class trips, student presentations, potlucks, group walks, etc.
- Express high expectations for family-school communication.
- Meet parents at the school, home, or a community location based on parent choice.
- Always listen to the parents' voices by providing opportunity for two-way communication.
- Begin the conversation on the personal level and mix personal talk with academic talk during the conference.
- Help parents find ways to support their children's learning.
- Ask parents what communication methods are best for them and use multiple communication methods.

Cross-Cultural Communication Strategies: School Level[5]

- Collect information about families' work setting when inquiring about children's family and after-school arrangements in order to determine the most effective ways of communicating with and engaging families.
- Create flexible scheduling for the timing of school-family interactions so that all families have an opportunity to participate in both formal and informal activities.
- Use a range of technological tools if possible to facilitate communication between teachers and families in their workplace in order to increase information sharing.
- Redefine and expand what family involvement means so that both families and educators recognize a wide range of possible ways that families can contribute to the education of their children.
- Make video clips to welcome parents and to present different topics (e.g., how to read with child, and/or how to play a math game).
- Always provide translation of written materials and interpreters for meetings.
- Provide transportation to bring families to school meetings.
- Provide childcare in the school when parents are in meetings.
- Survey, inventory, and address parents' concerns, perspectives, and ideas, and plan parent-teacher seminars based on survey findings.

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[4] Goodwin, L., & King, S. (2002). *Culturally Responsive Parental Involvement: Concrete Understanding & Basic Strategies*, AACTE Publications, Washington D.C.

Graham-Clay, S. (2005). Communicating with parents: strategies for teachers. *The School Community Journa*l, 117-130. Retrieved from: http://www.adi.org/journal/ss05/Graham-Clay.pdf

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[5] Ferguson, C., Ramos, M., Rudo, Z., & Wood, L. (2008). *The school–family connection: Looking at the larger picture.* Austin, TX: National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools at SEDL. Retrieved from http://www.sedl.org/connections/resources/sfclitrev.pdf

Section 3.2:
Preparing Educators for Two-Way Communication With Parents

Introduction

The African proverb, "It takes a whole village to raise a child," serves as a reminder to educators that education is a partnership and partnerships require frequent, two-way communication between home and school. In two-way communication, both people listen to each other, gather information, and are willing to work together in harmony [The Center for the Education and Study of Diverse Populations (CESDP), 2006]. During two-way communication, the people involved interact—they ask questions, paraphrase, and check to be sure they understand what the other person is saying. This interaction determines the outcome of the communication (e.g., a decision, an agreement). By contrast, in one-way communication one person provides information, attempts to persuade the other person, or asks the other person to do something (CESDP, 2006). One-way communication practices include parent newsletters, report cards, websites, and home-school newsletters. Two-way communication involves school-initiated and family-initiated communication. Examples include dialogue, phone calls, conferences, and open houses (Trumbull, 2011).

For effective family engagement, both one-way and two-way communications are necessary. Strategies for improving two-way communication include:

- enhancing understanding and use of basic communication skills (e.g., active listening, respecting others' points of view, using non-verbal communication), and
- increasing capacity to engage parents in dialogue.

Key Points

- **Educators need professional development in how to use basic communication skills to engage parents.** Many teachers feel that they have not been adequately trained to communicate and work effectively with parents (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2004). Educators would benefit from training in basic communication skills, such as observing verbal/nonverbal behaviors, using dialogue for two-way conversations, using active listening, asking questions that are not offensive, and other skills that will enhance communication and relationships with parents. All parents do not respond to the same communication strategy in the same way. As a result, it is essential that educators know multiple ways to communicate with all the families in the school community.

- **Listening closely to "parent voice" helps educators understand the challenges that students face and rethink their practices.** A strategy for encouraging communication with parents is to create opportunities for parents, educators, and community members to share success stories and effective strategies for supporting student learning. By focusing on positives, all partners are encouraged to share what is working and what is not working in a way that promotes the development of new ideas and strategies. An important part of listening to the parents' voice is recognition of diverse family structures (mothers, fathers, grandparents, aunties, etc.) (Goodwin & King, 2002; Graham-Clay, 2005; Trumbull, 2011).

- **When teachers increase their capacity to engage parents in dialogue, there are benefits for parents, students, and teachers.** Effective dialogue is based on mutual concern, trust, and an ability to appreciate one another's perspective (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2004). Parent-teacher conferences are a typical way that schools use for communicating student progress with parents. If teachers understand and use dialogue and other culturally competent techniques, these conferences can be a time when parents and teachers talk with each other about the students' strengths and needs and develop clear, shared outcomes that reflect both the teachers' and the parents' perspectives. Some strategies suggested by the Center for the Education and Study of Diverse Populations (2006) that help teachers engage parents in dialogue during parent-teacher conferences include:

  - provide families with a planning guide for parent–teacher conferences that will facilitate two-way planning and communication;
  - have an interpreter and maintain eye contact with the family;
  - always start with positive statements and open-ended questions;
  - provide families with enough time to provide feedback; and
  - end with a thank-you, a summary of how the conference has helped the teacher better understand the student and how to work with the family, and impact on the student's success.

- **There are a number of strategies for effective two-way communication when parents have limited English skills.** A challenge to two-way communication between the school and home may be the parents' ability to communicate in English. It is important that educators remove this as a barrier to communication by considering positive strategies such as the following:

  - Translate materials to the home language.
  - Use bilingual staff members to help provide a direct link between parents and school community.
  - Provide transportation to bring families to school meetings or meet at a community location. Be open to hosting school meetings in a location where families feel comfortable (e.g., community centers, local business).
  - Build a parent network for families who speak the same language to promote mutual support among parents and help to create a more comfortable environment for attending school events. (Brewster & Railsback, 2003)

Developing and maintaining trust takes frequent interactions; demonstration that children's best interest is at heart; open, honest and respectful communication; and an understanding and acceptance of communication differences. Through effective communication, parents and teachers become partners in the children's learning and the parents feel more empowered to be involved in their children's school.

Toolbox

- **Tool 3.2.1: Fostering Two-Way Communication at Parent–Teacher Conferences**
  This tool is intended to encourage the flow of dialogue during parent-teacher conferences so that the time spent is worthwhile for the family and the teacher.

Tool 3.2.1: Fostering Two-Way Communication at Parent–Teacher Conferences
Purpose To facilitate a process by which teachers consider their past parent-teacher conferences and plan how to participate in more two-way communication in the future
Outcome To increase understanding of strategies for enhancing the effectiveness of parent-teacher conferences through two-way communication.
Logistics Materials Needed: chart paper, markers, copies of "Cross-Cultural Strategies at Parent-Teacher Conferences" template, copies of "Culturally Responsive Strategies From the Literature" handout Time: 30-45 minutes
Tool Type Protocol **Activity** **Template** Process Article Chart Other
Group Type **Individual** **Small Group** **Large Group**
Participants/Audience Parents **Staff** Both

Tool 3.2.1: Fostering Two-Way Communication at Parent–Teacher Conferences

Purpose
To facilitate a process by which teachers consider their past parent-teacher conferences and plan how to participate in more two-way communication in the future

Directions
1. Distribute the template, "Cross-Cultural Strategies at Parent–Teacher Conferences."

2. Ask participants to think individually about their typical parent–teacher conference and record their thoughts on the "Past Conference Practices" section of the template.

3. Ask participants to share the thoughts they recorded with a partner.

4. Distribute the "Culturally Responsive Strategies from the Literature" handout and ask participants to read and discuss it in their table groups.

5. Ask participants to think individually about what they just read and discussed and then record in the "Future Conference Practices" section of the template some of the culturally responsive methods they might use to increase the effectiveness of their parent/teacher conferences in the future.

6. Ask participants to share their methods for increasing the effectiveness of their parent/teacher conferences with a different partner.

7. Ask table groups to think about the following questions:
   a. What did you learn from participating in this activity?
   b. How will you use what you learned to improve your parent-teacher conferences in the future?

8. Ask each group to report out one thing they learned and one way their conferences will be improved in the future.

Tool 3.2.1: Fostering Two-Way Communication at Parent–Teacher Conferences

Cross-Cultural Strategies at Parent–Teacher Conferences

Practices	Past Conference Practices	Future Conference Practices
Method of greeting/opening		
% of teacher talk/parent talk	% teacher talk % parent talk	% teacher talk % parent talk
Topics discussed		
Questions asked of the parent(s)		
Frequency of the use of the word, "we", "you", "I"	"We" "You" "I"	"We" "You" "I"

Tool 3.2.1: Fostering Two-Way Communication at Parent–Teacher Conferences

Culturally Responsive Strategies From the Literature[6]

- Begin the conference by talking on the personal level rather than on the academic level.

- During the conference, maintain a 50 percent teacher/50 percent parent talk time.

- During the conference, mix talk about the student's educational growth with talk about the student's social development.

- Discuss the student's achievement in the context of all of the students in the class (i.e., how the child contributes to the well-being of others in the class).

- If a parent does not understand or speak English well, provide an interpreter (do not use the child as an interpreter).

- Use indirect questions, versus direct questions, about the parent's goals for the child or about how they support the child in the family.

- Express belief and commitment to open and frequent home–school communication, and ask parent(s) how they would best like communication to occur.

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[6] Goodwin, L., & King, S. (2002). *Culturally Responsive Parental Involvement: Concrete Understanding & Basic Strategies*, AACTE Publications, Washington D.C.

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Appendix A: Tool Selection

The focus for developing the Toolkit of Resources for Engaging Parents and Community as Partners in Education was on selecting tools that would help school staff understand why and how to engage parents from the diverse cultures that are present in the Pacific, specifically on Guam. In order to identify resources that might include appropriate tools, REL Pacific staff conducted a web search using Google, Google Scholar, ERIC, and ProQuest Education Journals using the following search terms: parent engagement, parent involvement in the Pacific region, cross cultural communication with families, building trusting relationships with parents in the Pacific region, Micronesian education, indigenous learning, cultural competency with families and communities, cultural beliefs and assumptions, community partnerships, Parent Information Resource Centers, federal policy parent engagement, and access and equity for families. Additionally, REL Pacific staff reviewed websites of nationally recognized centers, including the Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships; Center on Innovation and Improvement; National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education; National Center for Parents with Children with Disabilities; Center for Study of Social Policy; Harvard Family Research Project; McREL International; SEDL; and WestEd. These sites were accessed to review their resources and to identify commonly-referenced websites that might also serve as additional resources.

As REL Pacific staff reviewed the resources, they first considered whether existing tools could be adapted for the Pacific context. Many of the tools included in the identified resources focused on parents of Hispanic or African American students, were more appropriate for parents of mainland middle class students, or were not closely enough related to the topic of the Toolkit section to be useful. Consequently, REL Pacific staff developed many of the Toolkit's tools. These tools reflect REL Pacific staff's experience working with schools in the Pacific region and with indigenous populations in the United States and Canada. Table A.1 indicates whether the tools in Part 3 were adapted from existing sources or developed by REL Pacific staff.

Some of the tools developed by REL Pacific are based on general group processes (i.e., inner and outer circle, carousel) for exploring people's knowledge or beliefs about a topic or generating ideas. To develop some tools, REL Pacific staff began with an existing graphic (i.e., The Iceberg Concept of Culture in Tool 1.1.2 and the trilateral graphic in Figures A, B, and C in Tool 1.4.1) that illustrates a concept (e.g., understanding cultural influences) related to family and community engagement or a way of thinking about it and created a tool based on the graphic. REL Pacific staff developed Tool 3.1.1, Reflection on Building Trusting Relationships with Families, based on information from Megan Tschannen-Moran's research. She provided suggestions for and feedback on the activity in Tool 3.1.1 when we sought permission to use her five facets of trust framework.

Taken together, the tools in the Toolkit provide many avenues for school staff to enhance their understanding of family and community engagement in education and their ability to involve family and communities as partners in supporting student learning.

Table A.1: Source of Tools in Part 3 of the Toolkit: Adaptation, New Development, or Use of Existing Graphics

Tool Number	Tool Name	Development	Comments	Citation
3.1.1	Reflection on Building Trusting Relationships With Families	REL Pacific Staff Existing framework	This tool uses an existing framework as the focus of an activity developed by REL Pacific staff. The researcher (Megan Tschannen-Moran) on whose work the activity is based provided feedback on and suggestions for the approach to the activity.	Information about the facets of trust is drawn from *Trust matters: Leadership for successful schools, 2nd Ed.* (2014) by Megan Tschannen-Moran, published by Jossey-Bass. Used with permission. Tschannen-Moran provided suggestions for this activity.
3.1.2	Communication to Enhance Family and Community Engagement	REL Pacific Staff	REL Pacific staff developed this activity and compiled the list of cross-cultural communication strategies from the literature cited.	Goodwin, L., & King, S., (2002). *Culturally Responsive Parental Involvement: Concrete Understanding & Basic Strategies*, AACTE Publications, Washington D.C. Graham-Clay, S. (2005). Communicating with parents: strategies for teachers. *The School Community Journal*, 117-130. Retrieved from http://www.adi.org/journal/ss05/Graham-Clay.pdf Trumbull, E. (2011). *FINE commentary: the challenge of cross-cultural family-school communication*. Retrieved from http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/fine-commentary-the-challenge-of-cross-cultural-family-school-communication Ferguson, C., Ramos, M., Rudo, Z., & Wood, L. (2008). *The school–family connection: Looking at the larger picture.* Austin, TX: National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools at SEDL. Retrieved from

Tool Number	Tool Name	Development	Comments	Citation
				http://www.sedl.org/connections/resources/sfclitrev.pdf
3.2.1	Fostering Two-Way Communication at Parent-Teacher Conferences	REL Pacific Staff	REL Pacific staff developed this activity, including the template for recording past and future cross-cultural practices during parent-teacher conferences. The practices included on the template reflect information from the literature cited on the handout that is part of the activity.	Goodwin, L., & King, S. (2002). *Culturally Responsive Parental Involvement: Concrete Understanding & Basic Strategies*, AACTE Publications, Washington D.C. Graham-Clay, S. (2005). Communicating with parents: strategies for teachers. *The School Community Journa*l, 117-130. Retrieved from http://www.adi.org/journal/ss05/Graham-Clay.pdf Trumbull, E. (2011). *FINE commentary: the challenge of cross-cultural family-school communication.* Retrieved from http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/fine-commentary-the-challenge-of-cross-cultural-family-school-communication

Appendix B: Tool Types

The descriptions below are specific to this Toolkit and may or may not apply in other contexts.

Tool Type	Description
Activity	A structured learning experience that involves discussing, reading, writing, or creating something for a specific purpose
Article	A written document, that is part of a journal, newspaper, policy brief, or other larger document that is not a book, that is used as part of an activity or as a resource that supports learning related to a particular topic
Chart	A graphic representation of information provided in table form
Process	A structured approach to accomplish a task that includes specific steps that can be used in a variety of situations
Protocol	A structured way to conduct a conversation that includes guidance in the form of questions or steps
Template	A graphic organizer that guides users in accomplishing a specific task, such as developing an action plan
Other	Types of tools that are not described as activities, articles, charts, processes, protocols, or templates

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