



# Five Strategies for Engaging Marginalized Communities



## Culturally Sustaining Communication

- Ensure outreach is culturally relevant and available in the languages spoken by the community.
- Avoid one-size-fits-all approaches. Tailor messaging to reflect the values, traditions and concerns of different cultural groups.
- Commit to equity in outreach. Ensure that outreach efforts intentionally target and prioritize underrepresented groups, recognizing that equity requires more effort and resources for those who have historically been excluded.
- Regularly assess outreach efforts to ensure they are inclusive. Make adjustments when needed.



## Trust Building through Consistent Engagement

- Establish ongoing relationships, not just during crises or events. Frequent, informal engagement can help build trust with underrepresented families and community members.
- Have district representatives participate in community events to show authentic interest in the communities served.
- Collaborate with trusted community organizations that already have established relationships with underrepresented families. This helps bridge gaps and foster stronger connections.
- Leverage these partnerships to ensure outreach efforts are guided by those who understand the specific needs and concerns of families and community members.



## Support Families as Leaders

- Elevate family voices in decision-making. Develop formal structures (e.g., family advisory boards) that include underrepresented voices, ensuring these groups have a genuine impact on district policies and practices.
- Share positive examples of how family and community input has led to meaningful changes shaped decisions and led to meaningful changes. Follow up on their contributions to demonstrate accountability.

## Empathetic Two-way Communication Channels



- Focus on how your school district can work collaboratively with families and community members to strengthen schools. Do not limit interactions to family volunteerism and fundraising.
- Use multiple channels for families to provide feedback and ask questions, ensuring these channels are accessible, easy to use and safe for all, including those who may be wary of institutional authority.
- Consider methods like small community gatherings, home visits and virtual meetings to make participation less intimidating and more accessible.
- Promote listening with empathy and action. Make community engagement an active listening process that is empathetic and avoids dismissiveness to the challenges families face. Take actionable steps based on what you learn.

## Address Barriers to Participation



- Recognize and address logistical barriers, such as transportation, childcare and work schedules that might prevent families from engaging in school activities and meetings. Do not assume families don't care about education!
- Provide flexible options for families to participate, such as offering both in-person and virtual options for meetings and holding activities at various times.

- Offer opportunities for families to take on real leadership roles within the district, such as leading workshops, speaking at board meetings, and convening other parents for dialog about how their schools can improve for all students.
- Provide training for families on advocacy, school policies and the education system to help them become more effective voices for change.
- Amplify stories and achievements. Highlight and celebrate the stories, strengths and achievements of underrepresented families within district communications (newsletters, social media, etc.).

