Creating a Welcoming Environment for English Learners and their Families Checklist

It is important to make English learners (ELs) and their families feel welcome at school. There are multiple ways you can build ELs' and their families' trust at your school.

Directions: First, review each of the following strategies to decide if you are currently making ELs and their families feel welcome in these ways. Then, consider action steps you will take to create a more welcoming environment for ELs and their families.

Strategy At our school, do we….	Yes	No
Display student work on the walls (including work in home languages)?		
Have visible signs in students' home languages?		
Communicate with families in a variety of ways (e.g., information sent home in home language, phone calls, home visits)?		
Display maps and flags of students' home countries?		
Have a bilingual staff or bilingual volunteers who can meet with families as needed?		
Provide staff opportunities to learn some common phrases in families' home languages and key information about families' cultures?		
Invite EL families to volunteer in the school (e.g., helping in a classroom, being a resource for other families)?		
Provide services that remove barriers that EL families from attending school events (e.g., child care, interpreters, transportation)?		
Have bilingual books in students' home languages in the school library and classrooms?		
Connect new families with a contact person who speaks their home language and offer tours of the schools in home languages?		
Host events specifically for EL families (e.g., back-to-school events, international picnics)?		
Have a parent room with bilingual magazines, school information, and a computer for families to use?		

Staehr Fenner, D. (2014). Adapted from Breiseth, L., Robertson, K. & Lafond, S. (2011). A guide for engaging EL families: 20 strategies for school leaders. Washington, DC: Colorín Colorado.

Possible Barriers to EL Family Engagement and Solutions

Possible Barriers	Possible Solutions
Language	**Parent** liaisons **Bilingual** staff **Translated** materials **Home language** phone tree/volunteers
Transportation	**Rides** to school events **Ride sharing** resource **Information** about public transportation **Meeting with families** in their community
Time	**Flexibility** in scheduling conferences and events **Parent** survey
Childcare	**Provide childcare** for conferences and school events
Understanding of school system and role of parent	**EL meetings** to provide information about school system and education **School tours** **Community volunteers** to share information in home language
Fear	**Demonstrated support** for EL families (regardless of status) **Adult education** programs - Family **support groups**

Source: SupportEd. (2018). Retrieved from https://getsupported.net/wp-content/uploads/Barriers_and_Solutions_Tool.pdf

EL Family Engagement Checklist

Area of EL Family Engagement	Scale: 1 (Lowest) to 5 (Highest)
1. Our school (or district)* advocates for its EL families who have not yet developed their own voice in the school context.	1 2 3 4 5
2. Our EL families participate in their children's education as much as our non-EL families.	1 2 3 4 5
3. Our school has high expectations of EL families.	1 2 3 4 5
4. Our school understands our EL families' perspectives.	1 2 3 4 5
5. Our school conducts home visits with its EL families.	1 2 3 4 5
6. Our school is flexible and creative in providing alternative schedules, locations, and kinds of events to involve its EL families.	1 2 3 4 5
7. Our school values its EL families' home languages and cultures.	1 2 3 4 5
8. Our school communicates information well to EL families.	1 2 3 4 5
9. Our school has an acceptable rate of EL family volunteers in classrooms and for events.	1 2 3 4 5
10. Our school helps EL families locate health care so that our EL children come to school healthy.	1 2 3 4 5
11. Our school develops EL family leadership so that families can serve as their own advocates.	1 2 3 4 5
12. Our school has a plan to increase EL family engagement and advocacy.	1 2 3 4 5

*Please substitute "district" for "school" when appropriate.

Adapted from Staehr Fenner, D. (2014). Advocating for English learners: A guide for educators. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.