The Pebble in the Pond...
Engaging Culturally Diverse Families in Advocacy

“Do unto others as they would have you do unto them.”

The Platinum Rule

• “Seek first to understand, then to be understood.”

Steven Covey

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What Impacts Relationships?

- Understand the role of differences that affect or define status, relationships and socially acceptable behavior
- Know that our actions & words don’t always have the impact we intend
- Recognize that many people communicate & process information differently
- Internalize different cultural approaches to silence, advocacy, & conflict
Cultural Reciprocity with Families

- Challenging power
- Assuming risks
- Sharing stories & ourselves
- Listening with the heart
- Involving those affected
- Offering alternatives
- Balancing the scales of justice and equity
- Holding ourselves accountable
How Change Happens

“Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never has and it never will.”

-Frederick Douglas
Agents of Cultural Competence

- Understand context, barriers to change, and stages of change
- Listen
- Respond
- Advocate
- Pursue change
- Intervene at the systems level
- Team with others
- Facilitate
Leadership in Cultural Competence

- Inspire and help people work toward the goal
- Share leadership
- Recognize diverse roles
- Become self-aware
- Accept responsibility
- Ask for help
- Be open to constructive criticism
- Encourage & motivate partners
Know Yourself

- Who am I?
- What am I doing here
- What are my:
  - Goals, purposes
  - Expectations
  - Motivations?
- What strengths & challenges do I bring?
- How can I best use my skills?
- How can I make space for others?
Gaining Community Trust

- Trust is not automatic; it must be earned and it can be lost.
- Trust must be two-way: those who are not trusted, do not trust.
- Trust leads to belief in each other and in a cause.
Developing Trust

- Be honest about the problems, the barriers, the potential negative consequences - as well as the potential benefit of action
Developing Trust

• Be in it for the long haul. Don’t abandon ship after the first disappointment or failure.
• Admit mistakes.
• Ask for help!!!
• LISTEN!!!
• Acknowledge others’ contributions.
Creating Community Vision

- Creating a vision requires:
  - Trust
  - Hope
  - Shared relationships
  - Honesty
  - Openness
  - Flexibility
  - Love
Preparing for Collaboration

• Discuss with partners in advance:
  - Agreed on issues?
  - Differences among subgroups?
  - Gifts of each?
  - Stuff to give up?
  - Stuff to gain?
  - Anticipated conflicts & compromises?
  - Strategies to address conflicts?
The Vision

- Visions are not abstract. They are based on people’s hearts and souls, their experiences, and their belief that a better life is possible - and deserved.
The Vision

- Creating a shared vision means letting go of the present to focus on what could be.
- “What would it look like, feel like, smell like, taste like, sound like, if it was good?”
The Vision

- How do we get there?
- What supports are needed?
- What is each of our roles in providing those supports?
- How can it be sustained?
The Vision

• Everyone’s contribution is respected.

• Individual contributions are discussed among all participants.

• A common, shared vision is shaped through discussion and pieced together like a community quilt.
Reaching Consensus

- Consensus is not reached when everyone is silent.
- Consensus is only reached when everyone assents.
- The “who” of consensus is based on your definition of your community.
- Consensus is not static
Reaching Consensus

- Reaching consensus requires the involvement of diverse sectors of your community.
- Involving these diverse sectors requires specific attention to broadening your base.
Diversity

- Honor & express sincere interest in racial, ethnic, cultural, & socio-economic diversity.
- Communicate in diverse languages.
- Prepare existing leaders to hear and make space for new voices & new leaders.
Diversity

• Adapt collaborative models to diverse cultures.
• Manage changing distribution of power & responsibility.
Ensuring Diversity

- Ensure broad representation among groups based on the communities in question.
- Be particularly careful to include members of traditionally underserved groups.
- Avoid any appearance of tokenism.
Making room for new voices

- Multiple opportunities for participation, from a small contribution of time to progressively larger contributions of time and effort.
- The level of participation varies depending on life circumstances.
Making room for new voices

- Community members are listened to; their ideas are supported and respected.

- Community members do not experience retribution as a result of their participation, or receive support if there is retribution.
The Chinese characters that make up the verb “to listen” tell us something about this skill.
Making room for new voices

- Community member participation has an impact - it makes an appreciable difference.
- Community member participation is appreciated; that appreciation is acknowledged.
Gathering Community Knowledge

- Communities know:
  - Their history: where they have been
  - Their culture: who they are
  - Sacred places
  - Dangerous places
  - What is important to them
Gathering community knowledge

- Encourage and support community members to find their voice.
- Be ready to hear what community members say.
- Respect the passion of the community for change.
Gathering community knowledge

- Ensure that diverse community member perspectives are not considered a separate component, but are infused throughout.
- Always consider an individual community member’s story as valid.
Sharing Community Knowledge

- Tell stories within the community to build shared knowledge
- Listen to the stories of families
- Help families share their stories with each other
Partnering for Cultural Competence

- Committed Leadership from all partners
- Maintaining a partnership with good communication, clear decision-making, & specific responsibilities
Building Cultural Competence

- Quality information:
  - Develop accurate “map” of strengths & needs of families from diverse communities – who’s important, what’s important, relationships
    - Formal
    - Informal
  - Know how others have addressed these issues
Building Cultural Competence

• Effective strategies:
  - Ongoing:
    • Planning
    • Implementation
    • Evaluation
    • Revision of plan

• Persistent focus on key systems & central issues

• Understand specific changes needed
Specific Suggestions

- Allow time for reflection, don't always fill silent spaces
- Engage community leaders and cultural liaisons
- Modify communication methods, processes and materials to respond to individual circumstances
- Provide ongoing training and support in diversity, cultural competence, flexibility
- Provide qualified, trained and prepared interpreters when needed
Implementing Changes to Enhance Cultural Competence

- Bring about changes
- Monitor implementation to make sure improvements take place
The Last (First)Word

• Supporting & empowering diverse family members to participate in decision-making for their children is its own victory, regardless of the specific outcome of any particular effort.

• Families are in it for the long haul; we must be there, too!