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Engaging All Community Members

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Engaging All Community Members

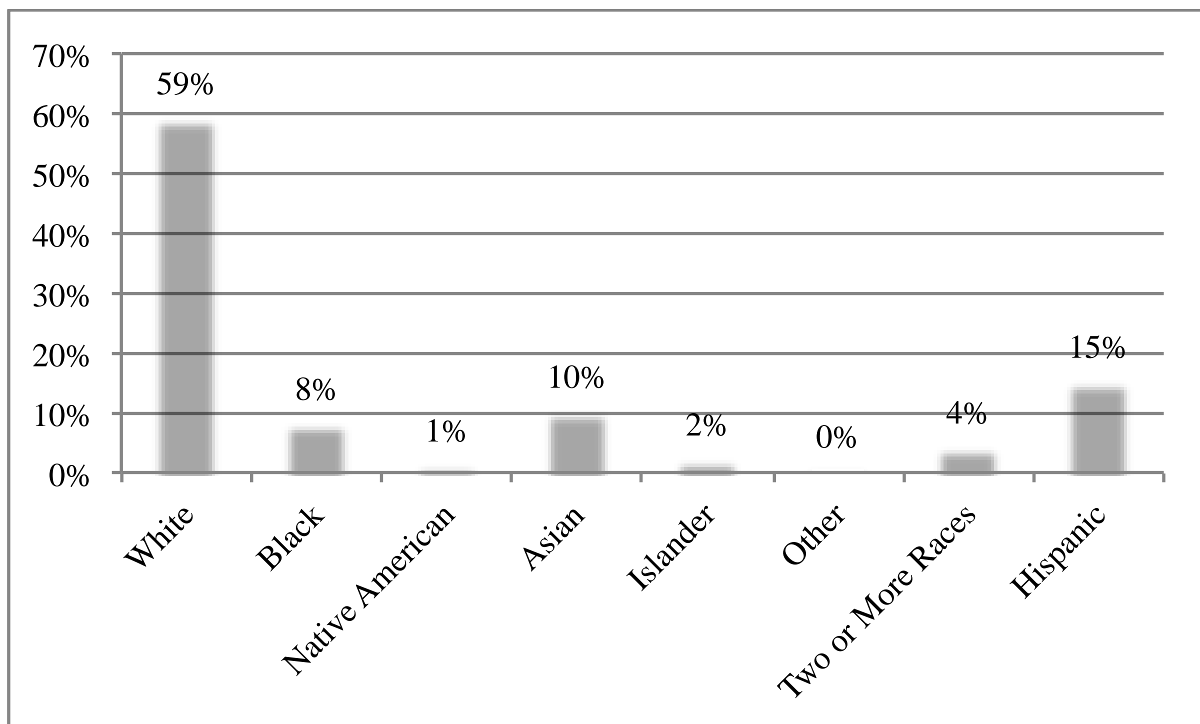
Public education is meant to be *for* the public and supported *by* the public (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). However, focus on school improvement is mostly centered around students, parents, and school personnel within the school and, therefore, is not representative of the whole community (Clifford, Menon, Gangi, Condon, & Hornung, 2012; Haggetry, Elgin, & Wooley, 2010). In order to include the voices of all parents within the school community and improve school climates for all, outreach to members living in the community is necessary (Ice, Thapa, & Cohen; 2015). Before this happens, schools must first reflect on attributes (e.g., socio-economic status, educational attainment, languages spoken at home) representative of their community and acknowledge any cultural similarities or differences to better help guide them in this process (Epstein et al., 2002; Ice et al., 2015). With this in mind, this report seeks to address the common barriers typically associated with parents' involvement in their children's schooling (e.g., culturally diverse, low economic status, underrepresented, economically disadvantaged) as well as provide strategies for school personnel regarding the outreach of culturally diverse parents and the community as a whole. This information is derived from relevant research within the education field and from demographically-comparable schools with that of the Parkrose School District (PSD).

Parkrose Demographics

In order to grow as a district, through the inclusion of all community members' voices, school districts must recognize who lives in their community so they can more effectively reach these community members (Epstein et al., 2008). Many school administrators are uncertain how to accomplish this task, however (Cohen, 2014). A starting point may be through the acknowledgment of the members who make up the district, since supporting all students involves

the support from the whole community (Cohen, 2011). Recognizing the cultural similarities and differences of members within a community provides an essential element of respect that encourages whole community participation (Ice et al., 2015). Within the PSD, 59% of its community members identified themselves as White, the next highest identified races were Hispanic at 15% and Asian at 10% (Census Reporter, 2015). Figure 1 displays this information.

Figure 1. PSD Community Members by Race (Census Reporter, 2015)



Understanding differing definitions of *education* and the roles and responsibilities that are expected is also important to consider when attempting to communicate with or include members of diverse cultural groups into the educational processes for students and school improvement (Durand, 2010; West, 2001). For example, the Spanish term (and belief surrounding) *educación* (i.e., education), encompasses more than just academics, but also includes moral and interpersonal goals and accomplishments, such as proper behavior, good manners, and respect for elders (Valenzuela, 1999; Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1995). Research

shows that Hispanic/Latino parents fulfill their role in their child's *academics* when they help develop their social and moral growth and leave the academic instruction solely to the classroom teacher (Goldenber & Gallimore, 1995; Greenfield, Quiroz, & Raeff, 2000; Valdés, 1996). This belief system may be something to consider when communicating with this demographic of community members.

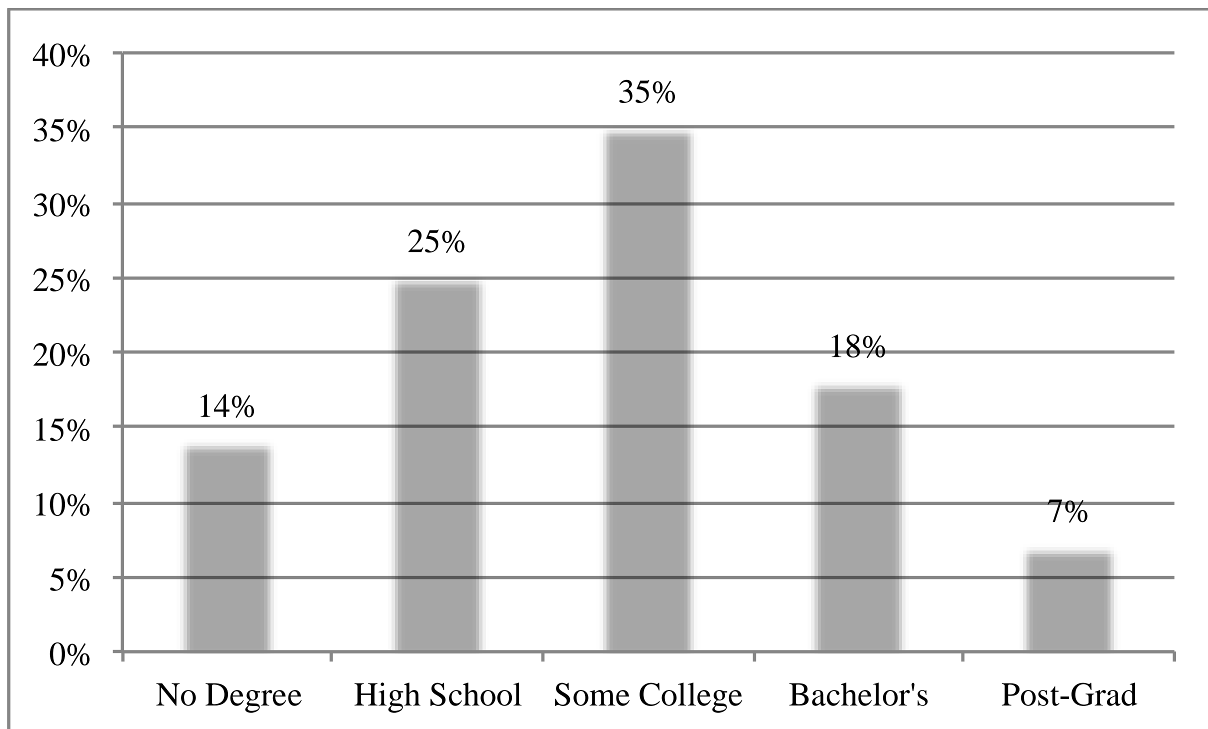
It is difficult to conclude the exact reasons why there are differences in various sociocultural traditions and parents' belief systems regarding their child's performance in school and their participation in school activities (Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010). However, research suggests that parents' understanding of and trust in feedback from their child's school plays an important role (Goldenberg, Gallimore, Reese, & Garnier, 2001). Alexander, Entwisle, and Bedinger (1994) conducted a study involving a large stratified sample of 20 Baltimore elementary schools' students and their families, which measured differences in parents' beliefs regarding education and their attentiveness to performance feedback from their child's school. Results showed that parents with a European (White) background more closely matched their academic expectations for their children with the school's expectations than parents with an African American background. This means that African American parents saw a greater mismatch between their belief systems surrounding their child's education when compared to the school's belief system and, therefore, were less likely to communicate with or participate in school activities (Alexander et al., 1994).

Improving parental involvement typically focuses on suggestions that are biased towards the values of White middle-class patrons and, therefore, shuts out the opinions of diverse members of the community (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Therefore, it is important to understand cultural differences and expectations regarding education and plan accordingly. It is important to

note that, though research suggests common cultural differences in educational belief systems, everyone is different, and determiners of parental involvement will vary greatly depending on the individual's life circumstances (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

These life circumstances include the level of education received by community members; these demographics for PSD are included in Figure 2. The majority of PSD members have either received a high school diploma (25%) or have received some college (35%) (Census Reporter, 2015). However, over 14% of PSD members have either not received a high school diploma or have less than a 9th grade level of education. Over 18% of PSD members have received either an associate's, bachelor's, or graduate degree.

Figure 2. PSD Community Members by Educational Attainment (Census Reporter, 2015)



Parents who feel capable of helping their children academically (largely due to their level of educational attainment) are more likely to help with the academic work and are also more likely to communicate with schools and teachers (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Yamamoto &

Holloway, 2010). Parents that do not feel fit to support their children academically, often due to receiving limited education, are more likely to develop low academic expectations for their children (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010), and research shows that they will be less likely to help their children academically and will be less likely to participate in school events and communicate with teachers because of this (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Yamamoto, 2007; Zhan, 2005).

Another important factor that must be better understood is language. The majority of PSD members (75%) speak only English at home, while the remaining 25% mainly speak either Spanish, some forms of Indo-European or Asian/Pacific Islander languages, or were labeled as "other". Out of the languages spoken (other than English), very few (less than 5%) identified themselves as being able to speak English well (Proximity, 2017b). In general, such parents are less likely to be involved in school, one key reason being poor communication and language barriers (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). To combat these issues, LaRocque and colleagues (2011) suggest using translators, and when translating newsletters, teachers should use pictures or videos when possible and provide a glossary of technical terms simplified for parents.

The type of language used to communicate with parents, from a cultural standpoint, is also important to consider (Bastiani, 1993). For example, when attempting to communicate with parents via newsletters, using language such as "parents and professionals" defines one set of people as the professionals and the others as just "parents;" this acts as a divide between teachers and parents (Bastiani, 1993). Thus, later on, using typically-positive terms like "partnership" will not be as effective in eliciting participation or trust from parents due to this barrier that was put in place from the beginning (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

Gaining the trust of community members is essential towards future school participation (Young, 1998). Within the PSD, 21% identified themselves as being born outside the U.S., which may cause increased difficulty towards those community members' participation (Census Reporter, 2015). Further, a study conducted by Young (1998) showed that a lack of trust between Mexican-American parents and their child's schools was due to a mismatch in cultural roles and expectations for their child's education; this, therefore, had a negative effect on parental participation. Developing trust by matching educational beliefs, consideration of language barriers, and types of language used when communicating should be considered by administrators who are attempting to reach out to their community members for greater school representation and participation (Bastiani, 1993; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Young, 1998).

Lastly, socioeconomic status (SES) is also a major factor. In 2015, families with PSD earned an average of $49,241 (Census Reporter, 2015). In the year 2015, 20% of the population earned an income that placed them below the poverty level (Census Reporter, 2015); children under 18 years old represented 31% of the population living in poverty. Research shows that lower SES parents tend to feel less welcome in their child's school when compared to higher SES parents (Dumais, 2006). Also, 18% of families living in poverty in PSD were led by a single parent (Census Reporter, 2015). Families that are headed by single parents generally have greater difficulty participating in school activities (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Finally, approximately 10% of community members did not have a vehicle for commuting, which makes school participation much more difficult (Census Reporter, 2015; LaRocque et al., 2011). Administrators must first consider community members' life circumstances when attempting to communicate with or include them in school-based decisions; doing so conveys a feeling of respect and will aid in greater community participation (Durand, 2010).

School enrollment. Community is the basis of public education and therefore schools should be representative of their communities (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Schools must acknowledge cultural differences in order to develop trust and increase communication between the school community and diverse community members (Goldenberg et al., 2001). This can be accomplished by gaining an understanding of the members within the community and their life circumstances and by carefully considering the types of language being used for communicating (Bastiani, 1993; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Doing so will positively impact schools by increasing participation as well as bringing in new ideas and diversity (Epstein et al., 2008).

The following section provides a snapshot of the most recent school year for PSD and a closer look at the students themselves. According to the Oregon Department of Education (ODE, 2017), in the 2016-2017 school year there were 3,131 students (K-12) enrolled in the Parkrose School District, and the majority of those students were in Grades K-3 (n = 923) and Grades 9-12 (n = 953) (ODE, 2017). The Oregon Department of Education (2017) identified most (65 to 95%) of these students as economically disadvantaged (i.e., coming from a household that meets eligibility guidelines for free/ reduced school meals), as speakers of 23 to 31 different languages other than English, with roughly 29 to 38% of these students being English Language Learners (ELL) (ODE, 2017).

Parental Involvement and Academic Achievement

Participation by parents impacts students' achievement in a number of ways (Walker, Shenker, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2010). Students' self-perception, intrinsic motivation for learning, and attitudes towards school, as well as the positive relationships that are formed between the students and their teachers, all increase with greater parental participation (Walker et al., 2010).

Other researchers suggest that with greater parental participation, the connections between family networks (e.g., being able to share information regarding common concerns or issues) improve as well (Hill & Tayler, 2004). Turney and Kao (2009) imply that parental participation in their child's education helps form social capital which promotes academic achievement. From this promotion of social capital, children start to view their education through a new lens of appreciation and value.

Parental participation in their children's education helps to increase student academic achievement; however, some types of participation are linked to greater student achievement than others (Jeynes, 2003). Jeynes (2003) conducted a meta-analysis on the factors of parental participation and found that students of color (or coming from diverse school districts such as PSD) especially benefited from an increase in parental involvement. This was accomplished by parents either helping with or checking their child's homework or by parents communicating their academic expectations of the child. Also, when parents were able to dedicate time participating in the classroom, greater student achievement occurred (Hill & Craft, 2003). Thus, not only is it important to reach community members (especially culturally diverse communities), hear their voices, and include their opinions in the workings of the school environment, it is also important that children/students are able to see their parents and other culturally diverse community members dedicating their time towards student success. However, accomplishment of parents participating in their child's education both at home and in school is not always as easy as it seems, as working parents and culturally diverse parents tend to encounter more obstacles than non-working or White parents (Antunez, 2000; Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008).

Common Obstacles to Parental Involvement

Numerous obstacles exist for parents trying to participate in their child's education (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008; Rah et al., 2009; Smith et al., 2008). One comes in the form of misconception, meaning, schools often view parents' low school involvement as a signal that they are not interested in their child's education, when in fact they literally may not have time due to working multiple jobs (Arias et al., 2008). This misconception is rooted in the deficit model which focuses on poor family and cultural characteristics instead of strengths that promote social and cultural capital.

It is common that schools or teachers only contact parents when their students are performing poorly; this does not promote positive relationships between parents and schools, which essentially creates another barrier to parental participation (Kohl, Lengua, & McMahon, 2000; Trotman, 2001). Connecting with families early in their students' academic life may help push past preconceptions based on racism or a lack of parental involvement and help promote a shift in thinking, for both teachers and parents, built on a foundation of positive relationships and a focus on promoting academic success for their students/children (McKay, Atkins, Hawkins, Brown, & Lynn, 2003).

Common obstacles regarding parental participation in their children's education that are listed both within qualitative and quantitative research includes cross-cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic factors, such as:

- Parents' perceptions regarding school's limited cordiality (i.e., parents do not feel connected with schools due to a limited feeling in being welcome or the lack of relationships built between them);
- Lack of effective communication;

- Lack of training, support, and encouragement of parental participation;
- Lack of professional development for schools regarding cultural competency;
- Low English proficiency by parents;
- Lack of child care, transportation, and resources for life skills training;
- Reluctance by the parents to question the authority of the schools or teachers;
- Parents' immigration status; and
- Differences between expectations of immigrant parents to the U.S. compared with their home countries (e.g., levels of parental involvement or parental interest in their child's education). (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008; De Gaetano, 2007; Rah et al., 2009; Ramirez, 2003; Smith et al., 2008)

Obstacles for culturally diverse families. School districts that represent culturally diverse populations encounter significant obstacles regarding parental educational involvement (Epstein et al., 2002; Antunez, 2000; Onikama, Hammond, & Koki, 1998). Cultural differences and expectations regarding education may exist between culturally diverse families and the school district which may discourage parent participation in schools or involvement in their child's schoolwork (Epstein et al., 2002). Also, parents who have felt discriminated against in the past or have had poor educational experiences in the past due to discrimination are less likely to communicate with or participate in school-based activities for their children (Antunez, 2000). Often culturally diverse parents who have felt discriminated upon in their past educational experiences have difficulty participating in their children's school (Onikama et al., 1998). PSD should consider the obstacles its culturally diverse community faces to further ensure parent participation and trust for the school district.

Strategies to Promote Parental Involvement

Many authors and researchers conclude with strategies for increasing parental participation. Administrators can begin to encourage greater parental involvement by including parental involvement in the school's mission statements (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Zarate, 2007). Providing information (in appropriate translations and in multiple formats) about the importance of parental involvement can help encourage greater parental participation in schools (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008; Green et al., 2007; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Rah et al., 2009; Ramirez, 2003). Cultural barriers that originally impede parental participation (such as those listed above regarding cultural discrimination) begin to diminish once barriers are removed (Chen, Kyle, & McIntyre, 2008; Lee & Bowen, 2006).

It is important to provide a positive, welcoming environment when considering parental involvement (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Green et al., 2007; Walker et al., 2010). One way of doing this is through emphasis of the functional and cultural needs of the parents (Green et al., 2007; LaRocque et al., 2011). Many parents have trouble getting off work to attend school functions or may have transportation issues, so it is important to consider the times of school events (Green et al., 2007; LaRocque et al., 2011). One way to address this is to schedule activities in the community versus at school or to meet parents at or near their working or living communities (De Gaetano, 2007; Ramirez, 2003; Zarate, 2007). Studies also show that parents respond to more personalized invitations from teachers rather than impersonal notices sent from school offices (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Zarate, 2007). These personal invitations serve as building blocks for considering families' visions of their role in helping their students academically and developing trust among teachers, schools, and their children (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Additionally, parents are more likely to come to

school-based events when their child plays more of a central role in the event (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008; Ramirez, 2003).

School personnel can play an important role in the outreach process for culturally diverse parents and other community members by creating action teams (which focus on implementation, development, and monitoring of these practices) involving administrators, teachers, other staff, parents, and community members (Epstein, 2004; Ramirez, 2003). Some literature suggests utilizing the expertise of a point person (this could be school staff or parent) either in the subject area or through language (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Rah et al., 2009). School counselors are great at filling these roles (i.e., connecting with families). By including members on the action team that have similar backgrounds or interests as the culturally diverse members of the school district, community members will be more likely to receive the school's message positively and will be more likely to participate in school-based activities in the future (Brewster & Railsback, 2018; Howland et al., 2006; Jeynes, 2005; Yohani, 2013).

Literature points towards school principals as being vital for parent involvement (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008; Chen et al., 2008; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). School principals may be able to help encourage parental involvement on a school-wide scale, such that parents, teachers, and other staff are more easily included (e.g., involve other principals and schools within the district to brainstorm ideas or create programs catered towards the district's needs). Principals also can provide access to family involvement strategies for teachers via various professional development opportunities, so teachers can continue to learn how to address these concerns (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Peterson & Ladky, 2007).

Strategies to help build trust with culturally diverse community members. Culturally diverse community members may initially feel a lack of trust with the individuals within their

schools that affects the community members' participation in activities and impedes open communication with individuals in the school district, so districts such as PSD should continue to focus on building relationships of trust and respect (Brewster & Railsback, 2018; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Some ways to do this include:

- Assess the level of trust within the school community (e.g., identify barriers to trusting relationships by soliciting input from all parties);
- Actively welcome students and their families (e.g., decorate the school with signs and pictures representative of diverse community members, hire administrative staff that speak the same languages, create family resource centers, etc.);
- Communicate positive messages home to parents about their children (e.g., celebrate student's successes versus addressing their struggles);
- Demonstrate that district personnel (i.e., teachers, school administrators, other school staff) care (e.g., this could be as small as learning a few words in the parent's native tongue, or having an informal get together);
- Take parents' concerns seriously; and
- Promote professionalism and reliability. (Brewster & Railsback, 2018; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Henderson & Mapp, 2002)

Educational cultural brokers. Educational cultural brokers are people who advocate on behalf of individuals or groups of people to ensure there is successful adaptation for all families in the school community (Yohani, 2013). These brokers often include teachers, instructional aides, school counselors, and parent liaisons (Amatea & West-Olatunji, 2007; Cooper et al., 1999; Howland, Anderson, Smiley, & Abbott, 2006; Major, 2006). Brokers share a common love for engaging families and reaching underserved populations of families within a school

community, and they act in a culturally sensitive and respectful way to help connect families with their schools (Yohani, 2013). They engage in both micro- (e.g., day-to-day supports for students, communicating with parents) and macro-level activities (i.e., the overall transformation of the system or relationships between schools and diverse parents over time) inside and outside of schools (Yohani, 2013).

Educational cultural brokers may engage in a number of activities (micro and macro) that are essential for connecting with all families within the school community. For example, brokers that offer bilingual support to families not fluent in English, benefit and feel more included in their children's education (Howland et al., 2006). Activities may also include helping parents navigate and interpret the mainstream educational system, connect with administrators, and help students find employment (Martinez-Cosio & Iannacone, 2007; Yohani, 2013). Translating or helping students and their parents make sense of academic expectations or subculture is also something educational cultural brokers may provide (Martinez-Cosio & Iannacone, 2007).

Educational cultural brokers can help build relationships between parents and the school community, ultimately allowing for greater participation from diverse parents, which is often an essential component for the success of students and the overall school community (Jeynes, 2005). It is important to note that differing belief systems between educational cultural brokers and administrators, regarding connecting with families and beliefs around education, in general, may cause conflict and add confusion to students and parents involved. So, it is important that these belief systems are confronted before allowing a team of educational cultural brokers to start providing these supports to the community (Yohani, 2013).

Connecting with Culturally Diverse Community Members

School districts with culturally diverse community members face common obstacles (e.g., poor communication, not knowing how to reach community members) as well as culturally-related obstacles (e.g., lack of parents' trust of schools, language barriers, parents' past perceived discriminatory experiences with education), that all contribute to less parental involvement in schools. However, these obstacles can be surpassed, as some diverse schools have demonstrated.

Fairbanks North Star Borough School District has a diverse student and parent population. In the district over 60 languages are and roughly 10% of the student demographic is represented by Alaska Native (Brewster & Railsback, 2018). Fairbanks North District utilizes parent mentors as a means to bridge communication between schools and culturally diverse families. They have many success stories regarding connections that were made between parent mentors who could speak the languages of the diverse families within their school communities (e.g., Russian, Spanish) and the impacts that those had on the students and the parent's participation in their child's education later on.

Parent mentors within the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District offer a variety of services (often decided by or with the school principal) for the parents to aid their child's educational success, including simply being welcoming through interactions in school or in the community, doing home visits, providing rides to and from school, and keeping a contact list of parents that need continuing support. The district also notes that the program was initially funded with Title I money, then was later funded mostly through Title III dollars (so that parent mentors could work in both Title I schools and non-Title I schools).

Fairbanks North Star Borough School District also has found success in parental involvement by using family workshops (Brewster & Railsback, 2018). Parents, specifically parents of English Language Learners (ELLs), are targeted to come to these workshops. In the workshops the school's teachers teach parents math games that can be played at home with their children, provide information regarding raising children in bilingual homes, and conduct workshops where parents can make their own activities and bring them home for family use. The Title III development coordinator said that the best way they have found in contacting these culturally diverse groups of parents was for the parent mentors or ELL teachers to send flyers home that had been translated.

Another school district found success in reaching their underrepresented community members by diligently engaging and working with culturally diverse families in their school district through parent and teacher association programs (PTSA) created by schools, teachers, and parents. Bellevue is a large urban school district located near Seattle, Washington. It has over 15,000 students and is culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse; Asian families represent 21% of the school population, followed by 3% African American and 8% Hispanic (roughly 68% of the students are White). The district (e.g., district administrators and school principals) offers families many opportunities to partner with individual schools (Brewster & Railsback, 2018). For example, teachers send out invitations to families regarding special interest groups such as Parents for African Americans. Teachers recognized the mostly underrepresented population of African American students and parents in the school's district and decided to form an organization that could represent these family's interests. African American parents were encouraged to join the organization to address concerns involving these students and parents and the concerns were eventually taken to the district's superintendent. Parents and teachers felt like

their voice was being heard and that it mattered within the Bellevue school district (Brewster & Railsback, 2018).

These two school districts give practical examples of how underrepresented and culturally diverse community members within the school district can be reached. Utilizing expertise (especially those who are bilingual) from a variety of sources is effective in building trust with hard-to-reach, culturally diverse, underrepresented community members and enhancing parental participation inside and outside of school settings. Students, schools, and communities all benefit from this engagement.

Connecting with Hard-to-Reach Communities Using School Climate Surveys

Typically, school climate surveys focus on school personnel (i.e., students and teachers) and rarely include the voices of diverse community members (Clifford et al., 2012; Ice et al., 2015) even though school climate reform is mostly centered on community needs (National School Climate Council, 2012). Including the community's voice (especially when it is different from the cultural norm) to help support public schools is foundational for how public education was meant to be (i.e. supported by the public) and is valuable for school improvement (Ice et al., 2015, U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

Schools benefit from hearing and incorporating new ideas from their culturally-diverse community members (Epstein et al., 2002). Measurement tools such as the Community Scale helps to accomplish this (NSCC, 2017). The Community Scale measures 13 dimensions of school climate within six categories: safety, teaching and learning, interpersonal relationships, institutional environment, leadership and professional relationships, and social media (see Appendix A). Community voice, however, is the main focus of this survey, and through this evaluation, community members are invited to record their impressions of their local school

climate, the level of school-community partnership, and the extent to which they are interested in learning about school climate evaluation findings and in helping the school's improvement efforts (Ice et al., 2015). Also, the Community Scale can be modified to fit the needs and the mission of the school district as well as the culturally diverse community (NSCC, 2017).

Communicating with culturally and socio-economically diverse community members can be difficult due to the variety of barriers associated with these challenges (Antunez, 2000; Bastiani, 1993; Epstein et al., 2002; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Onikama et al., 1998; Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010; Young, 1998). Thus, it is important to consider survey implementation processes, as some may be more effective than others (Epstein et al., 2002). One way to effectively communicate with underrepresented or culturally diverse community members is through utilization of student-leaders in a School Community Partnership Process (Cohen, 2012; Cohen & Day, 2012). Students (e.g., middle and high school) are encouraged to engage in school leadership and school reform by taking the Community Scale into the community (Cohen & Day, 2012; NSCC, 2017). In doing so, students are given the chance to develop relationships with community members (Cohen, 2014). This also provides a more personal touch towards community members' understanding, perspective, and the importance placed on collecting survey data (Cohen, 2014; Cohen & Day, 2012; Ice et al., 2015).

An example of how a school district used the School-Community Partnership Process to administer the Community Scale is provided below. Also, see Appendix B for examples of items on the Community Scale. Ice and colleagues (2015) conducted a pilot study which involved a small, suburban school district in Connecticut. The school district included roughly 7,000 people, and the majority of the population were White (Ice et al., 2015). Below is an outline of how the

Community Scale was administered and how the School-Community Partnership Process unfolded (Ice et al., 2015):

1. Capturing the Process: Student-leaders and participating teachers shared their perception of the School-Community Partnership Process through weekly phone calls and emails. The research team created a list of questions regarding the process to guide the teacher in describing and improving the process to students. Questions included:
    - Were there any challenges explaining school climate and the goals of the project to students?
    - What were students' biggest concerns about going out to the community?
        - How did you address these concerns?
    - What percent of community members agreed to participate in the survey?

    See Appendix C for a more expansive list of example questions. The students also created a report for the research team with their thoughts on the process and their suggestions on ways to optimize the process. The research team met with the students and the teacher following the completion of the study for a focus group and filmed their reflections on the process (see Appendix D for a link to these videos).
2. Coordinator and Student Recruitment: The superintendent for the district selected an educator from the high school to coordinate and lead the Community Scale and School-Community Partnership Process. This teacher participated in many school activities (e.g., Teen Leadership instructor, social studies teacher, driving instructor, etc.) and was committed to improving school climate. This teacher had good relationships with students and parents, as well. The teacher recruited students from a "Teen Leadership" course, then selected as diverse of a representation of the student body as possible. The

teacher described the purpose of the study and what the process might look like to students in the course. About half of the students in the class offered to help. The teacher limited participants to those who were highly interested to ensure the highest quality of work on the project.

3. Student Orientation and Preparation: The research team provided the teacher with important points regarding school climate to cover as well as a list of questions that community members might ask students and ways to respond to these questions. The teacher then met with participating students and explained the project, school climate, goals of the district, and the Community Scale with them in detail; the process took approximately two hours for each orientation. Students then practiced explaining school climate, the study, and the importance of community voice in their own words as well as administering the survey to other teachers in the school. Students expressed concern that community members might be unwilling to answer certain questions (e.g., demographic questions). The teacher and research team understood why these questions would be included and when to use personal information. The teacher also met with the parents to explain the purpose of the survey and the students' roles; the parents were delighted to see their children participating in the project.

4. Community Mapping: Next, the teacher helped the students organize their community into sections for implementation. The sectors are detailed in Appendix C and include categories such as businesses, social services, organizations of higher education, faith-based organizations, and civic organizations. Students did not have trouble finding contact information to the identified organizations.

5. Community Outreach: Next, the superintendent garnered community investment in the effort. The coordinating teacher and students met with local government officials and were able to get the project publicized for the community. Also, students and teachers attended community events to further reach community members when possible. Students and the teacher found that email and telephone tended to have a lower response rate, so most contact was in person. Community members that responded had lived in the community five or more years and identified as parents, faith-based organization members, public safety officials, or members of civic or leisure organizations.
6. Administration to Community Members: During a pilot of the initial implementation process, the student-leaders suggested a few revisions to the Community Scale. The actual statements and questions within the survey, however, remained the same for all community members. Students, in some cases, attended community organizations' regularly scheduled meetings. In the meetings, student-leaders described the project and asked the organization's members to complete the survey. The survey took approximately 10 minutes to complete. It is important to note that many organizations asked for more copies of the survey to distribute to other colleagues at a different time. This prompted the list of bullet points about the project for the community members to read if they were administering the survey. It took approximately two months to administer the Community Scale to all sectors of the community.
7. Data Collection: Data were collected on paper and online through the use of an online survey system. Because paper surveys were mostly used, student entered the responses into the online survey system later. Once complete, the research team updated the students with the compiled results of community responses.

8. Data Analysis: Data were analyzed manually by the research team from National School Climate Council (NSCC). Next, the research team provided the results to the student-leaders, cooperating teacher and school personnel. Also, suggestions for ways community members could contribute to the school climate improvement process, more efficient ways of data analysis, as well as next steps for sharing the information with the community were provided to the student-leaders and the teacher.
9. Data Presentation and Utilization: When information was received, the students shared this information with the school and broader community. Students found that meeting with organizations individually was most effective when sharing information (rather than asking each organization to gather at one setting). Students and the participating teacher reported that community members appeared to take a potential collaboration with the school more seriously after hearing about their findings. The students also reported that the community members praised the school for their active community involvement. The students' and the community members' ideas for collaborative opportunities between community organizations and the school included the following: creating a calendar with school events to distribute to the community, providing free admission for senior citizens to school events, inviting students to classes at the public library, and organizing student visits to businesses to increase awareness of resources and employment opportunities. Many community members expressed interest in continuing to work with the school to determine the best ways to collaborate. In total, the process began in May 2013 and, although an ongoing process, the pilot study was largely completed by December of the same year.

Using the Community Scale can offer district and school-leaders valuable insights into school improvement efforts (Cohen, 2014; Cohen & Daly, 2012; Cohen, Fege, & Pickeral, 2009; Epstein et al., 2002). Also, involving students in these efforts can garner more survey responses, encourage community participation, and inspire participation from the whole community.

Conclusion

It is important to realize that efforts towards increasing diverse parents' involvement in their child's education should be continuous, as new parents move into the district and parents' needs often change (Walker et al., 2010). Recognizing parents' and the school's cultural differences in expectations or beliefs towards education can be a great starting place for this process, and utilizing already existing expertise in the school (e.g., principals, counselors, teachers, parent mentors, students, and educational cultural broker teams) may prove useful as well (Epstein, 2004; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Ramirez, 2003; Yohani, 2013). Also, using tools such as school climate surveys is an efficient way to collect and analyze community members' opinions (Cohen, 2012; Cohen & Day, 2012). See Appendix D for additional resources regarding school climate surveys (e.g., case studies of schools who have implemented school climate surveys) and see Appendix E for opportunities to engage parents in underserved populations (e.g., roundtable discussions, teacher home-visits, invite parents to come speak with classes regarding their cultural perspectives, etc.). Ultimately, however, schools and families need to come to an understanding of what parental involvement should look like before more active roles of participation can occur (LaRocque et al., 2011).

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Appendix A: 13 Dimensions of School Climate Measured by CSCI and Community Scale

Dimensions	Major Indicators
Safety	
1 Rules and Norms	Clearly communicated rules about physical violence; clearly communicated rules about verbal abuse, harassment, and teasing; clear and consistent enforcement and norms for adult intervention.
2 Sense of Physical Security	Sense that students and adults feel safe from physical harm in the school.
3 Sense of Social-Emotional Security	Sense that students feel safe from verbal abuse, teasing, and exclusion.
Teaching and Learning	
4 Support for Learning	Use of supportive teaching practices, such as: encouragement and constructive feedback; varied opportunities to demonstrate knowledge and skills; support for risk-taking and independent thinking; atmosphere conducive to dialog and questioning; academic challenge; and individual attention.
5 Social and Civic Learning	Support for the development of social and civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions including: effective listening, conflict resolution, self-reflection and emotional regulation, empathy, personal responsibility, and ethical decision making.
Interpersonal Relationships	
6 Respect for Diversity	Mutual respect for individual differences (e.g., gender, race, culture, etc.) at all levels of the school – student-student; adult-adult and overall norms for tolerance.
7 Social Support – Adults	Pattern of supportive and caring adult relationships for students, including high expectations for students' success, willingness to listen to students and to get to know them as individuals, and personal concern for students' problems.
8 Social Support - Students	Pattern of supportive peer relationships for students, including: friendships for socializing, for problems, for academic help, and for new students.
Institutional Environment	
9 School Connectedness	Positive identification with the school for broad participation in school life for students, staff, and families.
10 Physical Surroundings	Cleanliness, order, and appeal of facilities and adequate resources and materials.
Social Media	
11 Social Media	Sense that students feel safe from physical harm, verbal abuse/teasing, gossip, and exclusion when online or on electronic devices.
Staff Only	
12 Leadership	Administration creates and communicates a clear vision, and is accessible to and supportive of school staff and staff development.
13 Professional Relationships	Positive attitudes and relationships among school staff that support effectively working and learning together.

Appendix B: Community Scale Sample

Dimension Measured	Survey Item (i.e., question, statement)
Rules and Norms	In our public schools, there are clear rules against insults, teasing, harassment, and other verbal abuse.
Social and Civic Learning	Our public schools intentionally and helpfully work to promote social, emotional, and civic as well as intellectual/academic learning.
Social and Civic Learning	In our public schools, students discuss issues that help them think about how to be a good person.
Social and Civic Learning	In our public schools, educators talk to students about moral values (for example, responsibility, fairness, and respect).
Respect for Diversity	Adults who work in our public schools treat one another with respect.
Respect for Diversity	Our public schools teach students to respect differences in others.
Respect and Diversity	Adults in our public schools respect differences in students (for example, gender, race, culture, etc.).
Respect for Diversity	Students in our public schools respect each other's differences (for example, gender, race, culture, etc.)
School Connectedness & Engagement	Our public schools try to get families and the community to participate in school activities.
Community Involvement	In our public schools, educators are willing to work with the community to support positive youth development.

Notes. Adapted from Ice, Thapa, & Cohen (2015).

Appendix C: Example Questions for Supervisors Overseeing the School-Community Partnership Process

Personally reflection towards answering questions authentically as well as consideration of the reasoning behind the decisions and feedback may be a useful component in efficacy and validity of the survey.

Preparation

- How did you select students in the project?
  - Did students in class have to participate?
- How old were the students?
- How often did the students meet to work on the project?
- When did the students meet to work on the project?
- Will additional students be recruited to analyze and present the data?
- How many students were involved in the project?

Orientation

- Were there any challenges to explaining school climate and the goals of the project to students?
- Did any common questions arise that it would be useful to prepare other educators for?
- Did any students decide to no longer participate after attending the orientation?
- How long did it take to prepare them?

Mapping the Community

- How did you identify organizations and community members to reach out to?
- What was challenging about identifying community members to reach out to?

Preparing students to go out into the community

- How did students prepare to go out into the community and speak with community members? Role plays? Elevator pitch? Research on the organization?

- What were students' biggest concerns about going out to the community? How did you address these concerns?

Reaching out to the community

- What size group did you break them into?
- How did you break students into groups?
- How did you assign groups to community members?
- Did adults accompany the students to go speak with community members?
- Did students provide their own transportation to go speak with community members?
- Were students required to take turns leading the interaction with the community member?
- Did all outreach occur during the assigned project time or did some outreach occur on weekends and other unscheduled time when the students were a part of the community?
- What was difficult about identifying community members to speak with?
- How many times did you have to reach out to community members before speaking to someone?
- What percentage of community members you spoke with agreed to participate in the survey?
- How did students reach out to community members? Email, phone, in person, etc.
    - If you used email, phones, what line/email did you use? Did you as an educator respond to any return emails or phone calls?
- Were any spheres of the community particularly hard to get in touch with?
- What made it easier to reach community members and encourage them with?
- What made it easier to reach community members and encourage them to participate? For example, past partnerships with the school, personal connections, etc.
- Were students asked any questions they felt unprepared for?
- Did many students have personal connections to the identified organizations before reaching out to them?

- What spheres were students more or less comfortable reaching out to? Why? How did you support them?

Data collection and input

- Did community members express any confusion or concerns with the questions?
- Were students unsure ever how to input a response?

After data collection and input

- What was more challenging than you had expected?
- Is there anything you wish you had done differently? If so, what?
- What would you have liked more information or guidance on?
- How did the process feel time-wise? Did students feel like it was moving too slowly? Did it feel rushed?
- Were there any unexpected outcomes of this project?
- What was challenging for you in letting the students take the lead on this project?
- Where did you see the students struggling the most?
- Where did you see the students really excelling?

Would you have liked more resources, such as worksheets, activities, etc. to guide sessions with students?

Appendix D: List of Resources and Website Links

- NSCC website: http://www.schoolclimate.org
- School Climate: http://www.schoolclimate.org/climate/
    - School Climate Improvement Process: http://www.schoolclimate.org/climate/process.php
    - District Guide: http://www.schoolclimate.org/climate/districtguide.php
- NCSSLE website: https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/topic-research/school-climate-measurement
- NCSSLE'S School Climate Survey Compendium: https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/topic-research/school-climate-measurement/school-climate-survey-compendium
- The Character Education Partnership Assessment Index: http://character.org/?s=assessment+index&submit.x=0&submit.y=0
- Three guides for collaborative survey development and research can be accessed here: https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/
- Popular survey software: https://www.surveymonkey.com
- Measuring School Climate: http://www.schoolclimate.org/climate/practice.php
    - CSCI: http://www.schoolclimate.org/climate/csci.php
        - Case Studies: http://www.schoolclimate.org/programs/csci-case-studies.php
        - More information on the CSCI School Report: http://www.schoolclimate.org/programs/csci-report.php
        - Frequently Asked Questions about the CSCI: http://www.schoolclimate.org/programs/csci-faq.php
        - Purchasing the CSCI: http://www.schoolclimate.org/programs/csci-cost.php
    - Community Scale and School-Community Partnership Process (including video interviews with students and teacher about their experience in this process): http://www.schoolclimate.org/climate/community-scale.php

Appendix E: Opportunities to Engage Parents in Underserved Populations

- Focus school goals on high academic achievement for *all children* and clearly communicate how schools are successfully educating children from underserved populations.

- Help parents participate meaningfully in school/district decision-making.
    - For example, hold roundtable discussions run by parents and disseminate flyers in every language represented in the school district to attract communities of color (also, provide interpreters).
    - Employ interpreters for all parent activities at school.
    - Schedule conferences and other activities in the evenings or on weekends to accommodate parents who have inflexible work schedules.
    - Provide bus tickets to families without cars.
    - Consider holding meetings in the parents' community, rather than at school.
    - Actively recruit parents of color to advisory groups and committees.

- Recognize that many cultures do not see their children's education as a *partnership* between home and school; rather, they expect academic tasks to occur at school and family tasks to occur at home. Teachers are responsible for teaching academics, while parents are responsible for overseeing a child's personal and moral development. Telling parents what they should do at home to help their student can be perceived as being told how to raise their child. Similarly, asking parents to do certain academic activities at home can be perceived as parents being asked to do a teacher's job.

- Recognize that many cultures do not value individual achievement as much as respectful group participation; parents may be more concerned about how their child is behaving in class than how well they are doing on academic assessments.

- Clarify *exactly* how parents can help in the classroom, at the school, at home. Many parents do not understand what they might be asked to do if they volunteer, so they avoid it.

- Encourage teachers to form warm, supportive relationships with parents, with frequent communication and on-going encouragement. This "personal touch" can go a long way to building trust with parents.

- Reduce the unintended messages educators may be sending to parents through their choice of language or gestures by integrating *implicit bias* and *cultural responsiveness* training into professional development.

- Recruit and train specific staff to liaise with parents of varying backgrounds; consider working with parent/community leaders in this role. Use a multilingual/multicultural individual as a *cultural broker* to help build trust and understanding in the community.

- Offer classes for parents: literacy skills, parental rights, employment services, family education.

- Provide services for parents/community members: food pantry, clothing closet, lending library, computer lab, internet access, tutoring.

- Encourage teachers to do home-visits (with a cultural broker, if teacher is White) to get to know students and families before the school year starts.

- Provide information about the activities and services available at the school to local community-based organizations who can help spread the word.

- Integrate cultural traditions from your population of students into the school's annual calendar of activities.

- Encourage students and families to continue to speak their first language, even outside the home.

- Invite parents to come speak to their child's class about their job, a hobby, or their native country.

- Consider creating sub-groups of the parent-teacher organization to allow parents of similar languages or backgrounds to learn about school and engage in organizational activities together.

- Offer local organizations a space in your school as a way to encourage them to bring their services to your families.

- Invite community members to inform parents and teachers about their services.

- Involve students in collecting feedback from community members and providing them with networking opportunities. Consider establishing a youth-led *school-community partnership*.

- Look for service-learning opportunities for students in the wider community (Breiseth, 2011; Finders & Lewis, 1994; Ice et al., 2015; Leadership Conference Education Fund, 2017; US Department of Education, Office of Innovation and Improvement, 2007).