Equity in Family Engagement
TOOLKIT

ncfl Family Learning
COMMUNITY
Network

Equity in Family Engagement
TOOLKIT

Based on a Parent University collaboration with Academy of Music Production Education and Development (AMPED), Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS), and the National Center for Families Learning (NCFL), stakeholders produced this Equity in Family Engagement Toolkit to support educators as they engage with families toward student learning and achievement.

Captured throughout 12 meetings, family voice is interwoven throughout each of the seven modules—demonstrating ongoing commitment to family partnerships and equitable learning spaces. Our goal is to provide educators with tools and strategies that promote equity and inclusion and allow all students to be seen, visible, and valued in their classrooms and schools. The Equity in Family Engagement Toolkit is foundational as we continue to collaborate with families to share power and co-design experiences to strengthen school, family, and community partnerships.

"Exercising power in partnership is a core practice of co-design, recognizing that both professionals and people with lived experience have vital contributions to make."

(Boviard & Loeffler, 2013; Slay & Stephens, 2013 as cited in McKercher, 2020, p.27)

Resources
McKercher, K. A. (2020) Beyond sticky notes: Co-design for real: Mindsets, methods & movements. Beyond Sticky Notes

Module 1: Introduction to Equity

Overview:
As educators, it is crucial to have common understandings of how we define equality, equity, and justice as a community among ourselves, our students, and our families. While building and nurturing community in our classrooms and school buildings, we define our individual understanding of our identity and intersectionality by our lived experiences. These understandings contribute to how we interact with others and find common ground. Therefore, it is important to be purposeful with practicing equity and inclusion so that our students have the access and opportunity to participate in quality learning experiences to prepare them for postsecondary and/or transition to the workforce. Families are partners in this work. Their knowledge and experiences contribute to the learning community and foster support that promotes student achievement and success.

Learning Objectives:
- Educators will increase their understanding of equity and justice as it pertains to teaching and learning.
- Educators will gain strategies to practice equity and inclusion in their classrooms and within the school community.

Video:
Equity vs. Equality

Equity is different from equality.

- **Equality** assumes that everyone has the same amount of something (food, medicine, opportunity, etc.) despite their varying existing needs or assets. Imagine telling everyone that they get a pair of shoes, but you only have size 7 shoes for everyone. Is it equal? Yes. Is it fair or equitable? No.

- **Equity** is about each of us getting what we need to survive or succeed—access to opportunity, networks, resources, and support—based on where we are and where we want to go. Equity is giving families the resources they need to succeed.

- **Equitable** practices are best supported when organizations promote participative democracy, economic opportunity, and social justice.

Video Reflection:

- What are key points that resonated with you while watching the video?

- As an educator, how can you revise routines and procedures to ensure equitable access and opportunity for all students you serve?

Activating Funds of Knowledge:

In your own experience in the grade/level you teach, consider the following questions. These questions should also be used to interview two to three other individuals who are of a different gender, age, and ethnic group from you. Answering these questions allows you to reflect on your lived experience as a student and gain information from others— which demonstrates that everyone does not have the same experiences and can provide context to consider as you build relationships with students and families.

- Describe your overall high school experience or X grade.

- Did you feel represented and safe in your education?

- Did you feel cared for, overall, by teachers?

- What relationships did you develop in high school?

- What is the one thing that you would have changed about your high school experience?

- How did your experience or environment at home affect your experience in high school? How did school influence your view of the world now?

- Did you feel like you could be your true self at school?

Practicing Equity: Constructing an Equitable Classroom

Within Jefferson County Public Schools, teachers have access to the Affirming Racial Equity (A.R.E.) Tool developed by the Diversity, Equity, & Poverty Department (2021). This tool is a companion for lesson planning and supports incorporating racially equitable practices into curriculum, instruction, and pedagogy. A component within the A.R.E. Tool provides indicators *for* Empowering Classroom Culture by which the "Teacher recognizes

the value of culture and race in relationship building with both students and families, so teachers build positive relationships that are the foundation for a healthy, inclusive, and safe learning environment."

Using the descriptors to examine classroom practices, teachers can evaluate their intentionality with curating inclusive spaces. Representing a continuum of practicing inclusion, examples noted in the table (not an exhaustive list) could be used to support building a welcoming environment.

| Descriptors	Examples
Teachers are affirming of race, ethnicity, culture, religion, class, gender, and sexual orientation when interacting with students and their families.	• Build relationships to increase awareness. • Represent all students and families through pictures, posters, and language in the classroom. • Encourage students and families to share their experiences.
Teachers establish a classroom culture that rejects educational traditions that work to harm students in underrepresented groups and maintain the status quo.	• Connect learning to student experiences to increase relevance. • Use diverse stories, materials, and perspectives to examine concepts. • Elevate voices of marginalized groups (diverse representation in job fields with science, math, literature, history, the arts, etc.).
Classrooms acknowledge and affirm the strengths of students' diverse heritage and identities through positive, supportive, and welcoming interactions.	• Invite students to share their stories, histories, and funds of knowledge. • Provide choice in demonstrating knowledge/mastery. • Utilize guest speakers to demonstrate multiple perspectives.
Classroom expectations, routines, and rules are affirming and equitable, providing student feedback and voice regularly.	• Create expectations and routines with students. • Create a feedback loop for student voice, including results from input. • Establish communication protocols to ensure voices are heard and recognized.

Descriptors	Examples
Established communication systems are inclusive, translated as needed, and varied, ensuring that all caregivers and families have equal access to necessary information.	• Identify communication needs by talking with students. • Utilize the Language Line to have direct conversations with families. • Create a consistent, predictable two-way communication system.
Caregivers are regularly invited to contribute to students' learning, participate in ongoing classroom conversations, and share their expertise.	• Initiate positive communication and invite families to participate before or immediately after the start of the school year. • Invite caregivers to contribute as guest speakers or in a way that is amenable to them.

Parent Voice:

"All families do not get access to the same opportunities."

- AMPED Family Participant

Video:

Access and Opportunity
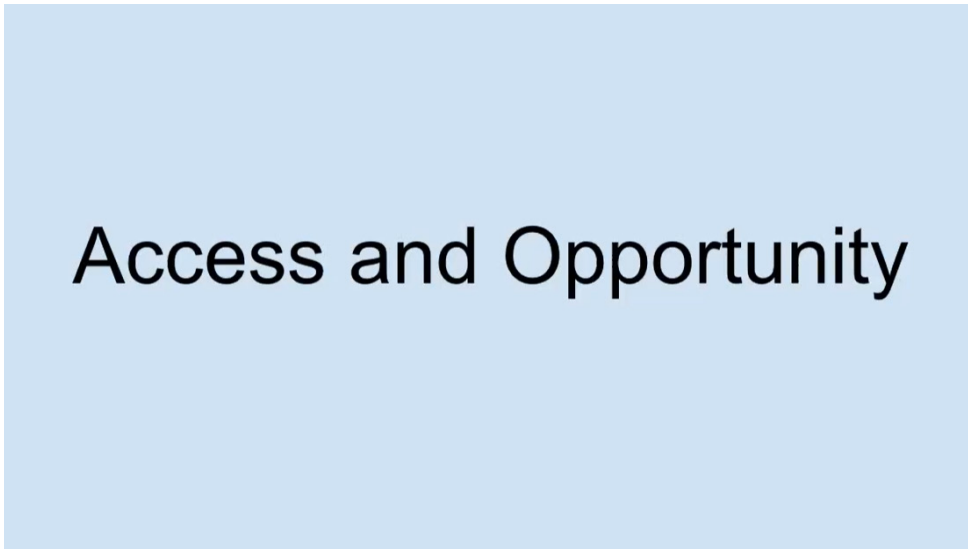
Activities/Reflection:

Within your educational space, what measurable goal can you create to disrupt inequity and increase inclusion with your students? What gets measured matters. Think about your expectations or what expectations would be for your own loved ones; how would you build a space in which they can thrive? Set a goal to practice equity. Review the descriptors for constructing an equitable classroom to drive your planning. As you create your goal, choose an accountability partner to grow with. Remember, students are an excellent source of feedback, especially since you are building a space for them.

Resources:

Beyer High [Beyer High YouTube]. (2020, April 23). Equity vs equality [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X0N22PMdF1U

Jefferson County Public Schools, Department of Diversity, Equity, and Poverty. (2021). The affirming racial equity tool. Jefferson County Public Schools. https://drive.google.com/file/d/10-mKvU_DxQe_CxvEpXRHygl86w9o9PaF/view

The original JCPS ARE Tool was curated by former DEP Resource Teachers including: Rachel Klein, Donna Lawson, Shashray McCormack, LaManda Moore Rodriguez, and Kadia Turner. Their work was adapted from the Equity Framework developed by Karla E. Vigil and inspired by James A. Banks, author of Cultural Diversity and Education: Foundations, Curriculum, and Teaching. This iteration of the ARE Tool was curated by DEP Anti-Racist Specialists LaManda Moore Rodriguez, Rachel Klein, and Aven Cook to better align to current challenges to racial equity work being done in JCPS and to other DEP anchor documents that work to fortify anti-biased, anti-racist, and racially equitable pedagogy and practices for all students every day.

Jefferson County Public Schools, Department of Diversity, Equity, and Poverty. (2021). Diversity and equity definitions. Jefferson County Public Schools. https://docs.google.com/document/d/1XvLAtgYTvFo7QeoIeEuxUdBcAkqZrPWGcLsIQ2HxKzU/edit

Module 2: Representation

Overview:

The equitable classroom community continues to develop as *educators acknowledge and affirm the strengths of students' diverse heritage and identities through positive, supportive, and welcoming interactions.* Students are not a blank slate upon entering the school building and thus bring lived experiences, knowledge, cultural ideals, and intersectionality with them each day. The notion of welcoming students to learning spaces with expectations, rules, and routines that are affirming and equitable is not difficult—but does require thoughtful consideration. As students interact in these spaces, the ability to have a voice within the classroom environment and opportunity to incorporate choice in some assignments—with consistent feedback opportunities toward growth—demonstrate consideration of them as people. Therefore, in constructing classroom expectations, routines, and rules to facilitate teaching and learning, educators are encouraged to welcome the accumulated knowledge of students and ensure they are seen and respected within the classroom and school environment.

Learning Objectives:

- Educators will prepare to engage with students, build relationships, and increase knowledge of students to support lesson planning and engagement.
- Educators will develop a plan to ensure visibility and relevance with lesson planning and classroom experiences to fortify the pursuit of equity in the learning environment.

Activating Funds of Knowledge:

Consider these questions as you watch the video and read the two articles that follow.

- What is your experience working with others who are different from your culture, differently abled, or identify as LGBTQIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning/Queer, Intersex, and Asexual)?
- Can you think of a time when you were not able to tell your side of the story? How did that make you feel? What could have been done differently to make you feel heard?
- Can you think of a time you were unable to communicate orally or on paper with someone? Did it make you stressed, scared, or some other emotion?
- Has anyone ever gone out of the way to make you feel welcomed? What impact did that gesture have on you?
- How do you engage students to build relationships?

Video:
Representation Matters - Aisha Thomas

Article:
6 Exercises to Get to Know Your Students Better and Increase Their Engagement

Article:
Learning to Recognize and Celebrate Students' Cultural Experiences

Family Voice:

"We don't see the stories that relate to us. We need more Black representation."

"Black teachers are leaving because they cannot make the kind of impact they want to make."

~ AMPED Family Participant

"Some states are making it illegal to teach history"

~ AMPED Family Participant

Family voice demonstrates frustration with the lack of representation in curricular

materials. Strategies for increasing the use of multicultural and inclusive materials are provided as part of this toolkit. Families hypothesize Black teachers are leaving the profession due to lack of impact. Nationally in 2017, 79% of teachers identify as White, 7% identify as Black, 9% identify as Hispanic, 2% Asian American, and less than 2% identify as American Indian, Alaskan Native, or Pacific Islander according to the National Center for Education Statics (Schaeffer, 2021). Thus, the teacher workforce for public elementary and secondary schools is much less racially diverse than student populations with 47% of students identifying as White, 27% Hispanic, 15% Black and 5% Asian (Schaeffer, 2021). Recruitment efforts continue across school districts to attract teachers of color and increase representation to better mirror student demographics.

Practicing Equity:

Educators are on the front lines and capable of increasing representation with curricular materials, discussion of multicultural historical figures who have made contributions to our world, and inclusion of current happenings that are representative of our global society and all that contribute to its growth. Educators must be steadfast in their approach to teach an inclusive curriculum.

- Explore diverse individuals and groups who have contributed to your discipline (mathematics, science, literature, visual and performing arts, history, etc.).
- When adding posters, pictures, and examples of achievement, ensure vast representation (specifically addressing demographics of students in your class/school).
- Display images throughout the building that are representative of your student population.

Providing students some choice among assignments to demonstrate their learning and mastery is a key element to practicing equity. Students are allowed to bring their identity to the classroom and express their ideas, creativity, and critiques in a way that marries experience to relevance of learning topics.

- Are various formats acceptable for student demonstration of learning (essays, graphic representations, multimedia presentations, etc.)?
- Do students have the opportunity to gain feedback and resubmit work products and assessments?
- Does assessment language utilize examples and references that are relevant for students?
- How is quality judged? Is this information readily shared with students when assignments are given, prior to assignment due dates?

Professional development and growth will continue to evolve our understanding of one another and how we can best support students and families' achievement. Educators must communicate with families to understand familiar expectations for achievement and success. Families who are English learners are able to have meaningful conversations with educators through the assistance of translators and use of tools such as services that provide live translators and apps that translate writing in messages.

- What professional learning have you sought to increase your cultural awareness and understanding?

- Are you engaging in book studies or reading on your own to build your knowledge in deficit areas?

- How are you using reflection to analyze your practices? How do you hold yourself accountable for continuous improvement? How do you hold others accountable?

- How will you ensure planning of inclusive steps you will take to get to know your students and represent them within the learning community?

Activities/Reflection:

- Start the year with an interest inventory to discover students' learning styles: https://drive.google.com/file/d/185mRXjkRq8czHcDK8AwXkI-j1drm-umJ/view?usp=sharing

- Talk with students. Ask about their lives—perhaps with an open-ended question: What do you want me to know about you?

- Exploring Perceptions About Identity Through Self-Portraits (Shana V. White): https://youtu.be/yNm3xM4B00s

- Examining Identity and Assimilation: https://www.learningforjustice.org/classroom-resources/lessons/examining-identity-and-assimilation

- Utilize the Affirming Racial Equity Tool to support lesson planning: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1N2slqI4b1VsUd51vuKohfDSAgpJIXytO/view?usp=sharing

References:

Fleming, N. (2020, November 12). 6 exercises to get to know your students better--and increase their engagement. Edutopia. Retrieved May 27, 2022, from https://www.edutopia.org/article/6-exercises-get-know-your-students-better-and-increase-their-engagement

Fuhrman, R. (2020, September 15). Learning to recognize and celebrate students' cultural experiences. Edutopia. Retrieved May 27, 2022, from https://www.edutopia.org/article/learning-recognize-and-celebrate-students-cultural-experiences

Jefferson County Public Schools, Department of Diversity, Equity, and Poverty. (2021). The affirming racial equity tool. Jefferson County Public Schools. https://drive.google.com/file/d/10-mKvU_DxQe_CxvEpXRHygl86w9o9PaF/view

The original JCPS ARE Tool was curated by former DEP Resource Teachers including: Rachel Klein, Donna Lawson, Shashray McCormack, LaManda Moore Rodriguez, and Kadia Turner. Their work was adapted from the Equity Framework developed by Karla E. Vigil and inspired by James A. Banks, author of Cultural Diversity and Education: Foundations, Curriculum, and Teaching. This iteration of the ARE Tool was curated by DEP Anti-Racist Specialists LaManda Moore Rodriguez, Rachel Klein, and Aven Cook to better align to current challenges to racial equity work being done in JCPS and to other DEP anchor documents that work to fortify anti-biased, anti-racist, and racially equitable pedagogy and practices for all students every day.

Learning for Justice. (n.d.). Examining identity and assimilation. Learning for Justice, Southern Poverty Law Center. Retrieved May 27, 2022, from https://www.learningforjustice.org/classroom-resources/lessons/examining-identity-and-assimilation

Schaeffer, K. (2021, December 14). America's public school teachers are far less racially and ethnically diverse than their students. Pew Research Center. Retrieved May 27, 2022, from https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/12/10/americas-public-school-teachers-are-far-less-racially-and-ethnically-diverse-than-their-students/

Shana V. White, Edutopia [Edutopia]. (2021, June 24). Exploring perceptions about identity through self-portraits [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yNm3xM4B00s

TEDxBristol [TEDx Talks]. (2020, February 6). Why representation really matters | Aisha Thomas | TEDxBristol [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-X-taPvKWbY

Module 3: Intentional Planning

Overview:
Intentional planning for equity starts with commitment to every student and family to value their existence and lived experiences. Students enter our schools and classroom spaces with history, knowledge, language, and their own identity. When educators gain knowledge of their students through conversations, family communication, choice assignments and encouragement to express ideas, ask questions, and think critically, students are more apt to take risks and make connections to their learning.

Learning Objectives:
- Participants will align expectations they have for themselves (teaching), students (learning), and partnering with families (two-way communication)
- Participants will explore the Affirming Racial Equity (ARE) Tool to affirm students and intentionally plan lessons to promote inclusion.

Activating Funds of Knowledge:
It is important to think through how you will partner with families regarding teaching, learning, and two-way communication. This requires intentionality and inclusion of students' funds of knowledge to engage them and make learning relevant to their lives. Review the chart below as a foundation for intentional planning. Partnering with families is key as familial expectations for learning and achievement has the greatest impact on student performance (Loughlin-Presnal & Bierman, 2017).

Teaching	Learning	Two-Way Communication
• What standards and concepts will I teach? • What foundational knowledge is needed? • What are time-based benchmarks for success? • How will I use exemplars? • How will I analyze student work and monitor progress?	• How will students demonstrate their learning? • How will I teach/ encourage students to persevere? • How will students use goal setting? • How will students self-assess to monitor their own progress?	• How will I introduce myself and my willingness to share power? • How will I communicate learning results? • What will be the routine frequency of information sharing? • How will parents share information, provide feedback, and ask questions?

Family Voice:

"I see change coming but don't see change yet."

~ AMPED Family Participant

"Community circumstances impact a child's academic performance. Children need more options for learning" (e.g., remote learning should have always been an option).
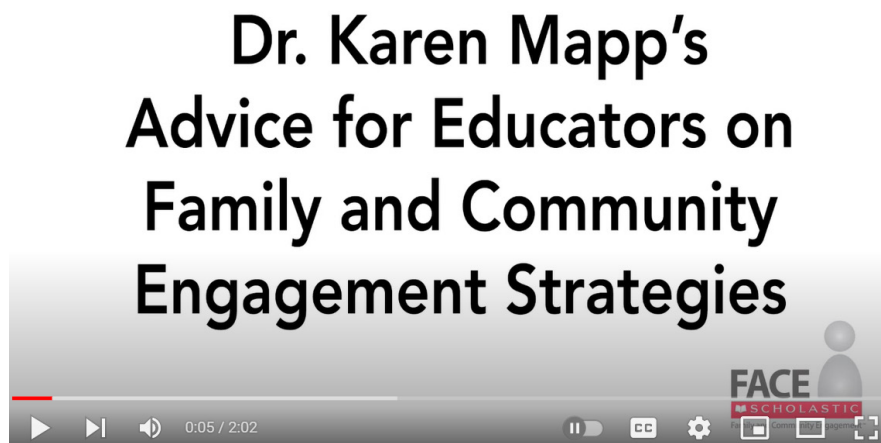
~ AMPED Family Participant

"How is [the school system] contributing to the social/emotional development of students"
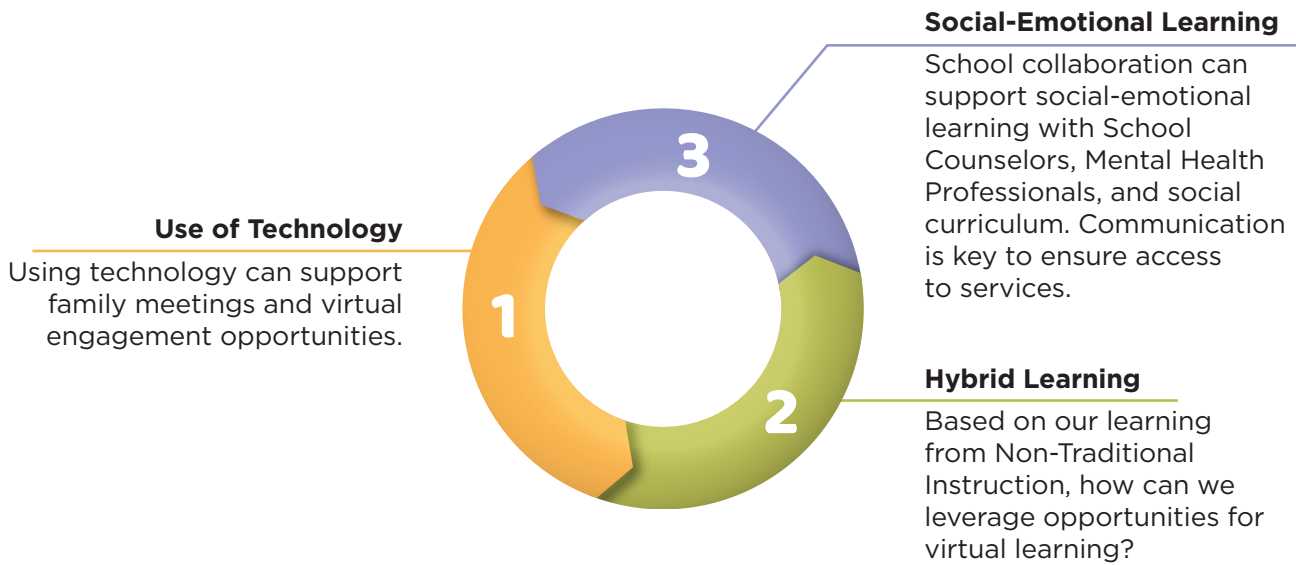
~ AMPED Family Participant

Video:
Dr. Karen Mapp Shares Advice for Educators on Family and Community Engagement Strategies.

Listening to families and learning from our experiences over the past two years grappling with a global pandemic, educators can incorporate feedback and lessons learned to enhance the learning environment for students.

Social and emotional learning (SEL) provides a foundation for safe and positive learning, and enhances students' ability to succeed in school, careers, and life. Research shows that SEL not only improves achievement by an average of 11 percentile points, but it also increases prosocial behaviors (such as kindness, sharing, and empathy), improves student attitudes toward school, and reduces depression and stress among students (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011).

Use of Technology

Using technology can support family meetings and virtual engagement opportunities.

3

1

2

Social-Emotional Learning

School collaboration can support social-emotional learning with School Counselors, Mental Health Professionals, and social curriculum. Communication is key to ensure access to services.

Hybrid Learning

Based on our learning from Non-Traditional Instruction, how can we leverage opportunities for virtual learning?

Practicing Equity:

The following video discusses teaching, learning, and two-way communication. Use these examples to support your thinking and make plans for engaging students and families.

Resource: https://kystandards.org/standards-family-guides/

Using the Affirming Racial Equity (ARE) Tool to support lesson planning affirms students and adds purpose to build equity and inclusion within the classroom. This tool is a companion to support lesson planning and aligns to the Framework For Teaching (Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching, 2011) used for educator evaluation in Kentucky.

Framework for Teaching (Danielson, 2011)	Affirming Racial Equity Tool
Domain 1: Planning & Preparation • Demonstrating Knowledge of Students • Demonstrating Knowledge of Resources • Designing Coherent Instruction • Designing Student Assessment	• Content Integration • Knowledge Construction • Prejudice Elimination • Equitable Pedagogy • A.R.E. Through Assessment
Domain 2: Classroom Environment • Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport • Establishing a Culture for Learning	• Empowering Classroom Culture
Domain 3: Instruction • Communicating with Students • Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques • Engaging Students in Learning • Using Assessment in Instruction	• Knowledge Construction • Prejudice Elimination • Equitable Pedagogy • A.R.E. Through Assessment
Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities • Communicating with Families • Growing and Developing Professionally	• Knowledge Construction • Prejudice Elimination • Equitable Pedagogy • A.R.E. Through Assessment

Resources:
Framework for Teaching: https://www.jefferson.kyschools.us/sites/default/files/Teacher%20Framework.pdf

Affirming Racial Equity Tool: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1N2slqI4b1VsUd51vuKohfDSAgpJIXytO/view?usp=sharing

Activities/Reflection:

Intentional planning is crucial to providing equitable learning environments for students. Making space for varied experiences and using students' funds of knowledge to scaffold new learning allows students to make connections, which in turn, make the learning more relevant for all.

Consider the following questions as you move forward in your planning practices.

- How can we intentionally leverage the lessons learned during a global pandemic to increase the use of technology in our curricular practices?

- How do we communicate with families to build awareness of available social–emotional learning resources?

- How can we be more intentional to include social–emotional learning with our curricular practices?

- How will we intentionally use the Affirming Racial Equity Tool to plan lessons that are inclusive of student diversity and lived experiences?

References:

Danielson, C. (2017, November). Framework for teaching. Kentucky Department of Education & Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching. https://www.jefferson.kyschools.us/sites/default/files/Teacher%20Framework.pdf

Durlak, J.A., Weissberg, R.P., Dymnicki, A.B., Taylor, R.D., & Schellinger, K.B. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. Child Development, 82, 405–432.

Jefferson County Public Schools, Department of Diversity, Equity, and Poverty. (2021). The affirming racial equity tool. Jefferson County Public Schools. https://drive.google.com/file/d/10-mKvU_DxQe_CxvEpXRHygl86w9o9PaF/view

The original JCPS ARE Tool was curated by former DEP Resource Teachers including: Rachel Klein, Donna Lawson, Shashray McCormack, LaManda Moore Rodriguez, and Kadia Turner. Their work was adapted from the Equity Framework developed by Karla E. Vigil and inspired by James A. Banks, author of Cultural Diversity and Education: Foundations, Curriculum, and Teaching. This iteration of the ARE Tool was curated by DEP Anti-Racist Specialists LaManda Moore Rodriguez, Rachel Klein, and Aven Cook to better align to current challenges to racial equity work being done in JCPS and to other DEP anchor documents that work to fortify anti-biased, anti-racist, and racially equitable pedagogy and practices for all students every day.

Kentucky Department of Education. (n.d.). Standards family resources. KY Standards, Kentucky Department of Education. Retrieved May 27, 2022, from https://kystandards.org/standards-family-guides/

Loughlin-Presnal, J., & Bierman, K. L. (2017). How do parent expectations promote child academic achievement in early elementary school? A test of three mediators. Developmental Psychology, 53(9), 1694–1708. https://doi.org/10.1037/dev0000369

Mapp, K. & Scholastic [Scholastic]. (2015, September 15). Dr. Karen Mapp shares advice for educators on family and community engagement strategies [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6j-Hkl5vIS4

Module 4: Partnerships

Overview:
Practicing equity with intentional construction of inclusive learning environments, and planned lessons that affirm racial equity, enables students to better find success within schools. Partnering with families strengthens school connections. Extending opportunities for community partnerships adds an additional layer of support as we all work collectively to bring unique opportunities and access to students.

"Family-school-community partnerships are a shared responsibility and reciprocal process whereby schools and other community agencies and organizations engage families in meaningful and appropriate ways."

(National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments, 2022)

Learning Objective:

- Participants will explore opportunities for intentional community partnerships to support student interests, engagement, and vocational exposure to area businesses and organizations

Activating Prior Knowledge:

- Think back to a time when you had to make a major decision (education, career choice, health, buying a house, etc). Did it help to have exposure to your options or have a mentor or friend who could help you?

Family Voice:

"Are we taking advantage of relationships with organizations to prepare students who may not plan on going to college?"

~ AMPED Family Participant

"How do all families learn more about after school programs?"

~ AMPED Family Participant

Practicing Equity:

Community collaboration encompasses the interactions among school, home, and community partners that support student learning and growth. This could include after school programming, visiting the public library, family workshops, and arts activities. Educators can act as connectors to share information with families promoting upcoming community programs. Additionally, educators can act as catalysts to build and nurture partnerships among local businesses and organizations to explore options for engagement, sponsorship, and vocational exposure.

Our Reciprocal Responsibilities Video:

Community Connections

Engaging community partners for after-school programming can support students with tutoring, homework assistance, visual and performing arts education—including performance opportunities, and targeted programs to address varying interests (science, technology, math, robotics, karate, cooking, etc.).

Leveraging Community Partnerships Infographic:

Leveraging Community Partnerships

Assess the Neighborhood

Determine the local businesses and organizations in the immediate and nearby community.

Inventory Opportunities

Are businesses and organizations able to participate with mentoring, field trips, virtual experiences, sponsorship, or volunteer support? What are areas of expertise?

Engage with Students for Interests and Needs

Based on student interests and needs, can businesses partner with the school to sponsor events/programs or offer internships, job shadowing, and mentoring?

Gain Administrative Support

Talk with your administrator to gain support and to navigate the conversation with area businesses and organizations. Is the school a member of the local business and neighborhood associations?

Solicit Partnerships and Share Credit

Reciprocal relationships can be shared and promoted through newsletters, company updates, banners, pictures, and joint events that promote education and company products and services.

Article:
How Can Schools Engage Communty Partners

Article:
Leveraging the Power of Afterschool and Summer Learning for Student Success

Activities/Reflection:
- What steps can we take to create external partnerships?
- What partnerships currently exist? Identify gaps in services and explore partnership opportunities within your community.
- Create a partnership plan that includes collecting data from families regarding the type of partnerships they would like to see the school make and executing an action plan for pursuing the partnership.

References:

Great Schools Partnership. (2021, August 6). Equitable community engagement. Retrieved May 27, 2022, from https://www.greatschoolspartnership.org/resources/equitable-community-engagement/

Little, P. (2013). School-community learning partnerships: Essential to expanded learning success. Expanding Learning. Retrieved May 27, 2022, from https://www.expandinglearning.org/sites/default/files/em_articles/6_schoolcommunitylearning.pdf

Sudderth, A. (2022, April 5). How schools can engage community partners. Rethink Together. Retrieved May 27, 2022, from https://xqsuperschool.org/rethinktogether/how-to-engage-community-partners/

Module 5: Communicating with Families

Overview:

Communicating with families is essential to setting a foundation for successful relationships and outcomes in any education system. The Flamboyan Foundation, headquartered in Washington, DC since 2008, completed research that shows ongoing communication sets the groundwork for "REAL" equitable family engagement in schools. REAL equitable family engagement can be defined as:

- **Relationships** with teachers built on trust, ongoing communications, and shared power

- **Experiences** where educators challenge their own biases and promote racial equity

- **Academic** partnerships that include family-teacher teams who support student performance and social–emotional development

- **Leadership** in schools, school systems, and communities which create the conditions for meaningful engagement

The power of a trusting relationship should never be underestimated. Family engagement starts with a trusting relationship. It is the foundation for everything we hope to accomplish in partnership with students and families. The most successful academic partnerships are built on a strong foundation of trust and supported through ongoing communication. Setting this trusting foundation first makes having hard conversations easier in the long run. Because the trust has been built, hard conversations feel like they are coming from a place of genuine concern instead of a place of negativity. In this module, we will discuss a few different ways to build trusting relationships within the school community that will help when having to have hard conversations.

Learning Objectives:

- Participants will understand that building relationships with families can: challenge teachers' assumptions about families, help you communicate with families more effectively, increase families' trust in the teacher, help you better invest in and engage students, and improve a number of outcomes in your classroom.

- Participants will understand that preparing for a hard conversation should be done with intent.

Activating Funds of Knowledge:

- Have you ever had to tell someone in a "position of power or influence" that you do not feel valued or respected or feel overlooked by them? If so, how did that make you feel?

- How have you prepared for tough conversations in the past?

Practicing Equity:

- **Reflect on the topic on your own or with a colleague before talking to the family.** Be sure to reflect on what you think and how you feel. Taking the time to reflect is essential to creating and maintaining equitable, positive, and goal-oriented relationships with families. Working to understand, value, and honor how our experiences, beliefs, and cultures influence our work allows us to acknowledge our strengths and biases as well as recognize our personal reactions as they arise in our professional roles. Reflecting on our possible reactions to a topic can help us prepare for and understand the strong feelings, attitudes, or opinions we may have—whether they are positive or negative.

- **Prepare your questions about the challenging topic.** It is imperative that you use intention to prepare for a hard conversation. After you have reflected, you should think about what you are prepared to ask and why. You also need to ask yourself what you need to know before you start the conversation. Some questions to help you prepare are listed below:
  - What might help you in your work or to allow the family to feel heard and understood?
  - What outcomes do you expect?
  - What possible outcomes are you prepared for?
  - What are your backup plans?
  - Do you have a referral process in place to provide families with requested community supports (community partner or agency)?

- **Prepare questions to learn about the family's perspective on the challenging topic**. Preparing to understand the family's perspective will be important for your relationship with the family. Think about what you will need to be ready to ask the family and why. Some questions to help you prepare are listed below:
  - How might the family view a conversation about this topic with you?
  - What feelings might the family have about the topic (surprise, relief, shock, shame, fear, frustration, no feelings at all)?
  - How will you work with the family to understand more about how cultural differences may play a part in how you both see the challenging topic?
  - What potential negative outcomes can arise from this conversation?
  - What might the family hope to gain from this conversation?
  - How will this conversation help you partner with this family?

- **Take the time to prepare families for the conversation**. Oftentimes, only one party in the discussion is prepared to have the tough conversation. It is wise for all parties involved to be prepared for the meeting and avoid having the topic sprung on them.

Here are some questions to consider to help prepare a family for hard conversations:
  - Do family members know the nature, purpose, and spirit of the conversation?
  - Do family members expect that you may be offering help with matters that they may consider highly private or personal?
  - Do family members expect to work on differences in understanding of a situation?
  - Do family members expect you to share concerns you may have?

- In addition to these preparation steps, it is good practice to prepare a comfortable, welcoming, and safe environment to have a hard conversation. Not only is it vital for the family to feel comfortable and secure, but for the school staff as well. It is encouraged to have a colleague in the room if it will help you feel more comfortable. Be sure to tell the family everyone who will be attending the meeting in advance so they will feel comfortable as well.

- There are many strategies for family engagement activities and relationship-building opportunities in schools. Below is a list to get you started:
  - community visits
  - welcome calls
  - student led conferences
  - goal setting parent teacher conferences
  - positive calls home
  - international potlucks
  - cook offs
  - school newsletters
  - parent resource rooms
  - student performances
  - regular personal communication
  - back to school nights
  - in school volunteers
  - career/hobby day

Activities/Reflection:

- What are some ways we as educators can ensure parents feel heard?
- How can we address white supremacy and other disparities in schools?

References:

Flamboyan Foundation. (2021, May 18). REAL leadership: How leaders can support educators to engage families during distance learning. Retrieved May 27, 2022, from https://flamboyanfoundation.org/resource/how-administrators-can-support-educators-to-engage-families-during-distance-learning/

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement [NCPFCE]. (2020). Preparing for Challenging Conversations with Families.

Module 6: Co-Design Practices

Overview:

Simply stated, co-designing is what happens when all stakeholders are involved in an initiative from its ideation or conception to implementation and evaluation. When done properly, it may be challenging to get right—it pushes the boundaries or historical beliefs of how programming in underserved communities has been conducted. In their book, "Beyond Sticky Notes," Kelly Ann McKercher defines co-design as an "approach to designing with, not for, people" (page 8). They go on to say about co-design, "It involves sharing power, prioritizing relationships, using participatory means, and building capability. A co-designer is someone who is part of a co-design team throughout the co-design process. …A co-design team is made up of people with lived experience, professionals, and provocateurs" (page 8).

All participants should be open to attempting to relinquish control of the traditional approach as well as the outcome. This promotes trusting the collaborative process and allows for the emergence of new and unexpected ideas and solutions. In the co-design process, power is shared. People with lived experience (families) often begin the process feeling there is a power imbalance between professionals and themselves. Professionals must make intentional efforts to address perceived and real imbalances in power, knowledge, and resources. In this module, we will look at the co-design process and one of its principles—specifically, sharing power.

Learning Objectives:

- Participants will understand the importance of sharing power when implementing family engagement initiatives.
- Participants will get an introduction to co-design principles and how to apply them in family engagement initiatives.

Activating Funds of Knowledge:

- How did it feel when you were included or excluded from an important decision that impacted you?
- What do you think works about this approach? What does not work?
- How can we be intentional about sharing power with our families?

Family Voice:

"Treat me with respect and give me say."

- AMPED Family Participant

"Trust and relationships are established when we are viewed on the same level instead of 'I'm the teacher/administrator and you are the parent."

- AMPED Family Participant

"What are the ways this group can advocate (school board meetings, opinion pieces in newsletters, social media, etc)?"

- AMPED Family Participant

"Participate in JCPS school board meetings and speak."

- AMPED Family Participant

"The people experiencing oppression have the best ideas to resolve problems."

- AMPED Family Participant

Practicing Equity:

Co-design principles (McKercher, 2020)	
Share power	To address power differentials and allow people with lived experience to influence decisions, organizations share power in research, design, delivery, and evaluation.
Prioritize relationships	Co-design isn't possible without relationships, social connection, and trust among co-designers and funders. Fostering community and relationships must be a part of program design for true co-design.
Use participatory means	Co-design provides many ways for people to take part and express themselves. For example, through visual, kinesthetic, and oral approaches, instead of relying on writing, slideshows, and long reports.
Build capacity	Building capacity means moving away from "expert" to coach across programming and understanding that everyone has something to teach and something to learn.

Sharing power can be a difficult principle to change. However, it is vital that members of the community are involved in all aspects of the initiative for it to be considered successfully co-designed. In family engagement initiatives, members of the family or community are the closest to a problem and can identify root causes in need of improvement, assist in the planning of initiatives that will improve needs, and support first-hand evaluations of implementation initiatives. Invite members of the community early and often to be a part of the co-design process. Here is a list of possible solutions to barriers to get you started:

- provide childcare
- practice language justice by providing interpretation
- provide food
- have hybrid meetings (in person/virtual)
- various times

Prioritizing relationships is perhaps the most important of the co-design principles. Relationships are the foundation of most successful ventures and initiatives. Search Institute has a framework dedicated to developmental relationships entitled "Keep Connected." One of their pillars is sharing power. While their framework focuses on the importance of developmental relationships between children and adults, the same can be said between the developmental relationships between schools and families. They will not work and be successful without trust, nurturing, and investment. Honest conversations cannot happen among all stakeholders if there is no relationship among all stakeholders. Take some time to build trust among each other with community builders.

Using **participatory means** can sometimes lead to getting outside of your comfort zone. Instead of attending a traditional business meeting with a Powerpoint presentation, you may attend a meeting that includes a drummer and a call and response or a community builder and a light physical activity—and all those activities are welcomed in the shared co-design space. Participatory approaches aren't just about how you relay information, but instead providing opportunity for self-discovery and moving people from participants to active partners. One ways to do this for family engagement in a school is allowing families to suggest ways in which they would like to present information. You could encourage them to include elements from their culture.

Building capability is the fourth principle of co-design. It also encompasses two of the pillars of the Keep Connected framework from Search Institute, which are to provide support and expand possibilities. In their book, McKercher (2020) says that many people require support and encouragement to adopt new ways of being and doing, learn from others, and have their voices heard. To support that, designers can move from "expert" to coach. Everyone has something to teach and something to learn. Both Search Institute and McKercher emphasize that broadening horizons and expanding opportunities for families and members of the community are ways to strengthen relationships and the co-designing process. Ways to do this within family engagement in schools include:

- Support families in advocacy work for their communities.
- Empower them to be fully active participants in the co-design process.
- Provide networking opportunities with families and other leaders in the community.
- Encourage families to take on new roles such as coaches.

Activities/Reflection:

- What is one thing you can commit to trying in the coming weeks in order to better share power with families? I will…
- One thing that could get in the way is…
- If that happens, I will…
- I will seek out feedback from a colleague regarding my plan to share power.

References:

McKercher, K. A. (2020) Beyond sticky notes: Co-design for real: Mindsets, methods & movements. Beyond Sticky Notes

Search Institute. (2018). Developmental relationships framework. Retrieved May 27, 2022, from https://www.search-institute.org/developmental-relationships/developmental-relationships-framework/

Module 7: Parent/Caregiver Leadership

Overview:

In most cases, parents/caregivers are a child's first and most important advocate. However, some parenting adults may be reluctant to address concerns, question school practices, or advocate for their students. This reluctance could stem from inexperience with the education system, fear of making things worse for their student, or lack of confidence as an advocate. Educational leaders must create spaces where our families are comfortable being in community with us and each other. We must communicate to families that being a leader doesn't mean you have to know everything about a certain subject. Part of equitable leadership is ensuring all voices are heard and that we operate from an asset-based approach while working with families (Flamboyan Foundation, 2020). Families are not expected to know everything, but building partnerships with families as we engage with them to "...gain understanding of their hopes, worries, and plans for supporting their children..." (Ferlazzo, 2011), will build a foundation that fosters community and advocacy.

Learning Objective:

- Participants will gain strategies to promote and support parent/family leadership and advocacy.

Video:

Parenting as a practice is a form of leadership. Caregivers make decisions daily in the interests of their children that permeate home, school, and community settings. In the school setting, educators benefit from inviting participation from families, inclusive of their leadership. In the following video, the connection between parenting and leadership is explained.

Parenting is the Closest Thing to Leadership

Activating Funds of Knowledge:

Have you been in a situation where you needed to advocate for yourself or for a family member and did not know how to find resources? How did that make you feel? What did you do to overcome that obstacle?

Family Voice:

"We want to be acknowledged as community members and leaders."

~ AMPED Family Participant

"We want to be given the opportunity to speak up for our children and families."

~ AMPED Family Participant

Practicing Equity:

Throughout this toolkit, family engagement, intentionality, and equity have been thematic in each module. Co-design with families adds to the development of meaningful partnerships that support student success and invite family members to participate as co-creators, building capacity as they bring their expertise and lived experiences to processes. In her book, "Parent Nation", Dana Suskind offers a description of parents.

> Parents do not just contribute to society, they create it. They are raising the next generation, the next wave of students and teachers, employees and employers, voters and parents. As guardians of their children, parents are nothing less than guardians of our future well-being (Suskind, 2022, 184).

It follows that parents/caregivers are primed for leadership—as educators, we have an opportunity to engage them and support their roles as leaders and advocates for their children. As we support families to build capacity for academic language, school processes and procedures, decision-making protocols, committee participation, and school governance, we increase their access to schools and their ability to participate in ways that best support their students. It is crucial to understand that caregiver leadership and advocacy will lead to questions and discussions centered on our practices as a school and as educators. We must welcome this opportunity to grow alongside our families.

Educational Context	Caregiver Leadership/ Advocacy Opportunity
Academic expectations: equipping caregivers with information to understand learning goals	• Provide definitions of key terms on reports. • Provide achievement score expectations and comparisons.
Conferencing with families: equipping caregivers with questions to guide conferences	• Provide a list of questions prior to the conference that caregivers could use to guide the conversation. • Share learning results ahead of the conference to give caregivers time to review them.
School governance	• Provide a handbook that details school processes and procedures. • Provide an explanation of the committees and decision-making structures that are in place. • Provide or create feedback mechanisms for caregivers to provide input and/or ask questions.
Solicit participation as a guest speaker	• Access the funds of knowledge and lived experience of caregivers. • Encourage caregivers to share their expertise and contribute to the learning community. • Create opportunity to increase diverse representation that mirrors student demographics.
Solicit participation for committees and associations	• Invite caregivers to participate as part of a committee. • Invite caregivers to co-chair or provide leadership to a committee. • Share leadership by encouraging rotation of roles among participants.

Educational Context	Caregiver Leadership/ Advocacy Opportunity
Utilize virtual platforms to host meetings and events	• Virtual meeting opportunities provide flexibility and may increase participation. • Recorded meetings can be viewed later to provide greater flexibility.
Share the school event calendar early, often, and in multiple formats	• Provide caregivers the opportunity to plan their engagement and participation.
Practice language justice by providing translated documents	• Invite caregivers to be part of the school communication team to ensure information is appropriately disseminated.

Activities/Reflection:

To assist us with practicing equity, use the Challenging Assumptions Reflection Tool to examine your thinking regarding families. The Flamboyan Foundation (2018) has identified five roles that families play to support student learning: (1) Communicate high expectations; (2) Monitor performance; (3) Support learning at home; (4) Guide their path; and (5) Advocate for their needs. This reflection tool helps to identify if individuals or groups are operating from an asset-based approach, which works to support partnering with families. Working with caregivers to increase their leadership and advocacy starts with mutual respect and belief that all want what is best for students and will work to that end.

Flamboyan Foundation Challenging Assumptions Reflection Tool:
https://flamboyanfoundation.org/resource/challenging-assumptions-reflection-tool/

References:

Ferlazzo, L. (2011). Involvement or engagement: We need to relate to families not as clients, but as partners in school and community improvement. Educational Leadership, 68, 10–14.

Flamboyan Foundation. (2018a). Five roles families play to accelerate student learning. https://flamboyanfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Five-Roles-Families-Play_Flamboyan-Foundation.pdf

Flamboyan Foundation. (2021b, June 3). Challenging assumptions reflection tool. Retrieved May 27, 2022, from https://flamboyanfoundation.org/resource/challenging-assumptions-reflection-tool/

Sinek, S. [Simon Sinek]. (2020, February 21). Parenting is the closest thing to leadership | Simon Sinek [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qepXx2SYRfs

Suskind, D. (2022). Parent nation: Unlocking every child's potential, fulfilling society's promise. Dutton.

Note on funding:

Partial funding for this toolkit was provided by the Kentucky Collaborative for Families and Schools.

Kentucky Collaborative
for Families and Schools
The Prichard Committee