

## Family and Community Collaboration Spotlight: **Build Connection and Trust with Listening Tours**

### Key Strategies

Districts can build connection and trust with families and communities to support student outcomes by:

- **Conducting listening tours** to better understand the needs of families
- **Ensuring two-way communication** where caregivers can both speak and be heard
- **Valuing caregivers' time** by responding to feedback in a timely manner

To foster strong relationships and trust with families and communities, it is vital for school districts to create spaces for ongoing conversations and collaboration. One way to do this across the district is by implementing listening tours as part of a larger family and community collaboration strategy. A listening tour is a systemic planned approach to engaging families and community members in collaborative discussions that encourage them to share their needs, their viewpoints, their hopes, and their fears. When done authentically, multiple voices and lived experiences are valued.

Effective listening tours encourage ongoing two-way conversations and offer a space for raising concerns. They require districts to follow up with listening tour participants and make changes based on the information gathered. It's also essential that they include the voices of historically marginalized groups within the district's community.

### »» Strategies in Action

#### **Listening Tours in Action: Bronx Community School District**

The Bronx Community School District 10, a district within the New York City Department of Education with around 50,000 students, has been effectively implementing listening tours for years. Conducted by District 10 staff, these listening tours are ongoing conversations with families that occur multiple times per month. For the tours to happen, the district explained that it is important to cultivate and sustain relationships with families, especially those from historically marginalized groups. The district also noted the importance of creating a space where caregivers always feel welcome, and their voice can be heard.



Ongoing conversations and a welcoming environment are not the only reasons District 10's listening tours are effective. Another essential ingredient is authentic collaboration with families. The district sees caregivers as the experts on their own children and values the insights they provide. The district ensures that families play a meaningful role in decision making so their insights and perspectives are used to address critical issues.

District 10 has made significant strides in its efforts to build trust and connect with families through listening tours and is a great example of how districts can authentically collaborate with families. By creating spaces for ongoing conversations, working with families and communities as partners, and fostering an environment of trust and collaboration, schools can better address the needs of their students and, ultimately, improve student outcomes.



### About the Connected & Engaged Initiative

This initiative investigates common barriers to achieving authentic partnerships between school districts and families and offers research-based strategies to address those challenges. This initiative aims to support school districts, community-based organizations and caregivers as they consider their own challenges and work to nurture and promote a connected and engaged school community.

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