

Six Global Lessons

on How Family, School, and Community Engagement can Transform Education

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Overview

[Six Global Lessons on How Family, School, and Community Engagement Can Transform Education](#)

("Six Global Lessons") presents the findings of over two years of community-driven research conducted in collaboration with hundreds of students, families, school educators, and researchers in 16 countries and 23 languages. While there were unique findings in each school, district, and country, six powerful lessons stand out across geographies and contexts. The *Six Global Lessons* delves into these findings and how to build greater family, school, and community partnerships as seen through the eyes of families, educators, and students who shared their beliefs on, experiences with, and trust in schools.

Six Global Lessons: At a Glance



The Link Between Families, Communities, and Education Systems Transformation

- Family, school, and community engagement encompasses the **many ways that families, educators, and community groups work together** to promote **student learning and development** and to **support schools to thrive**.
- Family engagement **varies depending on the context**, but is **critical** to **education systems transformation**. Stronger family, school, and community partnerships help ensure **relational trust** is at the foundation of schools, and that all the actors can work together toward a **shared vision of education in their communities**.

THE CONVERSATION STARTER TOOL (CST) PROCESS

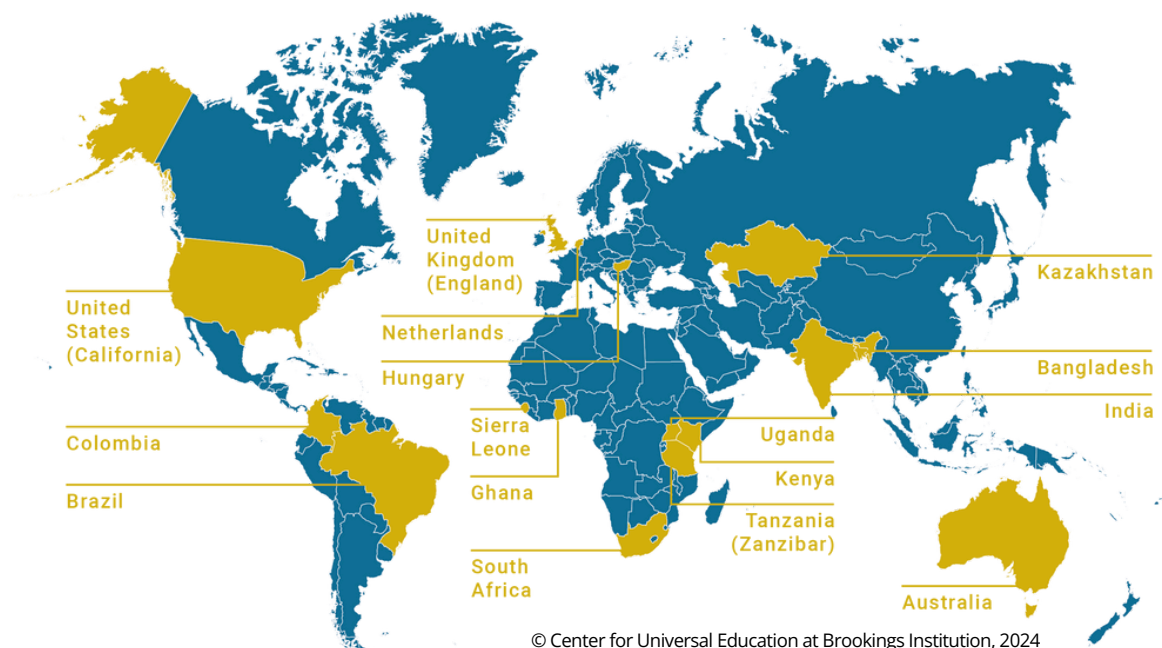
The [Conversation Starter Tools](#) process guides school and community teams in identifying educators', families', and students' **beliefs on education, relational trust, and types of and barriers to family involvement and engagement**. The process uses the **data, dialogues, and directions** approach.

1. **Contextualize**: Determine the research objectives, design, sample, demographics, and considerations in each context.
2. **Survey & analyze**: Administer surveys to families, school educators, and students. Analyze and visualize data in easy-to-understand formats.
3. **Share data & discuss**: Organize intentional conversations among families, school educators, and students to share, reflect on, and discuss the data.
4. **Strategize**: Using the survey and conversation data, identify contextually relevant strategies to build stronger family, school, and community partnerships.



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THE GLOBAL RESEARCH COLLABORATIVE



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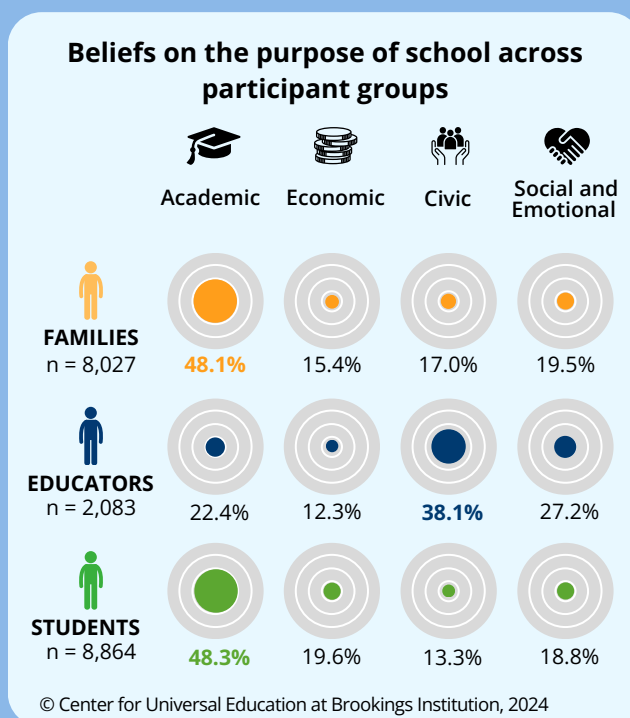
The Conversation Starter Tools process was led by 15 collaborating organizations in close collaboration with schools, families, and students on six continents.

Global Lesson 1: Begin with Beliefs

WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PURPOSE OF SCHOOL?

Families, students, and educators in 10 countries shared what they believe is the most important purpose of school.

- ▶ Nearly **half** of **families** named **academic learning** (furthering education) as the **main purpose of school**, and linked academic learning to **being prepared for future work**.
- ▶ **Students** also prioritized **academic learning**.
- ▶ **Educators** across grade levels were focused on supporting young people's **civic learning** (being active citizens) and **social and emotional learning** (to understand oneself and develop social skills and values).



WHEN ARE YOU MOST SATISFIED WITH EDUCATION?

Families, students, and educators in 10 countries shared when they were most satisfied with their children's/their own/their students' education.

Parents want their kids to succeed academically, but at the end of the day they will be **happier to see that their kid is happy and can be emotionally healthy no matter what**.

Educator in Kazakhstan

[Social and emotional learning] prepares us first and foremost to be **good people and humans** and gives us knowledge on **how to advance in the future**.

Student in Colombia

- ▶ **Educators** were most satisfied with education when children were **gaining skills to understand themselves and developing social skills or values** (social and emotional learning).
- ▶ **Families and students** were concerned about students' **well-being** and noted that **mental health** was a major concern across countries.

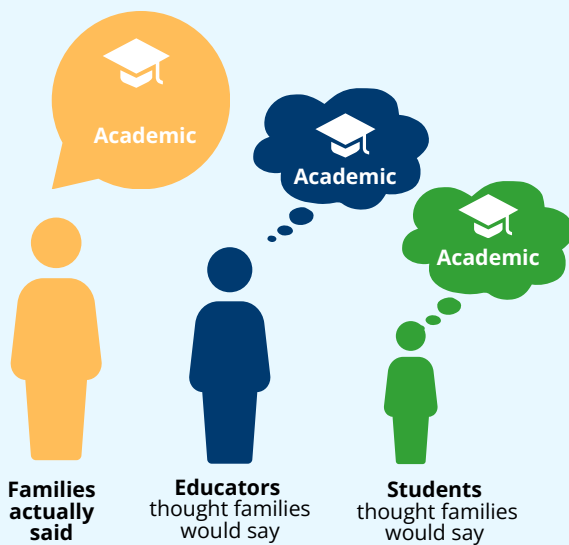
WHAT DO YOU THINK OTHERS SEE AS THE PURPOSE OF SCHOOL?

Families, students, and educators in 10 countries speculated what other groups saw as the main purpose of school.

- ▶ In 8 out of 10 countries, there was a **perception alignment** where educators correctly perceived families' beliefs on the purpose of school.

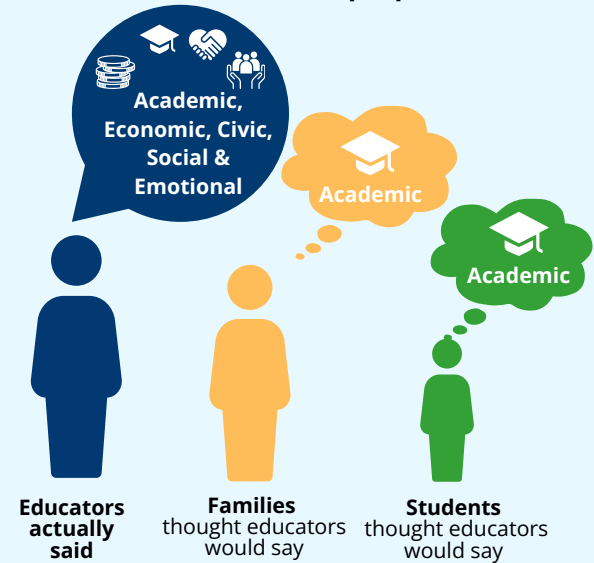
- ▶ In 7 out of 10 countries, there was a **perception gap** where families and students incorrectly perceived educators' beliefs on the purpose of school.

How educators and students perceived families' beliefs on the purpose of school



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How families and students perceived educators' beliefs on the purpose of school



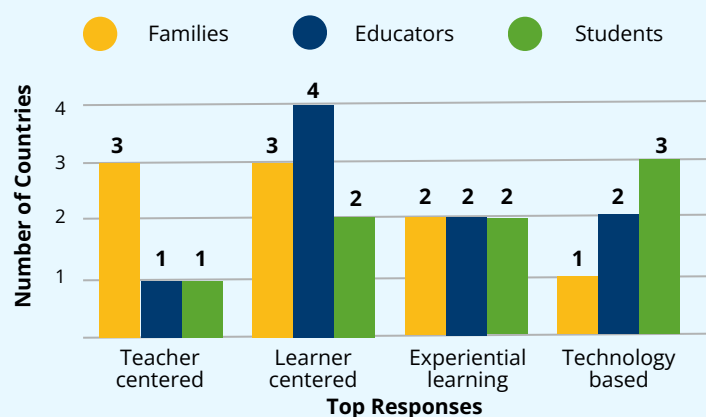
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WHAT TEACHING AND LEARNING PRACTICES WOULD YOU CHOOSE?

Families and educators in 10 countries, and students in 8 countries, gave the pedagogical approaches they would like to see in the classroom.

- ▶ **Families** chose **teacher-centered** and **learner-centered pedagogies**. Conversation revealed that families rarely understood these different approaches in practice.
- ▶ **Students** chose **technology-based** instruction.
- ▶ **Educators** chose **learner-centered pedagogies**.

Preferred pedagogies across participant groups

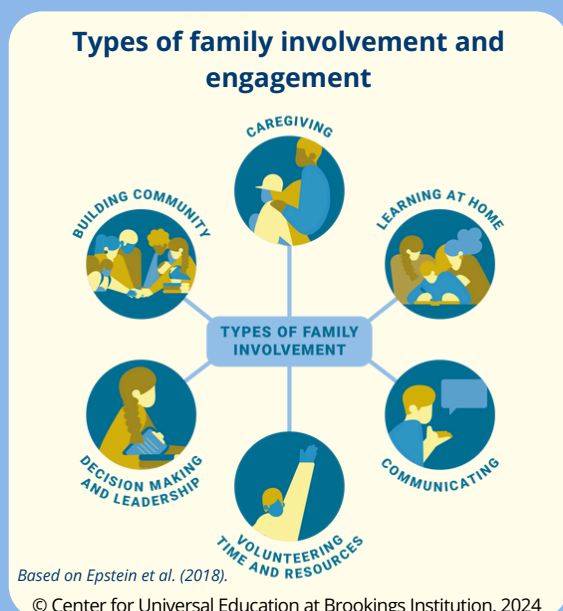


Other options: In 1 country, educators chose play-based. In 1 country, families chose funds of knowledge © Center for Universal Education at Brookings Institution, 2024

Global Lesson 2: Position Families as Partners

HOW ARE FAMILIES INVOLVED IN THEIR CHILD'S LEARNING OR SCHOOL?

Families and educators in 10 countries identified how parents/caregivers were involved in their children's learning.

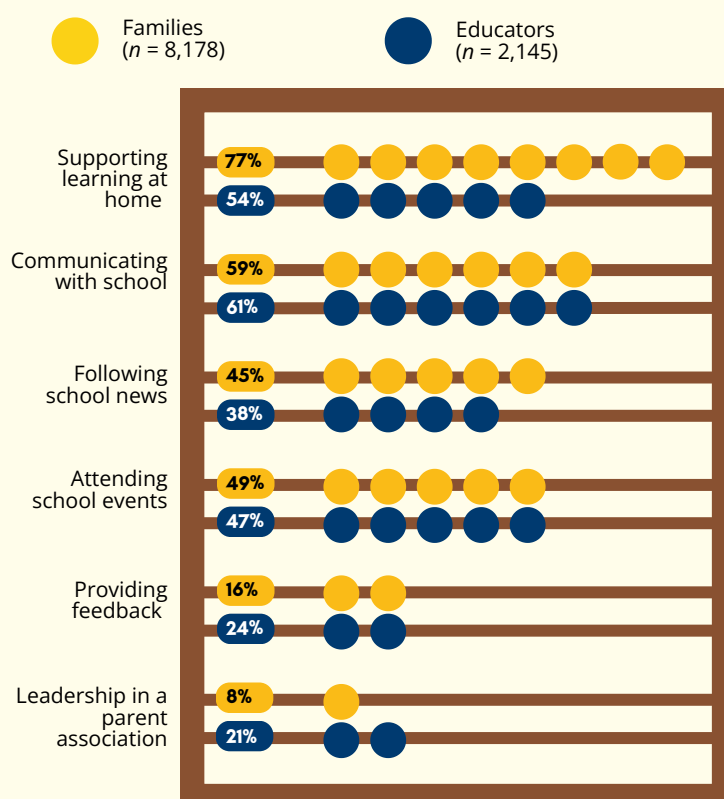


- ▶ **Family, school, and community engagement** encompasses the many ways that families, educators, and community groups **work together** to promote student learning and development and to **support schools to thrive**.
- ▶ The vast majority of **families** were **supporting learning at home**, a type of involvement **not highly visible to educators**.

- ▶ Only 1 in 4 families participated in **parent associations** or **provided feedback on school decisions**. **Decision making and leadership** roles often drew families that were **already highly involved in schools**.

- ▶ Supporting **different types of family involvement** and striving to engage **all families** is critical to building strong partnerships.

Top types of family involvement and engagement



Other options: donations and volunteering. Decimals in the figure have been rounded up or down to the nearest whole number for simplicity

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Global Lesson 3: Collectively Break Barriers

WHAT ARE SOME CHALLENGES FAMILIES FACE IN BEING INVOLVED IN THEIR CHILD'S LEARNING OR SCHOOL?

Families and educators in 10 countries, and students in 6 countries, identified barriers that impacted parents'/caregivers' involvement in their child's education.

- Families, educators, and students named many **structural** and **situational barriers** impeding strong partnerships.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES?



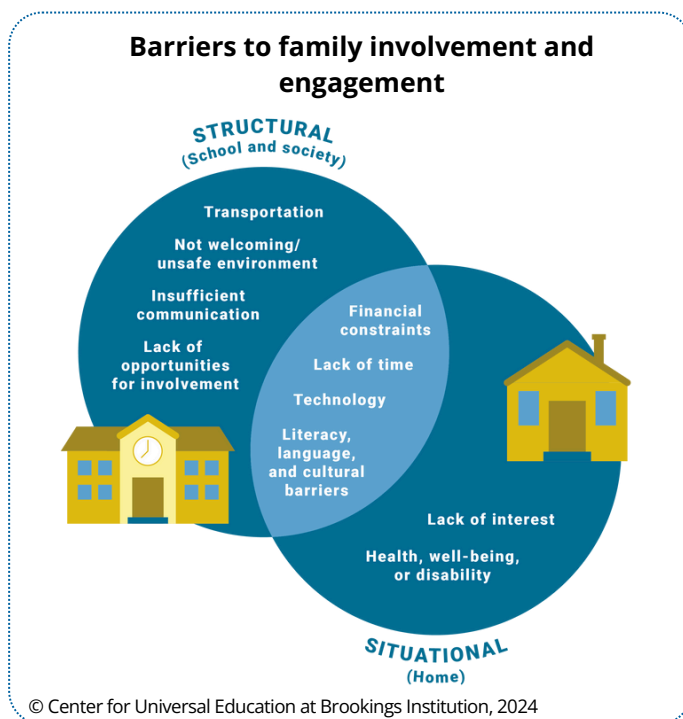
Structural barriers are posed by schools and society.



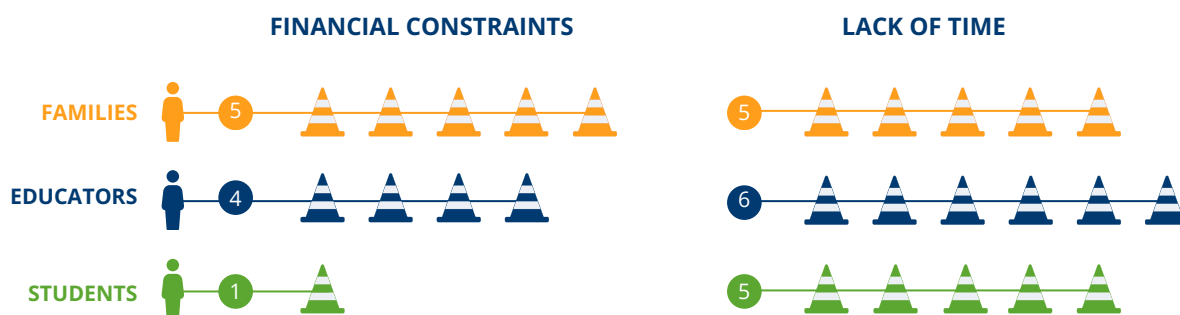
Situational barriers depend on household circumstances.



Overlapping barriers are both structural and situational.



Top barriers to family involvement and engagement



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- Families, students, and educators** identified **financial constraints** and **lack of time** as the top barriers to family involvement and engagement.
- Nearly a third of educators** assumed **families' lack of interest** in getting engaged was a main barrier to building partnerships, but families and students did not see it this way and often felt **blamed**.
- Educators** reported that they often felt the work of strengthening family, school, and community partnership fell on their shoulders and they **needed more resources and support**.

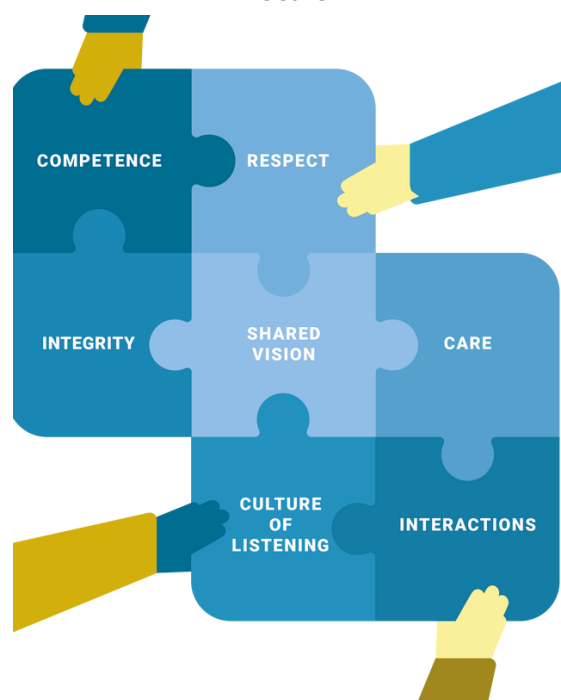
Global Lesson 4: Build at the Speed of Trust

TO WHAT EXTENT DO FAMILIES, STUDENTS, AND EDUCATORS TRUST EACH OTHER?

Families and educators in 7 countries, and students in 4 countries, rated their level of trust with one another on CUE's Relational Trust Scale.

- ▶ **Relational Trust** is the regard and respect for others in the school community shown through **treating each other inclusively, with integrity, and as competent and equally important members of the collective** (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).
- ▶ Families, educators, and students agreed that higher levels of trust will promote student and school outcomes and success, but it takes time to **build trust**. **Understanding families', educators', and students' beliefs and experiences** in education contributes to building relational trust and developing responsive strategies.

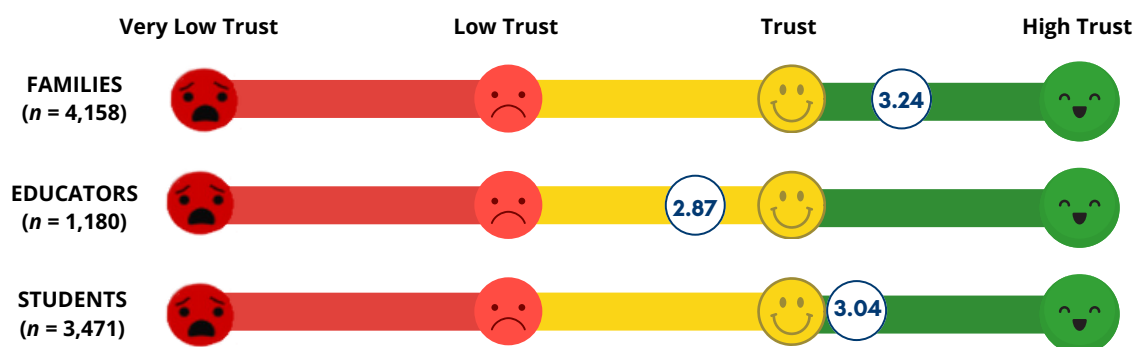
Seven elements of the Relational Trust Scale



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- ▶ **School educators reported lower levels of trust** with families than families and students reported with educators.

Relational trust across participants across 7 countries



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Global Lesson 5: Make Family, School, and Community Engagement a Must

HOW DO GOVERNMENTS ENVISION THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF FAMILIES IN THEIR EDUCATION FRAMEWORKS?

Thirty-three education framework across 13 countries were examined to map how respective governments envision the roles of families and communities in their schools and education systems.

- **Consistent and sustainable funding** of family, school, and community engagement activities is critical for building strong partnerships.

Families were designated in different roles across education frameworks.

- **In all 13 countries**, families were assigned roles in **implementing policies and practices** and **being informed**.
- **In all 13 countries**, families were also assigned roles in **decision making and leadership**, but **few education frameworks** provided resources or concrete steps on how districts or schools can **support families** in performing these roles.
- In **8 countries**, **families** were assigned a role in **providing resources** and **shifting mindsets**.

Roles and responsibilities of families and communities

- 1 Implementing policies and practices**
includes supporting learning at home, communicating with schools, volunteering, and beyond.
- 2 Decision making and leadership**
entails involving families in school decisions and governance bodies.
- 3 Being informed**
means knowing about policies, practices, responsibilities, and children's rights to an education.
- 4 Providing resources**
includes all financial and in-kind contributions families make towards teaching and learning, school infrastructure, and beyond.
- 5 Shifting mindsets**
includes promoting inclusion and reducing stigma and norms that prohibit access to quality education for marginalized groups.

Global Lesson 6: **Disrupt Power Dynamics Through Community-Driven Research**

WHAT ARE SOME METHODOLOGICAL INSIGHTS FROM THIS COMMUNITY-DRIVEN RESEARCH?

Sharing power and expertise across communities and teams enhanced the design, analysis, and utilization of the research.

Create space for reflection before action.

Start by assuming that families, educators, and students have very diverse experiences with education, including negative and traumatic experiences, and that doing the work of listening, acknowledging, and reflecting on these experiences must take place before launching into the development of strategies

Make data accessible and meaningful.

Giving back data to schools in easy-to-read visualizations encourages further reflection and dialogue, both of which are vital to developing responsive and sustainable strategies.

Ensure family, school, and community engagement practices can be analyzed by demographic groups.

Demographic data must be collected according to each context, and equity analyses conducted in order to understand how family, school, and community engagement experiences and practices vary across groups and to understand any historical patterns of exclusion.

Support existing expertise.

Emphasize resource sharing and mutual learning over capacity building. Position schools and community teams as experts and think about opportunities for exchanging knowledge and resources as opposed to assuming a one-way capacity building approach where outside researchers are the experts.

Utilize multiple modes of participation.

When working across languages and cultural contexts, continuously refining concepts helps ensure that the research is not only translated, but co-constructed.

Think co-construction and not translation or adaptation.

Reaching families, educators, and students through mixed formats (e.g., in-person oral survey, remote survey links, oral mobile-phone survey) ensures greater inclusion and participation in the research.

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