

## Considerations to Make for ELL Families When Planning School-Wide Events

Schools recognize the important role that parents play in the education of their children, and inviting parents into the school building for school-wide activities and celebrations is an effective way to involve them in their children's academic lives. As you begin to plan your school year, here are some suggestions to help ensure that events involving the entire school community are accessible to your ELL families.

1. **Offer translation and interpretation.** ELL parents and students should know that their home language has a place in school, even though it is not the dominant language. A way to ensure that ELL families can fully participate in school community activities is to provide translation of all correspondence about the event, as well as to provide interpretation at the event itself. One popular method is the use of interpretation headsets, as they can be used in classroom instruction, as well.
2. **Take different cultures into account.** When planning an event that will involve the entire community, it's important to consider different cultural values and obligations. Are you planning an event at a time when families cannot attend because of religious obligations? For example, many Jewish families cannot go to events that take place on Friday nights. Is the only activity one in which a family cannot participate due to cultural or religious reasons? For example, involvement in certain dance or music activities may be forbidden for some Muslim families. Becoming knowledgeable about the different cultures represented in your school will help ensure that you are culturally sensitive and asking the right questions when planning events.
3. **Provide additional context.** Many ELL families are navigating the US school system and culture for the first time. Translating word-for-word the phrase "parent-teacher night" might not offer enough context for ELL families to truly understand the purpose of the event. In fact, in some cultures, parent involvement in school is not expected at all. Providing additional explanations about the traditions and reasons behind a school-wide activity can help increase ELL parents' comfort and participation.
4. **Consider deliberately incorporating other cultures.** Students and families benefit from having their languages and cultures affirmed in positive, school-wide activities. By planning events that allow families to highlight different aspects of their cultures, schools are able to celebrate and learn from many different stakeholders. Popular activities that can facilitate cultural exchanges and increase ELL family participation include culture fairs, fashion shows, potlucks, talent shows, cooking nights, show and tells, and language exchanges.