

M5-S1: Family Engagement Across Learning Environments

CLH	<p>Hello Listeners! Today we're starting module 5 of the Tale Academy, Family Engagement across Learning Environments and we're going to get into some general facts about shifting our mindsets around family engagements in order to set ourselves up for the rest of the module.</p>
GK	<p>Hi everybody! I just want you to know that I love family engagement because at the heart of education is really the families and caregivers of our students. Who we see in our classrooms, they are the results of the people who helped raise them.</p>
CLH	<p>Most definitely, you know how there's the whole duckling imprinting science stuff?</p>
GK	<p>How cute is the duckling imprinting science stuff?</p> <p>So basically around a day of hatching, a duckling imprints on the first moving object it sees, which sounds totally made up but it's not.</p> <p>So whatever or whomever that duckling latches onto in this formative period becomes its lifeline. The set of clues that let's the duckling know how it should eat, sleep, walk and act like a duck.</p>
CLH	<p>Yes it feels like something from a cartoon but it's kind of a beautiful example in nature of the innocence of youth, that nature allows this animal to form its identity based on the family that it's presented with.</p>
GK	<p>Well what if the first thing it saw was like a basketball?</p>
CLH	<p>Right, that's what I'm saying in the cartoons I think that's what happens.</p>
GK	<p>I think we both saw the same cartoon but I guess what your point is that as humans we are not much different.</p> <p>Regardless of our caretaker, we form our identities based on the values and customs that we're raised with. Our families form our culture and infiltrate every aspect of our lives, from how we see the world, to how we act, react and interact. It's because of this that we as educators have a duty to ensure that our students' families, in all of their shapes and sizes, are 100% valued, engaged and represented in our classrooms.</p>
CLH	<p>Yeah and if we look back on module 2 and think about Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Education (CRSE), we see a lot of similarities here.</p> <p>In her best selling book <i>Cultivating Genius</i>, Goldie Mohammed names identity development as the first of the four parts of a culturally and historically responsive equity framework. So the benefits of considering and fostering our students' identities are manifold. We offer them not only the chance to strengthen their own sense of self but also to understand the strengths of others as well.</p>

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GK	Wonderful, so in module 2, CRSE, we also learned about students' intersectional identities . These are foundational to their thinking and learning. When we partner with families to create a more robust curriculum, we honor their identities, and in doing so strengthen relationships, learning and a sense of community that will guide them through each step on their journey to adulthood.
CLH	So let's go back even further to module 1 if you remember all the way back then. In module 1 we talked about the four constants, do you remember those?
GK	I do. The four constants, the cross learning environments. These are the four things that we prioritize in everything we do. Am I doing it right?
CLH	Yeah, well it's the four constants of trauma informed education , is that right?
GK	Ok yes but then we were saying if we're going to be universally designing around trauma informed a rise as the four constants for everybody. They are awesome, they are predictability, flexibility, connection and student empowerment. How can you go wrong? Predictability, flexibility, connection and student empowerment.
CLH	Yup that's it. So educator and researcher Alex Shevrin Venet says that these four priorities are essential to creating equitable, trauma-informed learning plans but the four constants aren't just limiting to informing our planning, they can actually also guide every aspect of our teaching from creating assignments and assessments to engaging with families and caregivers. That's because it wasn't just students that were affected by the pandemic closures, families and caregivers all really also suffered a lot of trauma during those years and our approach to family and caregiver engagement post Covid has to reflect that.
GK	The easiest thing about returning to this framework is the four constants work together to build trust and transparency with families as well as with students, which we'll talk about in our next session. These four constants can form the backbone and they do, they form the backbone of a lot of what we do across the Tale Academy.
CLH	Yeah most definitely and we need to ask ourselves a couple questions. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How can we leverage the knowledge, values and wisdom of the diverse array of families in our classroom to help empower our students? 2. What goals do our class families have for their children 3. How do we integrate those goals within our current curriculum?
GK	These are all really good reflection points and I'm looking forward to unpacking this throughout the module. Right now I think the first place to start would be that place we generally start in our session one's, would be how do we make lemonade out of

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	<p>lemons?</p> <p>Let's go back to emergency remote teaching ever so briefly. Emergency remote teaching caused a lot of sleepless nights and heartache for everyone involved. We found ourselves all juggling zoom schedules with ourselves as teachers and our families, our students, our own families, our own kids, juggling spotty wifi. We were learning throughout Emergency remote teaching that there were some other more systemic issues around digital equity, which were troublesome and concerning, we'll look at that in session 3.</p> <p>These are definitely lemons, the pitfalls. Through that we also gained an extraordinary arsenal of tools like technology that we can now wield across learning environments and start getting that lemonade that we deserve.</p>
CLH	<p>Yeah for sure, so I think there were really a few big takeaways from emergency remote teaching and one of them is that it takes a village.</p> <p>Mapp and Birdman talk about this collective effort in a book called Embracing a New Normal towards a more liberatory approach towards family engagement and sounds pretty ideal, goes, quote,</p> <p>"Educators and families should work together to define their shared challenges and improve the educational experience for children. Schools that take a co-design approach understand that families' wisdom must be brought to bear on any problem the school encounters. Co-design models move beyond parent committees and compliance mandates to include families in the day to day work of education. Educators are not afraid to hear what families think because they are secure in their relationship with families and appreciate their perspectives and skills.</p>
GK	<p>I love that vision. Part of that is it's also important to remember that it's a whole new world out there. In his book, Carpe diem, Convert Pandemic Struggles into Student-centered Learning, Thomas Arnett talks about the advantages of this huge technology shift.</p> <p>"When used to enable blending learning models, online learning resources can create flexibility in the time, place, path and pace of learning for students".</p> <p>The example he gives is, "Many teachers who began using the flipped classroom model during the pandemic, saw it as a powerful way to support absent students, adapt instruction to student needs and circumstances and to focus more class time on giving their students individualized support".</p>
CLH	<p>Yup and finally we should remember that we know about giving students options for the best results also works for families. Arnett, who you were just speaking about also talks about how families need options these days and</p> <p>He says "51% [This is a big number] of parents surveyed by the National Parents Union in June of 2021, indicated that they think schools should be rethinking how we educate students and should be coming up with new ways to teach children moving forward as a result of the Covid 19 crisis. Although most parents would prefer to have their children learn next year in person [this was in 2021] most parents wanted children to learn on campus, 19% wanted their children to learn remotely or online</p>

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	<p>and 22% still wanted hybrid learning options”</p> <p>Recent reports really suggest that some parents found remote and hybrid instruction to work better for their children than conventional schooling, and that quote was from Arnett.</p>
GK	<p>That's 19 and 22%, that's 1 out of 5 parents. 1 out of 5 families is finding this to be a really strong way to educate their children. We know that for a lot of students remote and hybrid learning was an advantage for them, it just worked better for some students and met the needs of some students better than conventional in-person learning.</p>
CLH	<p>Yea it's really true and while the initial push to establish strong family engagement across learning environments might require a little bit more work, the end result will no doubt reap the benefits of those relationships that are nurtured earlier on.</p> <p>So as Karen Mapp, the Harvard Graduate School of Education lecturer, famous lady, noted in a 2018 interview, she says</p> <p>“I've seen teachers be very enthusiastic about family engagement especially when they realize engaging families makes their jobs easier, not harder. Yes the investment in the beginning is time consuming, especially because teachers already have so much on their plates, some people feel like family engagement is a burden or an add on , or an extra, but these teachers will tell you this is an absolutely integral part of my teaching practice”.</p>
GK	<p>So let's end with a question Christina.</p> <p>How can we make our teaching practice easier by introducing families and parents into the equation?</p>
CLH	<p>Okay, do you have the answer?</p>
GK	<p>Kinda. This might be oversimplified but maybe by having them do what they do best.</p> <p>Support, educate and nurture their children. Using the rich technology that emerged during and post pandemic, we can now zoom grandparents in from India , we can collaborate with aunts and uncles in China, we can set goals with families in the neighborhood on their time and on their terms. It's just a bigger world for family engagement.</p>
CLH	<p>Yea, I love that on their time and terms.</p> <p>Alright listeners, you're off to do some thinking and doing and coming up you'll work on thinking about your current family engagement practices and you'll sort of come up with some new ways to make these practices portable across learning environments.</p>
GK	<p>Good luck everybody and see you next time.</p>