

M2-S8: CRSE in the Home: Inviting Families into the Learning Process

GK	<p>Hello Christina, and hello listeners! Welcome to CRSE in the Home: Inviting Families into the Learning Process. This is the eighth TALE Academy session in Module 2 focused on culturally responsive-sustaining education. Today, we're going to explore how to partner with families to support students.</p> <p>As we conclude Module 2, it is fitting that we end at the true beginning of our schools: our students' families. Parents and other caregivers are our students' first teachers. When educators partner with families to support student learning, accelerated student achievement has a greater chance to follow.</p>
CLH	<p>Right? It just makes sense, and it's also backed up by evidence.</p> <p>According to Anna Sudderth's article, "The Relationship Between Parental and Family Involvement and Student Success," engaging parents and families in their students' education can result in the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Higher grades in individual subjects, as well as higher GPAs. Although teachers' high expectations are a major factor for student success, families' expectations can have the biggest effect on student achievement.2. Improved Graduation Rates. Greater family involvement correlates with higher student attendance and lower dropout rates, which also greatly contribute to higher graduation rates, as graduating from high school requires consistency and perseverance.3. Increased College Enrollment. Providing families with information on the benefits of postsecondary education and the logistical support for navigating the college application process increases the likelihood of student acceptance at higher ed institutions.4. Enhanced Support of Students by Teachers. When teachers can leverage the "insider info" that families have about their children, teachers are better able to connect with, understand, and address student needs.
GK	<p>Those are all such great outcomes of family engagement! But, as we know from experience, there are some obstacles to family engagement.</p> <p>Though the benefits of partnering with parents and families are clear, schools can sometimes struggle with successful family engagement. Many of our challenges can disproportionately affect families of color or those who qualify for free or reduced lunch. According to a research brief from the National Center for Educational</p>

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	<p>Statistics, the most commonly reported barriers to parental engagement in schools were the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Family members can't get time off work ● Inconvenient meeting times ● No childcare ● [Parents] don't hear about things going on at school that [they] might want to be involved in
<p>CLH</p>	<p>Those are barriers, all right. And in another study of second-grade parent involvement, 59% of parents who reported low participation cited an inability to get time off as the primary barrier. This percentage was higher when a two-parent home had two individuals employed full-time and was even higher when a single-parent household was employed full-time.</p> <p>In that same study, 46% of parents identified inconvenient meeting times as a secondary barrier. When disaggregated by race, these percentages indicated a disparity between Black and White students, with 25% more Black families, citing this as a problem than White families.</p>
<p>GK</p>	<p>Yeah, it's really coming across loud and clear that barriers to family engagement often disproportionately affect families of color and families that are socioeconomically disadvantaged.</p> <p>Some of the barriers reported by parents can be easy to spot, and others run a little deeper in the zone of cultural competence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cultural or socioeconomic differences between staff and families ● Language barriers between staff and families ● Staff beliefs about and attitudes toward parents and families ● Parents and families' beliefs about and attitudes toward the school ● Limited capacity of families to assist with schoolwork due to their own limited formal education ● Lack of transportation to and from the school (including cost or accessibility) ● Lack of childcare for other (often younger) siblings

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety concerns with the school’s surrounding area beyond traditional school hours <p>Now, let’s stop describing the problems and start exploring CRSE-aligned practices for family engagement.</p>
CLH	<p>I agree, because while these obstacles pose real hurdles for schools in regards to parental and family involvement, the good news is that culturally responsive-sustaining education, or CRSE, can help us overcome these barriers. This is particularly important since the research indicates that students of color and those from single-parent homes tend to have significant disparities in parent and family engagement. The NYSED CRSE Framework not only includes ideas on how schools can improve parent and family engagement, it also provides explicit ways that families and community members can improve their children’s educational experience and outcomes. In addition to leveraging this resource for your own practice, consider ways you can share this resource with families, as well.</p>
GK	<p>Even though we have this CRSE framework to guide planning and instruction, there is no “magic bullet” for family engagement. It’s more like a series of combined efforts that can better position us to make families feel valued, supported, and included in their child’s education. Here are some ideas you can begin to incorporate in your own practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactively communicate academic expectations for all parties, such as describing the roles and responsibilities of the teacher, the students, and families, such as in a family handbook or in a classroom syllabus. • Provide advance notice of important dates, events, and activities so that families can plan accordingly, such as a school calendar, monthly newsletter, and weekly email blasts. • Offer families resources on how to leverage internal school supports, such as homework help, as well as external community partner supports, such as a local food pantry. <p>Christina, do you want to pick up the next three?</p>
CLH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sure! Invite families to plan and participate in various academic and extracurricular activities, such as students interviewing family members for an assignment, or families co-creating a history unit, cooking for a multicultural event, or presenting at a professional development event. • Periodically share student academic performance and progress, as well as solicit insights and inputs from family, such as progress reports one-third and

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	<p>two-thirds of the way through the quarter, a beginning-of-year survey, and monthly check-in calls with families.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish two-way feedback channels between families and the school to provide an ongoing communication loop so that families have opportunities to receive and share information, such as a bi-weekly check-in email from the teacher or a family tab on the school website with a link for sharing concerns or recommendations.
GK	<p>Since this is the TALE Academy, our job here is to highlight CRSE-aligned family engagement and the ways it can look in-person and in remote or hybrid environments.</p> <p>Christina and I are going to run through some CRSE-aligned approaches and application examples across learning environments. You can find links to everything we refer to in the podcast transcript. Do you want to kick us off?</p>
CLH	<p>Sure! So often we hear about the barrier to family engagement is about time and location of school events – that family members can't get time off from work, meeting times are inconvenient, or they lack child care for other (often younger) siblings.</p> <p>A CRSE-aligned approach could be to assist families in building or strengthening partnerships between each other in order to develop broader support systems so they can still receive key information; and remember to provide minutes of meetings and recordings of events or workshops.</p> <p>To apply this across learning environments, provide flexible and remote options when possible, such as morning or weekend time slots for traditional parent-teacher conference nights that can be conducted via video conference. You can also use parent communication apps and online systems for continuous dialogue, such as Schoolvoice, Remind, ClassTag, ClassDojo and Seesaw.</p>
GK	<p>A potential barrier might be cultural or socioeconomic differences and language barriers between staff and families.</p> <p>A CRSE-aligned approach might be to become familiar with the cultures, intersectional identities, and strengths of families. Be sure to know the primary language of each family and have translated versions of materials, as well as having translators present for conferences, community events, during enrollment, etc.</p> <p>To apply this across learning environments, develop and distribute surveys (paper and digital) that capture families' cultural backgrounds, strengths, and needs to better leverage and support families. Become a fluent user of translation apps such as iTranslate.</p>

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CLH	<p>Another potential barrier might be staff beliefs about and attitudes toward parents and families, as well as parents and families' beliefs about and attitudes toward the school.</p> <p>A CRSE-aligned approach might be to participate in professional development that helps to identify and mitigate implicit bias, as well as research family feelings about the school specifically and the education system generally.</p> <p>To apply this across learning environments, conduct focus groups and/or one-on-one meetings to hear from families (with translation services provided, as needed) and create “welcome” videos that have multi-language closed captioning or are recorded in various home languages.</p>
GK	<p>Another potential barrier might be limited capacity of families to assist with schoolwork due to their own limited formal education.</p> <p>A CRSE-aligned approach could be to offer family enrichment programming that can provide training on how to help students and continuing education programming for families, in addition to soliciting support from various culturally based community partners to improve participation through access/outreach.</p> <p>To apply this across learning environments, provide in-person and virtual tutoring that extends beyond just the teacher and includes peer and community partners.</p>
CLH	<p>One last potential barrier to explore is a lack of transportation to and from the school, and safety concerns with the school's surrounding area beyond traditional school hours</p> <p>A CRSE-aligned approach could be to explore partnerships with local service providers and law enforcement for any additional support in these areas.</p> <p>To apply this across learning environments, consider alternative hybrid or remote options for events, such as live streaming.</p>
GK	<p>Thanks, Christina. Now let's take a look at a concrete application.</p> <p>One New York School that serves as a great example of CRSE-aligned family engagement efforts across learning environments is the Brooklyn LAB Charter School. During the pandemic, they proactively sought feedback from families through town halls, focus groups, and one-on-one sessions in order to develop community-informed decisions. Their goal was to meet the actual needs of students, going straight to the source to inform their programming and planning. The school not only developed a hybrid model for students that allowed them to continue to learn with minimal disruptions, they also created a “Family Emergency Fund” that resulted in families receiving food and supplies to which they otherwise might not have had</p>

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	<p>access. It should be noted that much of the Brooklyn LAB School’s success in these endeavors can be attributed to the preexisting strong relationships and trust built with parents and families due to consistent efforts from its inception. This reaffirms the importance of embedding family engagement into the fabric of our school success efforts.</p>
CLH	<p>I love a success story! When schools put family engagement into practice like that, there are few important questions to consider.</p> <p>In the eTeachNY resource CRSE Family Engagement Strategies, teachers are encouraged to consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In what ways do you currently communicate with families? ● In remote and hybrid learning environments, what do you see as the greatest opportunity for family engagement? ● In remote and hybrid learning environments, what do you see as the greatest challenge to family engagement?
GK	<p>Moreover, when engaging with students’ families to build relationships with families or discuss a student’s learning, it is beneficial to determine the following ahead of time, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What languages are spoken? ● If needed, who can translate for families? ● Who are some family and community members with topical expertise and knowledge (and who can thus be included)? What methods of communication will be used?
CLH	<p>One final set of considerations for CRSE-aligned practices for family engagement is the “digital divide” that can sometimes exist between school and home. The digital divide often refers explicitly to students’ access to both technology and the internet. Most schools are equipped to ensure students can access both in school, and many schools have also been able to provide devices for each student to use outside of the building. Ensuring internet service is a bigger challenge; however, public places providing free WiFi have helped to address this. If students and their families do not have access to the internet in their homes, provide them with a list of places within the community, such as libraries and coffee shops, that students can utilize.</p>
GK	<p>Along the same lines, another challenge is families’ lack of digital literacy. Just as families who have limited education find it difficult to assist their children with academic tasks, family members who are technology novices may be limited in their ability to support their students when they run into issues. Schools can address this</p>

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	by providing direct programming to families in this area or connecting them to resources in the community.
CLH	<p>To close, the most important element of family engagement is to ensure that your efforts invite a two-way dialogue and equal partnership as opposed to a hierarchical one.</p> <p>Families are not to be simply “informed” of what is happening, but rather should be a part of the learning experience. The goal should be to make families co-creators who feel valued, respected, supported, and empowered.</p>
GK	The goal of TALE Academy is to help teachers rethink education so that everyone—students, families, educators, school leaders, and communities—all have the opportunity to succeed. You’ve just added another tool to your toolbox when you invite families into the learning process through CRSE-aligned family engagement strategies.
CLH	
GK	Thanks for listening. Now it’s your turn to head to the choice board for this session and keep on learning!