

Anton Brinckwirth

EDIS 6991 Professional Field Project

TEP Component E - Classroom Community

Artifact 03 - Classroom Come to Life (CCTL) Project, EDIS 5030 (Fall 2021)

Working with ESL Families, Community-Building Strategies, Letter to Parents

Working with ESL Families

K-12 public schools and districts increasingly expect teachers to meet and establish a connection to students' families as an essential part of providing a quality engaging public education.

- **Step 1: Reach out to parents**
Establish and maintain a database of parents' contact information, write a welcome letter to all parents and send by email. For parents who do not respond, send a follow up letter by standard mail.
- **Step 2: Meet the Parents**
Attempt to meet parents at school functions and by reaching out to them via email. Some parents will not be comfortable interacting with the instructor. I will need to read and interpret these signals clearly. Ultimately, the instructor must convey to resistant parents that they are accessible and available when the appropriate time presents itself.
- **Step 3: Remain connected to parents**
Devise a rotating schedule for reaching out to parents to communicate positive feedback about their child in the classroom and positively address areas for improvement (if needed). Send holiday greetings before extended school breaks. And, when parents do something nice for the teacher, always express gratitude with a hand-written thank you note.
- **Step 4: Respond to parents accordingly**
Some parents welcome enhanced communication and connectivity with their child's teachers, but others do not. I will do all I can to optimize teacher-parent communication and make people feel welcomed and comfortable. I will respect the wishes of parents who show they prefer less parent-teacher connectivity. How can teachers interpret what parents think when they seem unreceptive to enhanced communication? It would be easy to assume they prefer to avoid teacher-parent interactions, but other factors could be causing the communication breakdown. Therefore, when parents seem to prefer less contact with the teacher after the first parent-teacher meeting of the academic year, the instructor should ask them their preference. Inquire discreetly and in a culturally sensitive manner.

Community-Building Strategies

1. **Host an international day.** Building a rich learning community takes effort. Part of that effort requires planning for special events that bring people together for school-related activities.
2. **Start up new academic clubs for Spanish and ESL learners.** Encourage all students to join. Remind them that participation will strengthen their college applications. Plan events to raise money for the clubs and field trips and connect with Spanish/ESL clubs at other schools.
3. **Instructors should make efforts to partner with other faculty** and departments to bolster community-building efforts through cross-disciplinary activities and events ideal for bringing students, parents, and teachers together.

Examples for community-building strategy 3 include:

- 1) **An international market event** where students sell things they can make to represent other cultures and ethnic groups.
- 2) **An olympics-style competition** where students dress up and put on war paint to represent different countries and languages and form teams. The event could take place on the school's main athletic field. Students could play team games like crab soccer and competitions for symbolic medals. Students can generate an extraordinary amount of energy and spirit to celebrate other cultures, languages, and traditions, and raise awareness about the importance of diversity in the school community.
- 3) **A student talent show event** for music performances, art expos, skits, show-and-tell, etc.
- 4) **Inquire about the school's efforts to host an international day** where students from different cultures and ethnicities could celebrate their cultures and traditions with food, art, music, and other interesting things. If the school does not have an international day, perhaps you can be the teacher who starts a new tradition. I would acquire permission from the School to host an after-school event that would enable Spanish and/or ESL students to be involved in rich and fun extra-curricular learning activities. I would strive to create an inclusive, diverse, and interesting event that might even incorporate fund-raising opportunities to support student clubs, organizations, and athletics.

Welcome Letter to Parents

Dear Parents/Guardians and Students,

My name is Anton Brinckwirth, and I am thrilled to welcome you to my Spanish/ESL classroom this year! I have a doctorate in Instructional Leadership and a Master's in Teaching with endorsements in ESL and Spanish. I am originally from St. Louis, Missouri, and I currently reside in Chesterfield, Virginia. I have also lived in New England and San Jose, California. I am a passionate teacher enthralled with language, communication, culture, film, and media. I enjoy teaching and learning about Spanish and Latin American culture and civilization, including Brazil and Brazilian Portuguese.

I look forward to being your child's Spanish/ESL instructor and I hope to meet you at our opening parent-teacher's conferences this week. One of my priorities is to cultivate a learning community that includes parents in their child's developmental journey at our school. I want each parent to feel assured that I strive every day to bring the highest quality learning experience to your child with real and accessible paths to academic success. Attached, please find a copy of the syllabus, which outlines my classroom policies and expectations.

If you have questions about the syllabus or any other matter, you can reach me via email at teacher@myschool.edu. I am always happy to set up a meeting. I look forward to working with you and your child throughout the school year!

*Sincerely,
Anton Brinckwirth*