

FACILITATOR GUIDE STUDENTS, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITIES

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ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Illinois Administrative Rule Part 24, Section 24.50
[HTTPS://WWW.ISBE.NET/DOCUMENTS/24ARK.PDF](https://www.isbe.net/documents/24ark.pdf)

Introduction

- These trainings are intended to help participants gain an understanding of the Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading Standards and how to embed practices aligned to the standards into their practice.
- Refer to the notes on each slide and/or this guide for context and talking points.
- These modules are yours to modify. Take or leave what you deem necessary. You may omit or modify content to meet your participants needs. Each module is an open access resource and was developed on plain, white slides to enable institution of learning to insert their own logo/branding.
- ISBE recommends starting with *Section 1a: Self-Awareness and Relationship to Others*. The remaining trainings may be utilized in any **order** you see fit.

Facilitator Prep

- Share some of the documents with participants in advance so they come ready to the session.
- Review all content and determine if there are areas where you need additional context to feel comfortable presenting.
- Note where you anticipate differing viewpoints on content and prepare for how you will respond to that.
- Determine where breaks will be built into the session.
- Make note of the timing on animated slides
- Make sure videos are ready at the start (not ads)
- Determine if you will use breakout groups or strategically assign participants. Consider what the racial (and other identity) makeup of the group will be.

Elements of Culturally Proficient Facilitation

- In planning facilitator training, consider how training will build facilitators' skills and abilities on each of the following elements of culturally proficient facilitation.
 - **Assessing Cultural Knowledge:** Ability to understand how participants' identity, culture, and privilege will shape their learning experience and ability to reflect on how their own identity, culture, and privilege will shape interactions with participants.
 - **Valuing Diversity:** Ability to foster inclusion; amplify a diverse range of participant voices; and utilize materials, strategies, processes, and content that value differences.
 - **Managing the Dynamics of Difference:** Ability to demonstrate vulnerability and authenticity and implement mindful inquiry, dialogue, conflict resolution, and creative problem-solving with groups.
 - **Adapting to Diversity:** Ability to customize plans and learning experiences and improvise and adapt facilitation styles in the moment to support participant learning.
 - **Institutionalizing Cultural Knowledge:** Ability to strategically plan learning experiences in collaboration with school and district to support long-term professional development goals.

Strategies for Training Facilitators

The following strategies can help facilitators develop the elements of culturally proficient facilitation. Each of these strategies gives facilitators an opportunity to plan for, practice, and build their confidence with skills for navigating emotional and complicated conversations pertaining to race and equity.

- Practice “race talk”: Facilitators should practice sharing personal stories about identity, power, privilege, and positionality and talking about their own biases.
- Cultivate self-awareness: Facilitators can build awareness of personal responses to tension or strong emotion and identify tools to use in these situations
- Prepare to discuss underlying feelings and emotions: Strong feelings and emotions inevitably arise in conversations about race, equity, and privilege. It can be tempting for facilitators to bypass these emotions and stick to the content, but a skilled facilitator is able to name and acknowledge these feelings and emotions. These feelings and emotions often represent a hidden level of dialog. If we focus only on the content -- and not the feelings and emotions that arise around these topics -- we dilute the learning that can happen.
- Validate and hold space for feelings and emotions: This is especially important for participants of color who may feel like their feelings and concerns have been dismissed. Participants of color may also experience intense emotions like anger and grief, and facilitators should prepare themselves for how they can accept and allow expressions of these feelings.
- Creating psychological safety: Discussing topics like race, oppression, and identity feels inherently risky in a professional setting. Psychological safety makes it possible for participants to reflect and experiment, ask for help, and acknowledge mistakes or changes in perspective. Facilitators can help to create psychological safety regarding the content of culturally responsive teaching and leading by acknowledging their own biases and mistakes in the learning process.
- Practice different delivery platforms and methods: Varying contexts, audiences, and settings require the use of different tools. Facilitators can practice identifying and using different tools for content delivery, including small groups, dyads, fishbowl practice, and virtual tools like Padlet, Flipgrid, and Google Classroom. Consider how varying learning tools increases accessibility for different learners.
- Prepare for pushback from participants: Topics of race and equity can be emotionally charged, and facilitators should be prepared for some pushback. Training can help facilitators to understand, predict, and practice responding to rebuttals and pushback.

Content for Facilitator Training

While facilitator learning should be ongoing, the following topics represent content that facilitators should have some level of expertise on prior to facilitating training.

- Unique elements of culturally responsive facilitation: Facilitating on equity and cultural responsiveness varies from more traditional forms of facilitation. Naming these differences can help orient facilitators to how they should deliver content.
- Identity and intersectionality: Facilitators should develop their understanding of their own identity, how it influences their interactions and content delivery, and how participants perceive them.
- Data and storytelling: Facilitators will need to be prepared to identify and share relevant stories to tell the story of inequity and oppression in their communities. It will also be important to ensure that facilitators are using data responsibly, are prepared to help participants understand the ways in which data is not objective and balance the use of data with individual stories.
- Elements of oppression: Facilitators should have a deep understanding of the roles power and oppression play in schools and communities.
- Brain science behind bias: Facilitators should be prepared to use and teach the brain science of implicit bias and information processing of information. Facilitators can also use the science of how our brains seek safety and avoid threats to create safe adult learning environments. Training should build facilitator understanding that we all bring trauma and emotional responses to this work (including the facilitators) and how we can use this information to support participants as we think about facilitation moves.
- Common vocabulary: Facilitators should clearly understand the vocabulary used in the trainings on equity and cultural responsiveness and be able to appropriately differentiate terms. They should be prepared to use the vocabulary aligned to the Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading Standards (see Appendix 1) and support participants in using the appropriate vocabulary as well.

Illinois Administrative Rule Part 24, Section 24.50 Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading Standards

(a) Self-Awareness and Relationships to Others: Culturally responsive teachers and leaders are reflective and gain a deeper understanding of themselves and how they impact others, leading to more cohesive and productive student development as it relates to academic and social-emotional development for all students.

(b) Systems of Oppression: Culturally responsive teachers and leaders understand that there are systems in our society, especially, but not limited to, our school system, that create and reinforce inequities, thereby creating oppressive conditions. Educators work actively against these systems in their everyday roles in educational institutions.

(c) Students as Individuals: Culturally responsive teachers and leaders view and value their students as individuals within the context of their families and communities.

(d) Students as Co-Creators: Culturally responsive teachers and leaders (who fundamentally believe all students are capable) center learning around students' experiences and position them as co-creators, with emphasis on prioritizing historically marginalized students.

(e) Leveraging Student Advocacy: Culturally responsive teachers and leaders will support and create opportunities for student advocacy and representation in the content and classroom

(f) Family and Community Collaboration: Culturally responsive teachers and leaders will partner with families and communities to build rapport, form collaborative and mutual relationships, and engage in effective cross-cultural communication.

(g) Content Selections in All Curricula: Culturally responsive teachers and leaders intentionally embrace student identities and prioritize representation in the curriculum. In turn, students are not only given a chance to identify with the curriculum, they become exposed to other cultures within their schools and both their local and global communities.

(h) Student Representation in the Learning Environment: Culturally responsive teachers and leaders ensure the diversity of their student population is equally represented within the learning environment.

Our Agreements

TALKING POINTS:

- Encourage group to consider agreements and think if any other agreement might be necessary for us to fully engage and support each other on this challenging journey.
- Are there any that participants want to emphasize?
- We believe the most powerful kind of learning does not come from being told what to think but in learning how to think about it for oneself.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Communication Roadblocks to Avoid

TALKING POINTS:

- During this session, you will have a lot of time for discussion with other participants.
- This is important to learning and processing, but we want to put some norms in place for responding for your colleagues.
- Sometimes we respond with what can be called “communication roadblocks,” which invalidate others’ experiences. We often do this with the best of intention – we want to make others feel better. But actually, these kinds of statements make us feel worse. Think about how you feel when someone responds to you with one of these types of statements.
- Commit to avoiding these types of responses in our discussions.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

The purpose of this is to make sure that we are affirming and validating the experiences of people of color as we do this work. Familiarize yourself with these types of responses and be prepared to address them when they arise, especially when they are being used to invalidate the experience of any marginalized group members.

Silence Breakers

TALKING POINTS:

- We are going to talk about a lot of complex and charged topics. This may be new and uncomfortable to you and you might be tempted to stay silent.
- Part of learning is discussing and integrating what we learn.
- If you are uncomfortable or unsure about sharing, consider using some of these sentence starters/questions to stay engaged.
- They are also in your participant handout.
- They are especially meant to support entering conversation with intellectual humility and curiosity and to reduce fear of losing face

FACILITATOR NOTES:

- These can be important for everyone but may be particularly important in supporting members of dominant culture (White participants) in being able to access the conversation authentically. You may want to model what this could look like and encourage participants to refer back to these regularly throughout.

Reflection Questions

TALKING POINTS:

These questions will be used to frame and support our conversations. You will be asked to apply the framework as other material is presented to you. We will work through it together or in your small group with a facilitator to help increase your comfort and facility in using it for the future.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

These slides are included at multiple points throughout the content but feel free to draw on these questions as needed.

Objectives

- Describe authentic engagement and collaboration and how they benefit students and school communities.
- Investigate and discuss how to build relationships with students, families, and communities.
- Develop strategies for effective communication with students, families, and communities.
- Explore community assets and learn to leverage them for student success.
- Plan to proactively engage with students, families, and communities.

Authentic Engagement

TALKING POINTS:

- Student achievement increases when schools and districts work in partnership with families and communities.
- Increased family engagement in education is linked to improved school readiness, higher grades, higher test scores, better attendance and less tardiness, decreased suspension and expulsion rates, and the increased likelihood of high school graduation.
- A 15-year study of 400 Chicago schools found that schools with strong family and community ties, regardless of any other factors, were four times more likely to improve in reading and 10 times more likely to improve in math.
- In a study of Title I schools, teachers who were “especially active” in engaging parents and sharing resources to support learning at home saw larger gains in student achievement, regardless of other factors.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Resources cited:

- Xitao, Fan & Michael Chen. “Parental Involvement and Students’ Academic Achievement: A Meta-Analysis.” *Educational Psychology Review* 13.1 (2001): 1–22. Henderson, A. T., & Mapp, K. L. (2002). *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family and Community Connections on Student Achievement. Annual Synthesis.* National Center for Family & Community Connections with Schools. Sheldon, S. B., & Epstein, J.L. (2002). Improving student behavior and school discipline with family & community involvement. *Education & urban society*, 35(1), 4-26.
- Bryk, Anthony, et al. *Organizing Schools for Improvement: Lessons from Chicago.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010. Print.
- Westat and Policy Studies Associates. 2001. *The Longitudinal Evaluation of School Change and Performance in Title I Schools.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Deputy Secretary, Planning and Evaluation Service.

Impact on Decision-Making

TALKING POINTS:

- Too often when district and school leaders build their engagement strategies, they rely on traditional strategies – newsletters, PTO meetings, Family Nights, and events like “Donuts with Dad.”
- There is value in these activities because when utilized effectively they provide a way for families to stay informed and share feedback.
- But a TRUE partnership means that the community (families, students, community members) will have agency and authority over key decisions.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Four Pillars of Authentic Engagements

TALKING POINTS:

Authentic engagement is composed of four pillars:

1. Shared vision
2. Authentic collaboration
3. Intentional culture and diversity
- 4.. 360-degree communication

Research shows that successful engagement efforts frequently include one or more of these characteristics.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Authentic Collaboration with Families and Communities

TALKING POINTS:

Let's review the critical shifts we need to consider under this pillar.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Encourage participants to reflect on where they are in these shifts and how they know.

At its essence, the authentic collaboration pillar is about shifting mindsets and practices to ones that truly demonstrate the valuing of families as equals in decision-making. It is an essential element to the success of students.

Our work is to build a supportive environment that fosters these types of connections for families and teachers in an intentional way. We want to share resources and provide information to families to help them better support their child academically and emotionally. As teachers, it's been assumed that you are on the front line of these efforts; but now with virtual learning, it's even more clear that families play a key role here, and engagement can't come from you alone.

This type of engagement is more granular and focused on individual students – not just assumed values that you think families in your school community share. And, with that more individualized focus, it does take more time -- but the payoff is also much greater.

Finally, collaboration efforts need to align around academic goals to help keep the conversation grounded and focused on the student outcomes that are desired. That's really the end game.

Conscious Choices: Building Relationships with Families

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vNdwJTKuHDw#t=15>

TALKING POINTS:

Let's look at a group of teachers who've made conscious choices to connect in an authentic way with students and their families in order to create a bridge and really set their students up for success. During this video, capture key quotes and ideas.

ASK:

What perceptions can you infer that these teachers have of the families of their students?

Turn & Talk:

What would it take to build a bridge like that for you?

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Communication and Engagement

TALKING POINTS:

Communication is important, but not sufficient. Engagement also means listening and soliciting feedback.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Take another moment to engage with participants to reflect on what strategies they have used that have been strong and what they often use that doesn't reap constructive results.

Reactive and Proactive Communication

TALKING POINTS:

Our messages generally fall into two different categories -- reactive and proactive. Reactive tends to be a response to a parent question or concern or addressing something that has become a problem. Proactive communication involves consistent updates and sharing information about what to expect. Instead of addressing a problem, it is geared toward preventing a problem.

To help illustrate this slide, I'm going to start with an example scenario:

Imagine that a brand new shipment of high-quality, state-of-the-art math manipulatives has just arrived at school with rigorous lessons aligned to the standards. Because the school could only afford one set, the staff decided that each class would get the manipulatives and accompanying unit of lessons plans for three weeks. When our turn comes, I lengthen the daily math period from 45 minutes to 2 hours so we can try all the activities shown in the accompanying teacher guidebook. To compensate for the extra time that we spend on math in the classroom, I don't give any math homework for the next three weeks, and instead give students independent science homework (because we will not hold science during this three-week period).

Immediately, families became concerned. "Where's my child's math homework?" they ask. "Why did you stop assigning math homework?" they wonder. "Don't you know that my child will fall behind without math practice every night?" they insist.

Now I have to react. The families have already made up their minds. Based on the information they have received from their children, they have concluded that I have stopped assigning math homework, and they don't understand why. I have dug myself a hole out of which I have to climb.

All this could have been avoided had I been proactive. Before the first day of our three-week manipulative exploration, I should have sent home a newsletter explaining the situation. Then the families would have known in advance of the unique, short-term opportunity that we had to use these manipulatives and understood the value of these types of experiences. I could have told them that in order to take full advantage of this opportunity, I would be lengthening our daily math period, and that because of the extra time the kids spent on math in class instead of science, I would be decreasing the time they spend on math at home and giving them independent science homework instead. I could have emphasized that this hiatus from math homework would only last three weeks and that the youngsters would not be at all disadvantaged because they were gaining valuable practice in class. Informing families beforehand would have enabled me to accentuate the positive.

So that's something to keep in mind. As you make decisions or adjustments in your classroom, put yourself in the mindset of the family members. As you approach family communication, ask yourself what would be helpful for them to know/what questions might they have? Being proactive is a great strategy to increase the trust and engagement of your families.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Independent Reflection and Share Out

TALKING POINTS:

Let's take [X minutes] to reflect on the questions on this slide and then we will share out with the full group.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Tailoring the Message

TALKING POINTS:

Look at this excerpt from a handbook. Put a * next to "ed speak" terms. Put a line under lines that might have a negative tone. Put a circle around info that might be actionable to families

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Avoiding Ed Speak

TALKING POINTS:

Let's look at another example.

FACILITATOR NOTES: After participants have reflected and shared possible rephrasings, you can share some examples that may not have already been highlighted, such as:

- **Spell out all acronyms and provide examples (e.g. LEA = Local Education Agency, and in this context, means the school district.)**
- **Consider providing links (if an electronic document) or supplemental documents (if a hard copy)**
- **Define terms such as "promotion" and "progression" within the context of the memo.**
- **Define and provide examples of "applicable documentation".**
- **Define and provide more information about the Kindergarten Exit Test.**
- **Overall- don't assume your reader is familiar with educational jargon. Keep the language simple and clear. Anyone should be able to understand it easily.**

Avoiding Ed Speak

TALKING POINTS:

Ask participants to rephrase the slide in a positive way.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Communication Channels

TALKING POINTS:

Communicating well essentially means that we need to have a clear message and select the right medium for that message.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Communication Strategies

TALKING POINTS:

Resist the temptation to use a particular medium because it is available to you or to “check off the box.”
Make sure you are picking the right medium for your message — not the other way around.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Strategies for Effective Family Communication

TALKING POINTS:

Communications with families are most effective when they are regular, well-timed, and include actionable support strategies. Schools will be more successful involving families in academics when the asks focus on helping students establish good work habits and time management rather than supplementing instruction or academic content. Schools must ensure genuine representation across family communities to promote authentic engagement. Schools can reduce family anxiety by providing a sense of routine for students and families. Older students benefit from a role in shaping these routines.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Strategies to Avoid

TALKING POINTS:

- Given the level of concern (particularly among families from low-income backgrounds) about student progress, lowering standards and expectations for student learning is likely to raise rather than alleviate families' anxiety.
- Lowering academic standards and workload with the goal of helping families balance students' broader socioemotional needs is unlikely to reduce families' anxiety. Schools can serve families better by providing clear guidance on how the curriculum will help students stay on track and providing families with clear feedback on their child's progress against standards.

STRATEGIES TO AVOID:

- Call out focus today on punitive language and ed speak.
- Concerns and assumptions about families' willingness and capacity to help their kids are often driven by deficit perceptions and stereotypes about socioeconomic status and race rather than authentic understanding. Schools should not assume students are truant when they fail to attend online courses. Instead, they should assume best intentions and ask students and families why they are unable to attend.
- Many schools primarily communicate with families at key transition points throughout the year, such as end-of-quarter or end-of-semester report cards, but effective communications offer action steps during times when the action is likely to matter most. (See examples described in earlier sections.)

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Intentional Culture and Diversity

TALKING POINTS:

Intentional culture is purposefully reflective of the community's demographics and diverse perspectives.

It's really this shifted language from labeling (for example, assuming that because homework wasn't completed the students "weren't committed to the work" or that they "didn't know how to do the work") to providing meaningful opportunities for all voices to be heard and understood.

The focus here is on supporting families in driving their own educational vision with their student, rather than us as educators imposing our beliefs about what families and students are capable of doing. Because this approach is tailored, it does take time and targeted effort, but the payoff is much greater in the end.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Redefine Family and Community Engagement

TALKING POINTS:

To better understand this concept and the shifts required, let's start with this blog post.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Give participants time to read the linked blog post and reflect on the questions.

Risk of Unchecked Bias

TALKING POINTS: Let's take a moment to review how our unconscious biases might affect our engagement efforts.

FACILITATOR NOTES: Feel free to draw connections between this and all of the other topics we have discussed so far. Be sure to find ways to simplify academic language or "buzzwords" for clarity with your particular audience of participants.

Bayside High School Case Study

Case study link:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1DW0p3g0ZuX1rgK1LCuNEvJXw5jFonLGb/view?usp=sharing>

TALKING POINTS:

Let's look at an example of how this has played out in another district.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Reflection Questions

TALKING POINTS:

We've just shared a lot of information. Take some time to jot down your responses to the reflection questions.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Get a read on your participants when determining how to debrief these questions. Some participants may benefit from the chance to further discuss these, but if you sense that there are participants who will use this as an opportunity to debate (and potentially invalidate the experiences of people of color), and you are unsure of how to discourage that, you can just use this time for reflection and keep moving forward.

Community Assets

TALKING POINTS:

Let's look at the different assets in our communities and how these assets all play a role in supporting students and families.

At first glance, you may not think you have all of these – it's key to think about NON-TRADITIONAL ASSETS/THROUGH A LENS OF EQUITY.

We know that the work of supporting students and families cannot be done by schools, districts, or teachers alone. We are going to spend some time thinking about who/what groups can help us make these shifts.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

What is Community?

TALKING POINTS:

So as we move into our skill-building session today on community asset mapping, let's think about what we mean about community. In groups, you'll have a chance to do some brainstorming about how we define community.

Group Brainstorm: Share out and come up with a working definition as a group.

Share definition: To add on, we're going to be using some resources today from educator Joyce Epstein and her framework on six types of family involvement. We'll also keep in mind this definition as we move forward in our discussion today.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Asset Mapping

TALKING POINTS:

Call on participants to read.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

360-Degree Communication

TALKING POINTS:

You will use all three types of communication, but teachers and leaders with the strongest engagement skills who are great at building and leveraging relationships for student success will use 360-degree communication much more often than the others.

Let's focus on one-way communication here: [READ SLIDE] An example includes: I send a letter home and a text in Spanish and English to inform parents of early dismissal times for family teacher conferences.

Two-way communications include: [READ SLIDE] An example: Send home a family form or inquiry asking how families would like me to communicate with them and anything they would like me to know about them or their child.

360-degree communication: [READ SLIDE] An example: Building on our previous example, if I had feedback from the family survey and then followed up with families to discuss and map out new communication strategies, I would have been implementing 360-communication.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

360-Degree Communication

TALKING POINTS:

Let's take a moment and further dig into this cycle. [Read or have participants read steps of the feedback loop.]

Other best practices for engaging in authentic community engagement:

- Create or utilize practices that promote equal partnerships. It's about purpose, not power, so work with families as a team; never make a family feel like you are above them.
- Ensure families know how to and have opportunities to provide input and respond to school communication. If you don't do this part, you're not engaging in 360-degree communication – that's only one-way communication.
- Ground communication in academic outcomes and always be respectful. Put yourself in a family member's shoe. It's natural to go a little mama bear over your baby cub, so to speak. So be solutions-oriented and ground everything in academic outcomes. It will help both you and the family member to remain calm and focused on working to make things better. Written and spoken interaction between families and teachers should always be respectful.
- Listen. Seek first to understand before seeking to be understood.
- Recognize family engagement. Families should receive positive and consistent information as well as recognition for their engagement.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Community Voices

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vbyhao0FtaQ&feature=youtu.be>

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vbyhao0FtaQ>

TALKING POINTS:

I now want to share a video that was captured from the Flamboyan Foundation. In the video, you'll hear from Natina Kaya, a public school parent in Washington, D.C.

She talks here about how she came to be involved with her child's education by building a relationship with her child's teacher, Ms. Lucas.

D.C., like many urban areas, is one where the relationships between families and schools have been very tense historically. It reminds us that building a relationship with families when you are in a school can be tenuous and difficult -- and it takes time.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Group Debrief

TALKING POINTS:

ASK: What was challenging/simple about the practices?

ASK: What ways could you proactively plan for when and how you will engage family members of your students?

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Independent Reflection

TALKING POINTS:

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Debrief the session by having participants reflect on then respond to the questions on this slide.