

Strategy #1: Family Cohorts / Grupos de familias

Summary

Family Cohorts are groups of families and caregivers who meet regularly to support each other in their children's learning, to share information and resources, and to receive specialized instruction from the teacher. The Family Cohort model is a strategy aimed at improving learning outcomes by forging strong relationships that create networks of support and information, build partners-in-learning capacity, and surface and capitalize on family assets.

Implementation

Family Cohort convenings serve multiple purposes including:

- Builds family-to-family support networks and relationships
- Builds family-to-teacher relationships
- Provides a method to foster family partners-in-learning
- Develops family/caregiver capacity to lead in community spaces (*language liaisons, volunteer opportunities, family advocate groups, etc.*)
- Offers a method for disseminating key information to families and caregivers

Some key aspects to take into considerations when forming Family Cohorts include:

- Language preference (*mixed or language-alike*)
- Schedule needs/assets
- Technology needs/assets
- Specific skill set that can be shared with others
- Cohorts should be small, no more than 8 families and consist, ideally of one veteran family (*i.e., older sibling who has been in the program*)

Initially, Family Cohorts are convened and led by teachers and school staff who determine the agenda and send out the invites. However, the goal is for families to eventually take ownership of the group time, process and agendas. It is important to be intentional yet flexible as families' needs may shift throughout the year. Equally important is that high-quality translation and interpretation are always used when conducting cohort meetings in the home language. Convenings should last between 30-40 minutes.

Family Cohort Convening – Descriptions of Sections

Section	Content
<p>Welcome / Bienvenida: (3-5 minutes)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief check-in, warm-up question, or icebreaker designed to welcome families. This should be simple, upbeat, & low risk for everyone (<i>e.g., individuals share their name, child’s name & one thing they like to do: with their child, as a family, a book they like to read with their child or favorite song they sing together, etc.</i>). • Have individuals unmute themselves to share, write in the chat box, or use an online tool that is familiar to everyone (<i>e.g., Jamboard or another digital whiteboard</i>)
<p>Mini-Topic or Lesson / Mini-tema o lección: (5-10 minutes)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mini-topic, brief lesson or activity is led by the teacher or family member to build partners-in-learning capacity. • Given the limited time, it is important that you focus on ONE topic, and ONE or TWO aspects for that particular topic. For example, one mini-topic might focus on: <i>What are the family benefits of raising a child who is bilingual?</i> The focus could then be on how being bilingual enables the child to communicate with family members in their home language & engage in deeper conversations which in turn builds stronger family connections. • Other possible topics include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>How can I support oral language development at home?</i> The focus could then be on families singing songs together &/or modeling complex language by describing out loud what they are doing throughout the day while cooking, sorting laundry, shopping at the grocery store, watering the garden, etc. – <i>Asking children questions to make reading more interactive.</i> The focus could be on questions that encourage children to make predictions such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ <i>What do you think will happen next? ¿Que piensas que pasara después?</i> ◇ <i>What would you do if that were you? ¿Que hicieras si fueras tu?</i> ◇ <i>How do you think the character is feeling right now? ¿Como piensas que se siente el personaje?</i> ◇ and then asking the follow-up question <i>What made you think that? ¿Que te hizo pensar eso?</i> – <i>Media Mentor:</i> Demonstrate and provide support on how to utilize specific technology or Apps (<i>e.g., how to use a particular app, Chromebook, upload a photo, etc.</i>)

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<p>Important news / Noticias importantes: (5-10 minutes)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time to share news that will keep families updated on what is happening with regards to instruction, upcoming events, &/or community resources. • News may could include: <u>Focus on instruction:</u> Unit/Study/Theme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ <i>This month/for the next ___ weeks we will be learning all about _____. Some key concepts we will explore are _____. Este mes/durante las siguientes _____ estaremos aprendiendo todo sobre _____.</i> <p><u>Weekly Schedule</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ <i>This week we will focus on _____./ Esta semana nos concentraremos en _____.</i> ◇ <i>Some recommended books are/activities you might do at home are/local places related to our learning you might visit are _____. /Recomendamos los siguientes libros/ actividades que pueden hacer en casa son/lugares que pueden visitar son _____.</i> ◇ <i>Friendly reminder that Friday is Picture Day/ Recordatorio amigable que el viernes es día de fotos</i> <p><u>Partners-in-Learning Guidance</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ <i>In class we have been working on _____. / En clase hemos trabajado en _____</i> ◇ <i>Some key vocabulary words, concepts, and questions to focus on at home are _____. / Algunas palabras de vocabulario clave, conceptos, y preguntas de enfoque en casa son _____.</i> ◇ <i>Ask you children to share about _____. / Pida que su hijo/a comparta sobre _____</i> ◇ <i>Remember to keep asking those prediction questions at home. / Recuerde de seguir hacienda preguntas de predicción en casa.</i> <p><u>Community resources & events</u></p>
<p>Family Voices / Voces de las familias: (10-15 minutes)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide time for families to voice their needs, ask questions, ask for advice, provide suggestions & recommendations to one another, share their skills & assets, make suggestions for upcoming mini-topics or lessons, share ways in which they would like to volunteer or become involved in parent advocacy groups, etc.
<p>Closing & Appreciations Clausura y Apreciaciones: (2-5 minutes)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank everyone for attending & being a partner-in-learning. • Recognize & honor family assets & contributions.

Family Cohort Convening Agenda

Section	Content	Resources & Materials
Welcome / Bienvenida: (3-5 minutes)		
Mini-Topic or Lesson / Mini- tema o lección: (5-10 minutes)		
Important news / Noticias importantes: (5-10 minutes)		
Family Voices / Voces de las familias: (10-15 minutes)		
Closing & Appreciations Clausura/ Apreciaciones: (2-5 minutes)		