In the following report, Hanover Research discusses expert-recommended strategies to create an equitable learning environment, approaches to improve access to advanced courses for underrepresented students, and equitable discipline policies. In addition, this report describes strategies to engage hard-to-reach families and support highly mobile students.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND KEY FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

Leaders of diverse school systems frequently cite equity as a goal to guide school reform efforts. While the operative definition of educational equity continues to evolve and expand, many experts emphasize that equity focuses on meeting the needs of a culturally, linguistically, and socio-economically diverse student population. The Center for Public Education (CPE) defines equity as “when all students receive the resources they need so they graduate prepared for success after high school.”¹ CPE contrasts this definition with that of equality, whereby “students are all treated the same and have access to similar resources.”² Researcher Bradley Scott of the Intercultural Development Research Association (IRDA) notes that achieving educational equity involves changes to nearly all aspects of school system operation, including academic expectations, access to learning opportunities, high-quality instruction, resource allocation, and accountability.³

To support school districts’ ongoing efforts to improve educational equity, Hanover Research prepared the following report focusing on priority areas of equity improvement identified the district. Section I: Creating Equitable Learning Environments discusses expert-recommended strategies to improve equity in classroom instruction, access to advanced coursework, and discipline policies. Section II: Engaging Families presents approaches to enhance outreach to hard-to-reach families, create welcoming environments for diverse families, and support teachers in their engagement efforts. Section III: Supporting High-Mobility Students discusses expert-recommended strategies that district leaders, school administrators, and classroom teachers can take to support highly mobile students and ensure that the move to their new school does not disrupt their education.

KEY FINDINGS

- Teachers can ensure that students of all backgrounds receive equitable instruction by acknowledging students’ cultural heritage and accommodating multiple modes of learning. By recognizing and integrating multiple perspectives into instruction, teachers help students feel comfortable in their classroom environment and enhance learning for all students. Districts should encourage honest discussions among teachers about how to best support students with diverse needs, and provide training on culturally responsive teaching practices.

- Schools can create welcoming environments for diverse families by showcasing student diversity and offering parent education activities. For example, schools can post signs in multiple languages, create a parent room with bilingual resources, and

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² Ibid.
increase the visibility of bilingual staff. In particular, districts should make efforts to explain complex school operations, such as standardized testing, selection for gifted and talented programs, and the college application process. Some districts embrace a “community school” model and engage diverse families by offering English classes, housing support, and job coaching to extend the services provided to families.

- **Schools can engage hard-to-reach families by communicating in their home language, meeting them in their own communities, and taking steps to make family participation easier.** For example, schools can prepare welcome DVDs in multiple languages, hold events in local communities, build parent networks for families who speak the same language, and provide transportation to school-based events.

- **Experts find that some types of parent engagement programs are more impactful on student learning than others.** For example, meet-and-greet forums like celebrations, fundraisers, and performances have a lower impact on student learning than more consistent communication that focuses on parent empowerment. This kind of communication may include positive phone calls home, classroom observations, weekly data-sharing folders, and modeling learning support strategies.

- **Educators can support high-mobility students by ensuring timely transfer of records, creating welcome packets for new families, and taking steps to ensure that new students feel welcome at their new school.** To welcome new families to the school, school leaders should create orientation materials for new families and follow up with parents during their child’s first few weeks at school to ensure the transition is going smoothly. Further, student “ambassadors” can assist in building community and provide a buddy system at the school or classroom level to support new students.

- **Districts can promote equitable discipline by implementing tiered disciplinary policies.** In contrast with zero-tolerance policies, tiered disciplinary policies enact consequences of misbehavior that are proportional to the harm caused. Experts encourage schools to implement positive disciplinary programs, such as restorative justice, and focus on improving school climate in order to facilitate equitable disciplinary practices.

- **Experts recommend that schools use scores on standards-based tests administered to all students as part of the process to identify students who are likely to succeed in advanced courses.** Prerequisite courses, minimum grade point averages, and teacher or counselor recommendations may all serve as barriers to enrolling underrepresented students with potential to succeed in advanced courses. Once students are identified as high-potential, schools must communicate the benefits of participation in these programs to students and their families. This is especially important for students from underrepresented groups who may be otherwise unaware of the programs available. Districts use a variety of strategies to engage underrepresented groups in these discussions, such as sending information home in multiple languages, providing transportation and food for evening information sessions, and following up with families who are unable to attend information sessions.
SECTION I: CREATING EQUITABLE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Bradley Scott’s *Six Goals of Educational Equity and School Reform* outlines a comprehensive framework for achieving educational equity in the classroom. Many of the goals listed in Scott’s guidebook focus on interactions between students and teachers and student access to learning. The guidebook describes an equitable learning environment as, “patterns of interaction among individuals [that is] free from threat, humiliation, danger and disregard ... [and] exists within a supportive, quality environment characterized by genuine acceptance, valuing, respect, safety and security.”*4* This section focuses on three areas where educators can focus efforts to promote equitable learning environments: classroom instruction, access to advanced coursework, and discipline procedures.*5*

EQUITABLE INSTRUCTION STRATEGIES

In an equitable classroom environment, students of all backgrounds (e.g., race, nationality, gender) have the same opportunities to learn and develop their knowledge. Gloria Ladson-Billings of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, a leading pedagogical theorist focusing on equity, stresses that equity seeks to help students leverage their unique identity to further their learning:*6*

> The goal of equitable education is not to help students learn to adapt to the dominant culture of the school. Instead, the goal should be to help students develop a positive self-image and to learn how to embrace differences in others.

CLASSROOM-LEVEL PRACTICES

The instructional strategies summarized below are derived from guidance published by leading education researchers and institutions that support schools in meeting their equity goals.

**Acknowledge students and their cultural heritage.** By personally recognizing students and their unique characteristics, teachers set a tone of mutual respect. A 2016 report from the Equity Assistance Center at Education Northwest, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, advises that teachers learn how to correctly pronounce their students’ names, noting that “in many cultures, the giving of names is loaded with symbolic significance, and to mispronounce that name is to diminish it and its bearer.”*7* In addition, teachers can make students feel welcome by ensuring that bulletin boards and other displays in the classroom

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*4* Ibid., p. 5.
*5* For more information, see: “Educational Equity: What Does it Mean? How Do We Know When We Reach It?,” Op. cit., pp. 4–7.
*7* Ibid., p. 4.
reflect the diversity of students in the classroom. By surrounding students with images of themselves as learners, the teacher communicates to those students a recognition of their capabilities and high expectations for their achievement.  

**Connect the academic curriculum to what students already know.** By acknowledging the heritage and communities in which students develop and grow, teachers help students of diverse backgrounds feel comfortable in their classroom environment. In a report on culturally responsive teaching, the Equity Alliance at Arizona State University encourages teachers to recognize and activate “multiple avenues” to understanding and accessing information. For example, a history teacher could examine the expansion of the American West through both the perspective of the American pioneers and the indigenous peoples they encountered.

**Accommodate diverse learning styles.** Experts note that students of different cultural backgrounds may be more comfortable with specific modes of learning. For example, some students may learn best through modeling and stories, and therefore be unmotivated by incentive-based learning systems (e.g., earning “tokens” for good behavior or achievement). Similarly, researchers Linda Darling-Hammond and Diane Friedlaender note in a 2008 article that schools that are models of educational equity engage in a number of common practices that facilitate personalization of learning. These include: hiring more classroom-based staff in order to reduce class sizes and pupil loads; creating advisory systems that match teachers with 15 to 25 students for the duration of their time at the school; and allocating 7 to 15 days of shared professional learning time for teachers during the school year to plan lessons and share ideas.

**Set clear expectations for student learning and behavior.** As Education Northwest noted in its report on equitable teaching strategies, “some students are more vulnerable to low expectations because of societal biases and stereotypes associated with their racial and/or ethnic identity.” Teachers can communicate expectations using both explicit directions and non-verbal cues. For example, the report recommends that teachers outline the criteria and standards that will be used to evaluate their work, and provide students with anonymous samples of prior student work. In addition, teachers should maintain eye contact with both high- and low-achieving students while communicating expectations for learning and participation. Similarly, teachers who ask difficult questions of both low- and high-achieving students communicate equitable expectations and help students develop oral response skills.

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8 Ibid.
10 Ibid., p. 3.
13 Ibid., pp. 4–5.
In a 2010 document, the Equity Initiatives Unit at Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) in Maryland outlined 27 observable and research-based classroom practices that promote equitable learning. Figure 1.1, below, presents the MCPS recommended practices that school leaders could use in classroom observations.

Figure 1.1: Equitable Classroom Practices Observation Checklist

| ☑ Welcomes students by name as they enter the classroom | Asks students for correct pronunciation of their names; correctly pronounces students’ names |
| ☑ Uses eye contact with all students | Makes culturally appropriate eye contact with all students |
| ☑ Uses proximity with all students equitably | Circulates around student work areas to be close to all students |
| ☑ Uses body language, gestures, and expressions to convey a message that all students’ questions and opinions are important | Smiles, Nods head in affirmation; Leans toward students; Turns toward students who are speaking to show interest |
| ☑ Arranges the classroom to accommodate discussion | Arranges seating to facilitate student-student discussion; Seating to facilitate teacher-student discussion |
| ☑ Ensures bulletin boards, displays, instructional materials, and other visuals in the classroom reflect the racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds represented by students | Displays and uses materials (supplemental books) that reflect all students’ racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds year round; Displays products and props from students’ home and community background |
| ☑ Uses a variety of visual aids and props to support student learning | Uses multiethnic photos, pictures, and props to illustrate concepts and content; Uses appropriate technology to illustrate concepts and content |
| ☑ Learns, uses, and displays some words in students’ heritage language | Posts some content words or phrases in students’ heritage languages; Uses some words or phrases from students’ heritage language in the classroom |
| ☑ Models use of graphic organizers | Uses a variety of graphic organizers during instruction; Encourages students to identify and use the task appropriate graphic organizer by modeling |
| ☑ Uses class building and teambuilding activities to promote peer support for academic achievement | Structures academic and social interactions between students |
| ☑ Uses random response strategies | Uses random response strategies (i.e., numbered heads, color-coded cards, equity sticks, calling sticks) |
| ☑ Uses cooperative learning structures | Structures opportunities for students to learn with and from their peers (i.e., Think-Pair-Share, Teammates consult, Jigsaw, Pairs Check, Partner A and B, Boggle, Last Word) |
| ☑ Structures heterogeneous and cooperative groups for learning | Uses random grouping methods to form small groups; Explicitly teaches collaborative learning skills to students; Provides opportunities for cooperative groups to process/reflect on how well they accomplished the task |
| ☑ Uses probing and clarifying techniques to assist students to answer | Rephrases the question; Asks a related question; Gives student a hint, clue, or prompt |
| ☑ Acknowledges all students’ comments, responses, questions, and contributions | Uses affirming, correcting, or probing to acknowledge all students’ responses |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Seeks multiple perspectives</strong></td>
<td>Validates all perspectives with responses such as: “That’s one idea. Does anyone else have another?”; “That was one way to solve the problem. Who did it another way?”; “Who has an alternative view?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Uses multiple approaches to consistently monitor students’ understanding of instruction, directions, procedures, processes, questions, and content</strong></td>
<td>Uses a variety of approaches to monitor students’ understanding throughout instruction (Thumbs Up, Unison response, One Question Quiz, Envelope Please)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identifies students’ current knowledge before instruction</strong></td>
<td>Uses a variety of methods to assess students’ knowledge before instruction such as: Word Splash, K-W-L, Anticipation Guide, Brainstorming, Webbing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Uses students’ real life experiences to connect school learning to students’ lives</strong></td>
<td>Asks students to reflect upon and discuss the following: “What events/situations occur in your family or neighborhood that require some knowledge of ___?” How does knowing about ___ benefit your interactions in your family, neighborhood, or school?“; Uses examples that are reflective of students’ lives to support learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Uses Wait Time</strong></td>
<td>Pauses at least 3-5 seconds to consider the student’s response before affirming, correcting, or probing; Pauses following a student’s response to allow other students to consider their reactions, responses and extensions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Asks students for feedback on the effectiveness of instruction</strong></td>
<td>Asks students to indicate the learning activities that are effective in helping them to learn; Uses interviews, surveys, and questionnaires to gather feedback from students; Uses exit cards to gather feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Provides students with the criteria and standards for successful task completion</strong></td>
<td>Evaluates student work by providing performance criteria (i.e. rubrics, exemplars, anchor papers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gives students effective, specific oral and written feedback that prompts improved performance</strong></td>
<td>Confers with students to provide feedback to improve performance; Provides opportunities for students to use peer reviews; Provides written feedback that allows students to revise and improve their work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Provides multiple opportunities to use effective feedback to revise and resubmit work for evaluation</strong></td>
<td>Allows students to revise work based on teacher feedback; Encourages and structures opportunities for students to provide feedback to peers based on an established standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Explains and models positive self-talk</strong></td>
<td>Explains the importance of positive self-talk and how positive self-talk leads to positive outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Asks higher-order questions equitably of all students</strong></td>
<td>Asks analysis questions; Asks synthesis questions; Asks evaluation questions; Poses higher order questions and uses a random method for calling on students; Provides think time for all students before asking for responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Provides individual help to all students</strong></td>
<td>Ensures all students receive individual help</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Montgomery County Public Schools

**DISTRICT-LEVEL PRACTICES**

District and school leaders can support equitable instruction by maintaining high expectations for student achievement and encouraging peer-driven discussions about how to support struggling students. Writing in *The Learning Principal*, Pat Roy of the National Staff Development Council (now Learning Forward) outlines the following ways in which principals can support equitable classroom learning environments:

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15 Figure content adapted from: Ibid.
Communicate high expectations for all teachers and students
Do not accept excuses for the lack of achievement by subgroups of students
Change school schedules, curriculum, and use of staff time to support the learning of struggling students
Expect teachers to change classroom practices to support struggling students
Encourage respectful dialogue among faculty regarding their role in helping all students learn
Challenge educators’ underlying assumptions concerning the role of parents, socio-economic status, race, and background in student learning
Provide an ongoing system of staff development to enhance teacher skills and knowledge about teaching struggling students

In particular, districts can support equitable instructional practices by providing training to supervisors and instructional coaches. North Clackamas School District in Oregon provides an example; instructional administrators receive professional development in how to support teachers in implementing equitable instructional practices. The district’s instructional services director says the supervision system is a “two-way relationship” that includes classroom coaching and ongoing, just-in-time feedback.17 In Reynolds School District, also in Oregon, administrators meet monthly to discuss the racial and ethnic identities of their diverse student population and how they can support teachers to promote culturally responsive teaching.18

EQUITABLE ACCESS TO ADVANCED COURSES

Minority students are chronically underrepresented in advanced-level high school courses, such as Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), and courses of similar rigor. Experts underscore that advanced coursework provides students with the skills and subject matter knowledge that they will need after graduation.19 However, data from The College Board show that while the total number of students taking AP exams nearly doubled between 2003 and 2013, the number of low-income AP enrollees increased by only a third of that amount.20 Data from the 2013 administration of the AP exams show that African-American students are the most underrepresented group in the AP program, as shown in Figure 1.2, below.

Low awareness of advanced courses, insufficient preparation, and fear of social isolation prevent low-income and minority students from enrolling in advanced courses. A 2010 report by the Broad Foundation identifies a series of barriers, listed in Figure 1.3 on the following page, that may prevent students from self-identifying and self-selecting for advanced-level courses. The report notes that these barriers may emerge well before students enter high school. For example, the report finds that less than 68 percent of Grade 8 students are aware of the courses they need to be ready for college, and only 30 percent are on track to enroll in AP courses. Minority students who do qualify for AP or other advanced coursework may be reluctant to enroll if those classes typically have few minority students.

**Figure 1.3: Common Barriers to AP and Advanced Course Access**

- Lack of awareness (on behalf of teachers, students, and/or parents)
- Lack of preparation/support (on behalf of teachers and/or students)
- Lack of seats (due to insufficient staffing)
- Students with potential not identified
- Insufficient motivation/incentives (on behalf of teachers and/or students)
- Lack of funds (on behalf of the schools, parents, and/or students)

Source: The Broad Foundation

**Preparation for advanced courses should begin in middle school.** Experts emphasize that to access advanced courses in high school, students need to complete rigorous coursework in middle school. The U.S. Department of Education advises that students who take Algebra I

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in Grade 8 are better prepared to take advanced mathematics courses at the high school level, and more likely to attend college. Research suggests that middle schools can prepare struggling students for Algebra I by providing students with a transitional math course before they enroll in Algebra I. A review of the literature by the American Institutes for Research (AIR) found that the transitional course, during which students first learn conceptual skills associated with algebra, is more effective than a double-dose model, where students receive extended instruction in formal algebra skills.

The spotlight box below describes how Abington School District in Pennsylvania focused on Grade 8 Algebra as part of its equity initiative.

**SPOTLIGHT: PRACTICES OF PEER SCHOOL DISTRICTS FOR EDUCATIONAL EQUITY**

As part of its Opportunities to Learn initiative to close achievement gaps, Abington School District focused on “de-tracking” its middle and high school program. For core academic courses, the district now offers only two levels: a college preparatory course and an honors/AP course. The district encourages students to take the honors/AP courses, but all students (including special education students) are enrolled in rigorous college-track courses. In addition, the district used PSSA scores to identify students who required additional support in English/social studies or mathematics/science and provided targeted interventions to those students. Knowing that including all students in rigorous college-track core courses placed new demands on educators, the district provided professional development on differentiated instruction.

Superintendent Amy Sichel reported in 2011: “Since the implementation of this initiative, the disparity between the performance of the district’s All-Student group and the district’s African-American and IEP disaggregated groups has been narrowed significantly, while the All-Student Group has improved as well. At the secondary level the disparity... has been reduced by anywhere from 5 to 19 percentage points.”

Source: PASA Flyer

Experts recommend that schools pre-identify students for advanced courses using standardized test scores. The Broad Foundation states that “the use of a predictive formula based on a standardized test score is an easy and relatively unbiased way to identify additional students likely to succeed in an academically advanced curriculum.” For example, research from The College Board finds that student scores on the PSAT exam are better predictors of AP success than high school grades. However, experts further recommend that schools use multiple measures to determine student qualification for advanced course enrollment. The College Board stresses that single identification measures “should never be used to discourage a motivated student from registering for an AP course.” In addition, some schools deliberately encourage students who are “partially proficient” on standardized

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exams to consider advanced courses in order to raise awareness about the benefits of rigorous coursework.\(^{31}\)

Schools can also use assessment data to identify high-achieving students in middle school. For example, Wake County Public Schools in North Carolina uses standardized test scores to place students in accelerated mathematics courses in Grades 6 and 7, which prepare students for Algebra I in Grade 8. Initial research finds that the policy has led to greater numbers of female and minority students enrolling in accelerated mathematics and Algebra I courses, though the proportion of minority students taking the courses has not yet caught up with the proportion of students from other groups who study advanced mathematics.\(^{32}\)

**Schools should conduct targeted outreach to ensure that qualified students are aware of their eligibility and the benefits of taking rigorous courses.** The Broad Foundation notes that students are more likely to participate in advanced courses if their parents understand the advanced study program and curriculum. In an extensive guidebook on improving access to AP courses, The Broad Foundation outlines the following four strategies to ensure that students know about their advanced course options:\(^{33}\)

- **Notify parents and students.** Following student identification, best practice schools typically notify parents – often by mail – and invite parents and students to a school meeting to learn more about advanced courses.

- **Enhance outreach efforts for low-income and minority parents.** As low-income and minority students and parents are likely to be the least familiar with the school’s AP program and other advanced-level courses, the Broad Foundation recommends targeted outreach, including phone calls, to ensure that parents and students attend the informational meeting.

- **At the school informational meeting, discuss the AP program, course details, expectations, and benefits for participation.** The Broad Foundation suggests that the school principal and school AP coordinator conduct the informational meeting, starting with an overview of the program, followed by details on specific course offerings. If possible, current AP students should be present to share their experiences and offer peer advice.

- **Hold follow-up meetings.** For families that missed the initial informational session or who require more information or advice, the Broad Foundation recommends that districts schedule additional meetings with school counselors for parents. These meetings should be held at different times than the original meeting to offset recurring scheduling conflicts.


In addition, in-school recruitment by teachers and counselors can be effective at increasing advanced course enrollment among low-income and minority students. A 2012 study published in the *Journal of Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives in Education* reports that students are more likely to succeed when they feel supported and when teachers hold high expectations for them. Moreover, the authors note that African-American students especially benefit from “positive teacher/student relationships to help them feel as though they belong, particularly in the AP classroom.”34 In addition, school leaders may choose to allocate or raise funds to help low-income students defray the cost of AP and IB exam fees.35

**EQUITABLE DISCIPLINE POLICIES**

In many districts, minority students and students with disabilities are more likely to be subject to exclusionary discipline (e.g., suspension and expulsion) than their peers. Many researchers link this disproportionate application of severe disciplinary actions to zero-tolerance policies that apply harsh consequences to a wide range of school policy violations. Schools embraced zero-tolerance in the 1990s to deter students from misbehaving. However, research shows that zero-tolerance has resulted in minority and disabled students being removed from classrooms at disproportionate rates, denying them classroom time and reducing their chances of graduating from high school.36

Instead, experts encourage schools to implement positive disciplinary programs, such as **restorative justice and collaborative problem solving**. Through restorative justice, students gather in circles with adults and the student(s) they offended to focus on the practical consequences of misbehavior, rather than the specific rule that was broken. The response to misbehavior seeks to ensure the offending student understands the consequences of his or her actions, allows the student to restore balance to the situation created by the misconduct, and holds the student accountable for his or her actions. Offending students work with their victims to repair the harm they have caused and reintegrate back into the school community.37

Using the collaborative problem solving (CPS) model, “adults work together with kids to solve problems in mutually satisfactory and realistic ways.”38 The CPS approach involves four steps:39

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35 Ibid., p. 25.


39 Bulleted text adapted from: Ibid.
- Identify and understand the student’s concern about the problem to be solved and reassure him or her that the problem will not be resolved through the imposition of adult will.
- Identify and share the adults’ concerns about the same issue.
- Invite the student to brainstorm solutions together with the adult.
- Work with the student to assess potential solutions and choose one that is both realistic and mutually satisfactory.

In addition, experts emphasize the importance of creating a positive school climate to facilitate equitable disciplinary practices. In a 2014 guidance document, the U.S. Department of Education advises schools to focus on preventing discipline incidents by promoting a positive school climate and setting clear expectations for student behavior. Many schools achieve both goals, in part, through implementing a multi-tiered system of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). In an article published in Best Practices in School Psychology, researchers McKevitt and Braaksma recommend that schools implemented a three-tiered consequence system, like the sample presented in Figure 1.4 on the following page, whereby the punishment that students receive is proportionate to the offense. For the consequence system to serve as a preventative mechanism, teachers must clearly communicate to students what the school expectations are and what consequences students will experience if they misbehave. In addition, staff must have a clear understanding of their role within the system to ensure equitable and consistent application of consequences.

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School leaders should regularly review discipline data to ensure that policies are implemented equitably. The U.S. Department of Education recommends that schools collect data on both the characteristics of the students involved in discipline referrals as well as the location and times of the incidents, responses to the incidents, staff members involved, and law enforcement involvement. School leaders can use the data to adjust and target misbehavior prevention strategies to address high-incident locations and times of the day. Schools may also compare discipline rates to nearby schools or examine a handful of incidents to determine whether the school response was both appropriate and equitable. McKevitt and Braaksma add that school leaders can examine how the discipline program has impacted school attendance rates and achievement, as emerging research suggests that progressive and tiered discipline programs like PBIS correlate with higher achievement on standardized assessments.

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42 Ibid., p. 742.
44 Ibid.
SECTION II: ENGAGING FAMILIES

Research identifies family engagement as a key component of both student achievement and educational equity. A 2009 report from The Campaign for Educational Equity identifies numerous studies that establish family involvement as a strong predictor of student success. The report notes that families play a key role in the cognitive, social, and emotional development of children beginning at birth. However, current educational systems promote only “random acts of family involvement,” rather than coherent, comprehensive, and, therefore, equitable, approaches to family engagement. This section discusses expert-recommended strategies for engaging diverse and hard-to-reach families, creating a welcoming environment for diverse families, and motivating educators to engage with the families of their diverse student population.

ENGAGING CULTURALLY DIVERSE FAMILIES

Schools that serve families from diverse cultures and backgrounds need to take additional steps to ensure broad family and community engagement. The U.S. Department of Education’s Regional Education Laboratory (REL) notes that “families who get involved in schools are typically those whose home culture most closely matches the values reflected in schools.” For example, a 2002 report from the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) notes that while families of all backgrounds engage in supporting their child’s learning at home, white, middle-class families are most involved at school.

Experts say that the first step in engaging diverse families is to gather information about parents’ and guardians’ home language and educational background. Colorín Colorado, an online resource for English language learner (ELL) educators developed by a Washington, D.C. public television station, advises that districts engage both bilingual educators as well as community members to learn more about the families in their community. Key data to gather include:

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47 Ibid., p. 4.


Countries of origin
If students were born in the U.S.
Which languages are spoken at home
Educational background of students and parents (especially if the student is a migrant or refugee and has experienced interrupted formal education)
Whether family members have experienced traumatic events (e.g., war or natural disaster)

Using this data, the school can identify likely barriers to school engagement, which commonly include lack of English language proficiency, parent education level, and disjuncture between the culture of the home and school. Effective communication meets families where they are, and in their own language. In some cases, educators may have to use translators to overcome language barriers when communicating with parents who speak limited English.

Recommended strategies for engaging hard-to-reach ELL families include:

- Hold a special back-to-school event or picnic for ELL families in which they have time to meet school leaders, their children’s teachers, and other school staff.
- Create a welcome DVD in multiple languages.
- Provide staff the opportunity to learn some common phrases in families’ languages, as well as cultural gestures.
- Visit local neighborhoods to meet families.
- Connect new families with a contact person who speaks their language as soon as they enroll in the school for guidance and information.
- Create an “ambassador” program in which students and parents are trained to give school tours in languages other than English.

Experts find that some types of parent engagement programs are more impactful on student learning than others. The Parent Teacher Home Visit Program notes that meet-and-greet forums like celebrations, fundraisers, and performances have a lower impact on student learning than more consistent communication that focuses on parent empowerment. By contrast, positive phone calls home, classroom observations, goal-setting tasks, weekly data-sharing folders, and modeling learning support strategies are higher-impact strategies that help parents feel they can help their child with schoolwork at home.

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Similarly, schools can personalize communications, employ additional new methods of communications, and make family participation easier to engage particularly hard to reach families. For example, The Flamboyan Foundation, a nonprofit organization focused on supporting family engagement, encourages districts to consider the tone of their communications and the venues they use to reach out to disengaged families. In a 2011 guidance document, The Flamboyan Foundation identified a series of strategies to communicate with hard to reach families, which are summarized below in Figure 2.1.\textsuperscript{56}

\textbf{Figure 2.1: Strategies to Engage Hard to Reach Families}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREA</th>
<th>TIP OR PRACTICE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personalize</td>
<td>▪ Differentiate support for parents so that it is appropriate to their individual needs and strengths.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Be honest and forthcoming to avoid perceptions of being evasive or guilty.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Use one-to-one personal connections to build trust.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Keep communication informal at first.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Use “family” instead of “parent” or “guardian” in communications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on the message</td>
<td>▪ Encourage families to communicate in non-traditional places (e.g., grocery store, bodega, bus stops).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and the messenger</td>
<td>▪ At all events, promote how families can support learning at home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Create family bulletin boards for families to communicate with one another.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get creative</td>
<td>▪ Use a variety of communications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Share materials (especially video) and personal notes with families who miss events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Create magnets to share pertinent information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Keep web and phone communications up-to-date and relevant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Use newsletters to link families to learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch what and how you</td>
<td>▪ Avoid using education jargon and communicate more simply.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>communicate</td>
<td>▪ Understand how information spreads and understand that negative information spreads faster.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Be sensitive to families’ financial needs by not sending home requests for money or supplies frequently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make involvement easy</td>
<td>▪ Provide food and child care.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and exciting</td>
<td>▪ Arrange parent-teacher conferences and events after work hours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Include office hours and your contact information in all communications.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Flamboyan Foundation\textsuperscript{57}


The REL advises that district communication with families should have a cross-cultural element. Cross-cultural communication, REL emphasizes, “is a must to minimize the confusion and frustration that people can experience when they enter an environment where not only their language, but also their attitudes, values, and behaviors differ from that of others.” As shown below in Figure 2.2, cross-cultural communication considers cultural influences on the ways people communicate and helps ensure that educators and families of all backgrounds understand each other.

Figure 2.2: Two-Way and Cross-Cultural Communication Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Translate materials to the home language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Use bilingual staff members to help provide a direct link between parents and school community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Provide transportation to bring families to school meetings or meet at a community location. Be open to hosting school meetings in a location where families feel comfortable (e.g., community centers, local business).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Build a parent network for families who speak the same language to promote mutual support among parents and help to create a more comfortable environment for attending school events.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Begin the conversation on a personal level rather than starting with a formal progress report.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Allow the personal to be mixed with the discussion of academics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Have respect for the whole family, instead of only paying attention to the child who is the focus of the conference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Use indirect questions or observations rather than questions that ask for information about the child at home (e.g., “Some parents prefer to have an older child help with homework…” rather than, “Do you or someone else help the child with her homework?”).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Discuss the student’s achievements in the context of all of the students in the classroom, suggesting how the child contributes to the well-being of all.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Explain the goals and expectations of the school and help parents find ways in which they are comfortable supporting their children’s learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Create a sense of common purpose and caring through the use of the pronoun “we” rather than “you” and “I.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Regional Educational Laboratory Pacific

In particular, educators should identify and focus on the strengths of families with diverse backgrounds. The REL notes that “collaborating with families based on strengths develops strong relationships between home, school, and community.” As “parental situations, perspectives, and skills” vary and affect parents’ ability to support their children, schools need to consider multiple methods of engagement, as well as ways in which parents of all backgrounds can support their children. For example, some parents lack the experience or the skills required to read interactively with children. While these parents do have other

59 Figure bullets quoted verbatim from: Ibid., pp. 5–14.
strengths that allow them to support their child, they may feel isolated and disengage from efforts that emphasize practices that do not align with their strengths.\(^6\)

**CREATING WELCOMING ENVIRONMENTS FOR DIVERSE FAMILIES**

In its guide for engaging ELL families, Colorín Colorado notes that some families may feel intimidated by or excluded from their child’s school environment. By creating a welcoming and vibrant atmosphere, schools let families know “that the school is an integral part of the community and that they are valued members of that community.”\(^6\) In particular, Colorín Colorado says that ELLs and students from diverse backgrounds should “see themselves” throughout the school.\(^6\) Figure 2.3, below, describes strategies that schools can use to increase the visibility of diverse families throughout the school.

**Figure 2.3: Strategies to Increase Visibility of Diverse Families**

- Make sure parents know how to get into the building, especially if doors are usually locked during the school day.
- Post signs in multiple languages.
- Display student work on the walls.
- Display student and family photos on the walls.
- Display the maps and flags of students’ native countries.
- Display a large map in the front lobby where parents can mark their native countries with a pin.
- Enlist a bilingual morning greeter to welcome students and families.
- Ensure that your bilingual staff and volunteers are visible throughout the building.
- Create a parent room (such as a lounge or classroom) with bilingual information and magazine subscriptions, a bulletin board, a lending library, and a computer.
- Include bilingual books in the school library and classrooms.
- Consider playing music in the front entryway or lobby.

Source: Colorín Colorado\(^6\)

Also, many schools engage diverse families by offering parent education activities and supporting student and parent diversity groups. Parent education activities can be as simple as special meetings for specific groups to explain complex topics, such as standardized testing, gifted and talented programs, and the college application process.\(^6\) For example, an elementary school in San Jose, California promotes student and parent literacy by opening the school library before and after school so that parents can read Spanish and English language books with their children.\(^6\) Figure 2.4, on the following page, describes proposals to welcome families and improve equity in Upper Dublin School District, in Pennsylvania.

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\(^6\) Ibid., p. 12.
\(^6\) Ibid., p. 9.
\(^4\) Ibid.
\(^6\) Ibid., p. 20.
\(^6\) Mitchell, C. “Home-School Connections Help ELLs and Their Parents.” *Education Week*, ay 11, 2016Y.
SPOTLIGHT: PRACTICES OF PEER SCHOOL DISTRICTS FOR EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

Upper Dublin School District has an Excellence and Equity Committee that includes subcommittees representing different groups of students and families within the school community, including African-American, Hispanic, Asian-American, LGBTQ, and Special Education students and families. Committee efforts include establishing an Educators of Color Meet and Greet event to recruit more minority staff, increasing student and family feelings of inclusion in the district, and adding a Lunar New Year celebration on the district calendar. During a May 2016 meeting of the committee, a representative of the Asian-American Students & Families subcommittee noted that “students are in the middle between the culture and the school district,” emphasizing the importance of student and parent education about the various cultures represented in the district.

Source: The Ambler Gazette

More extensive, “two-generation” approaches to parent education include English language classes and job-search coaching for families. Some schools adopt a “community school” model and partner with external organizations to provide school-based support to parents in schools. For example, schools participating in a Promise Neighborhood in Chula Vista, California partner with the Work Path program to provide three-week workshops that include mentoring, skills training, job coaching, and resume development to unemployed youths and adults. The Promise Neighborhood schools have parent centers where family members can access the library, use computers, and get support from a bilingual coordinator.

MOTIVATING STAFF TO SUPPORT FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Educators may require professional development on how to engage with culturally and/or linguistically diverse families. In a series of reports on family engagement, the REL cites “cultural barriers (e.g., language differences, religious priorities, misconceptions about schools, generational differences in acculturation),” as well as “teachers’ beliefs and attitudes” as two common barriers to family and community engagement. For example, parents from culturally diverse backgrounds may lack knowledge about school operations, including grading practices, curriculum standards, and the importance placed on parent-teacher conferences.

School districts should assess teacher readiness for engagement and allow them to practice engagement strategies in a non-threatening environment. In a 2013 research brief, researchers from the Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP) find that professional development is most effective when it meets the teachers’ readiness levels. Therefore,

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69 Ibid., p. 22.
districts should determine the readiness of their teachers to engage with families and learn new communication strategies, and adjust training programs accordingly. HFRP encourages teachers to practice and receive feedback on their engagement skills from coaches and peers. In addition, teachers should work with coaches and administrators to identify post-training goals and continue to measure progress towards those goals over time.\textsuperscript{71}

**Experts recommend that educators use demographic data about their students as the starting point for discussions about how cultural and family differences may impact traditional family participation and engagement.** Similarly, the REL recommends that district staff lead educators in exercises to reflect on their beliefs and assumptions about family and community engagement, including how families’ cultures may affect partnerships and engagement.\textsuperscript{72} In these training sessions, REL finds that “viewing interactions from the families’ perspective helps educators work more effectively” with families.\textsuperscript{73}

In addition, district leaders may consider implementing a home visit program. The Parent Teacher Home Visit Program, an organization that trains teachers to conduct home visits, operates using five “non-negotiable core practices:”\textsuperscript{74}

- Visits are always voluntary for educators and families, and arranged in advance.
- The focus of the first visit is relationship-building only.
- Teachers are trained, and compensated for visits.
- Volunteers either visit all students, or an intentional cross-section of students.
- Educators conduct visits in pairs, with reflection on assumptions, strengths, and bringing what they learned back to the classroom.

Regardless of where and how communication takes place, the REL notes that “educators [may] benefit from training in basic communication skills.” This training could cover skills such as:\textsuperscript{75}

- Observing verbal/nonverbal behaviors
- Using dialogue for two-way conversations
- Active listening

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\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., pp. 5–6.


Districts can support teachers in their initial interactions with families by focusing on parent-teacher conferences. The REL encourages districts to develop a planning guide for parent-teacher conferences that outlines effective strategies for engagement, such as those listed below in Figure 2.4. Districts can also help teachers prepare for parent-teacher conferences through training that asks teachers to discuss their past conference practices, culturally responsive strategies, and how they could integrate culturally responsive practices into future conferences.  

Figure 2.4: Strategies for Effective Parent-Teacher Conferences

- Begin the conference by talking on the personal level rather than on the academic level.
- During the conference, maintain a 50 percent teacher/50 percent parent talk time.
- During the conference, mix talk about the student’s educational growth with talk about the student’s social development.
- Discuss the student’s achievement in the context of all of the students in the class (i.e., how the child contributes to the well-being of others in the class).
- If a parent does not understand or speak English well, provide an interpreter (do not use the child as an interpreter).
- Use indirect questions, versus direct questions, about the parent’s goals for the child or about how they support the child in the family.
- Express belief and commitment to open and frequent home–school communication, and ask parent(s) how they would best like communication to occur.

Source: Regional Educational Laboratory Pacific

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76 Ibid., p. 13-16.
77 Figure content taken verbatim from: Ibid., p. 18.
SECTION III: SUPPORTING HIGH-MOBILITY STUDENTS

Research suggests that students who change schools frequently during their K-12 career experience negative impacts on academic achievement. In a 2010 analysis of nationwide data, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) reports that high mobility is most common among student populations most impacted by education inequity – namely minority students (particularly African-American students) and low-income students. Student mobility is frequently caused by residential mobility – such as moving for a parent’s job/military post, homelessness, or eviction due to poverty – but may also result from students being expelled, bullied at school, or seeking a better educational program. This section discusses expert-recommended strategies that district leaders, school administrators, and classroom teachers can take to support highly mobile students and ensure that the move to their new school does not disrupt their education.

DISTRICT-LEVEL PRACTICES

Experts note that districts can take steps to reduce student mobility. In a 2003 brief for the U.S. Department of Education, Russell Rumberger of the University of California-Santa Barbara notes that student mobility is frequently viewed “as a strategic activity initiated by students and their families to serve their own interests and educational preferences.” However, Rumberger encourages district leaders to counsel parents to remain, particularly if they will continue to live in the same geographic area, and identify solutions that will keep the student at their current school. For example, districts can reduce unnecessary student mobility by allowing flexibility with school attendance boundaries and providing transportation to help low-income students stay at the same schools. Districts can also work with neighboring districts to allow students to continue their education at one school even when their families move to neighboring towns.

Experts recommend that districts collect data about the mobility and stability of their students. For example, districts could collect data on students’ educational history and flag the records of students with three or more moves. Those students may benefit from additional assistance or at least closer monitoring of their academic progress. Districts may

79 Ibid., p. 8.
82 Ibid.
also consider reporting mobility data as part of their school accountability system in order to raise awareness about student mobility and the needs of highly mobile students.84

**Districts should ensure timely transfer of student records.** The Military Interstate Children’s Compact Commission (MIC3) advises that districts provide unofficial copies of student records to parents within ten days of their request. In some states, the transfer of student data is facilitated by state longitudinal data systems that have a unique student identifier. In addition, districts may be able to use other longitudinal data systems that collect records for migrant students, homeless students, military families, and foster students. MIC3 further advises that districts recognize students’ prior placement in advanced and honors classes, as well as the prerequisites for those classes.85

In a guidance document, the National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE), part of the U.S. Department of Education, summarizes additional district-level strategies to support homeless students and other high-mobility students, as shown below in Figure 3.1.

**Figure 3.1: District-Level Practices to Support High-Mobility Students**

| ✓ Establish procedures that ensure transmittal of school records in a timely fashion. Delays in receiving school records lead to delays in enrollment and loss of instructional time. Use technology to transmit information quickly. |
| ✓ Create a parent booklet with transfer suggestions. Providing parents with information regarding appropriate withdrawal and enrollment procedures can shorten delays when moves occur. Checklists of important steps to complete at the students’ former and the new school can keep parents on track. |
| ✓ Allocate additional resources. Smaller class sizes, additional teachers, free summer school for students not on grade level, and community homework centers can provide instructional supports to increase academic achievement for students. |
| ✓ Provide guidance to parents about the effects of school transfers. Brochures and public service announcements alert parents to the potential challenges children face when multiple school transfers occur. |
| ✓ Become involved with interagency efforts to provide families with resources needed to reduce mobility, when possible. Student mobility is often a symptom of larger problems. Availability of affordable housing, local jobs, and accessible transportation are critical factors that can affect mobility. Schools can educate policy makers and other community leaders regarding the impact of student mobility in efforts to make it a consideration in the allocation of resources and planning. |

Source: National Center for Homeless Education86

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86 Figure text adapted from: “General Educational Support Systems for Highly Mobile Students.” National Center for Homeless Education. p. 2. http://nche.ed.gov/downloads/read_ch2.doc
SCHOOL-LEVEL PRACTICES

School leaders should take steps to connect highly-mobile families to their community. A guidance document from the National Institute for Urban School Improvement (NIUSI) recommends that school staff identify apartment complexes and shelters that serve highly mobile students to raise awareness about their school. Once a mobile student enrolls at the school, school leaders and staff may visit students’ communities in order to build trust and working relationships with families and community leaders. The school can even take an active role in connecting families to affordable housing and education classes (e.g., English classes, GED preparation) if needed. Figure 3.2 presents additional school-level strategies to support highly mobile students, as recommended by NCHE.

Figure 3.2: School-Level Practices to Support Highly Mobile Students

- **Prepare in advance for incoming and departing transfers.** Establishing routines that have been communicated to faculty and staff can make transfers less disruptive. Involve faculty and staff in developing procedures with opportunities for training, procedure review and revision.

- **Have counselors meet with parents and student when registering.** Personal contact provides a welcome to the family and an opportunity to begin identifying needs through informal conversations.

- **Arrange a parent follow-up** several weeks after enrollment. Questions often arise once a student has begun attending school. Some parents may be reluctant to contact the school with questions. A positive contact a few weeks after the child was enrolled can open the door to clarify information for families.

- **Create an orientation video or CD for your school.** Develop a video/CD for new parents and students to preview when they enroll. A virtual tour of the building, review of important policies, and an introduction to the faculty, staff, and student body can be an entertaining way to welcome newcomers. Consider multiple languages if families are non-English speaking. Arrange for a comfortable location in the school where the video may be viewed if families lack access for home viewing.

- **Create an orientation brochure for your school.** The content addressed in a video could be included in a written document. Again, consider what languages are needed for your community.

- **Create and train student volunteer coaches to orient new students.** Student “ambassadors” can assist in building community and provide a buddy system at the classroom or school level.

- **Conduct schoolwide acquaintanceship activities/contests.** Principals and counselors may arrange “New Kids on the Block” lunches as an optional activity for new students. Have a “welcome party” for new students and a “good-bye party” for those who are leaving.

Source: National Center for Homeless Education

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88 Figure content taken verbatim from: “General Educational Support Systems for Highly Mobile Students,” Op. cit., p. 3.
Schools should prepare a welcome plan for new students. The Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE) recommends that the school’s parent-teacher organization can play a key role in supporting new families by creating “new student” folders that include:\[89\]

- Notebook, pencil, and pen
- Map of the school
- Coupon for free lunches for a couple of days
- A magnet that has the school name, address, phone number, school hours, principal’s name, school webpage address, holidays and vacations, and days report cards are released
- Information for parents on how to get into the building, where to sign in, what each wing of the building looks like, where the cafeteria and gym are, and where to park

In addition, school leaders should identify a current student who can serve as a student “ambassador,” helping the new student find their way around the school, make friends, and feel included. The school counselor should follow up with the student’s parents after the first week to determine whether the student requires any additional support.\[90\]

CLASSROOM PRACTICES

Classroom teachers, in collaboration with educators, should identify the most pressing needs of their highly mobile students. Several experts on supporting highly mobile students refer to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs as a tool for examining the needs of highly mobile students. As shown in Figure 3.3 on the following page, Maslow’s model theorizes that humans are motivated by unsatisfied needs, ranging from the most basic physiological needs (e.g., food and medical attention) and security to a building a sense of belonging and strong self-esteem. In a 2003 handbook for educators of highly mobile students, researchers describe how to use the Maslow model to evaluate students by asking three questions.\[91\]

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\[89\] Bulleted text adapted from: Payne, R. “Welcoming Highly Mobile Students.” Association for Middle Level Education. https://www.amle.org/BrowsebyTopic/WhatsNew/WNDet/TabId/270/ArtMID/888/ArticleID/593/Welcoming-Highly-Mobile-Students.aspx

\[90\] Ibid.

- **Who am I?** Children gain self-awareness and identity through their social interactions with others and their connections with possessions and places. Frequent moves reduce, or even eliminate, those connections. How can educators reinforce a sense of self?

- **Where am I?** Security is tied to predictability in routine and location. When students move, that “known” is removed. How can educators quickly provide students with security and routine?

- **How am I?** Frequent moves and the potential stressors of poverty may increase anxiety and impact overall well-being and health, socio-educational, and emotional factors. What can educators do to reduce these stressors?

**Teachers should make plans to support highly mobile students before, during, and after new students arrive at their classroom.** As shown in Figure 3.4 on the following page, the NCHE recommends that teachers draft quick assessments to measure student learning in case transfer of their formal records is delayed. Teachers may also develop “catch up” activities for students who enter in the middle of a class unit. When teachers learn that a student will soon leave their classroom, they should prepare a packet containing relevant records, a letter to the student’s new teacher, and contact information so that the new teacher can call or write for more information about the students’ progress. In addition, students in the class can prepare a farewell memory book for the students, and the teacher can arrange for students to keep in touch with their former classmate.⁹²

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**Figure 3.4: Classroom-Level Practices to Support High-Mobility Students**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Before the Student Arrives:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✔ Maintain a list of classroom rules and procedures along with the class schedule.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔ Have “welcome gifts” (school pencils, writing paper, trade book, etc.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔ Make a “New Student Box” for the room. Include nametags, precut contact paper or roll of tape to affix names to desk or locker, marking pens to label possessions, extra labels for classroom charts (job charts, student-of-week projects, birthday charts, reading club, etc.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔ Prepare “New Student Files.” Include things to go home to parents, classroom and school rules, supply list, extra sets of supplies for those who can’t afford them, copies of general letters to parents, class schedule and special classes (art, music, library, P.E.), activity ideas for home, things for the child to use at school (quick interest survey for the older child to complete, “all about me” drawing paper for primary grades, get acquainted form or project, classroom and school rules, and classroom procedures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔ Maintain a teacher management checklist. Remember to update locker assignment chart, seating chart form, class list, and lunch list.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔ Develop short assessments for reading, writing, and mathematics if records are delayed (e.g., curriculum-based tasks, reading inventories, current unit pretests)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔ Create learning packets of background information and activities for “catch up” if students arrive mid-unit or make extra copies of materials for review when new students arrive without prior notice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>When the Student Arrives:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✔ Assign a buddy for recess, lunch, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔ Introduce the student to the class. Give new students an opportunity to share information about themselves (e.g., interviews, story writing).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔ Introduce the student to others who arrived late and are succeeding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔ Make time to chat with new students individually to welcome them and set aside a brief “chat time” when students arrive in the morning to allow them to talk about their day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔ Nurture social skills and new friendships with structured activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔ Laminate examples of best work for durability. This can help ensure quality work will be available for the next teacher if another move should occur.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔ Use a Polaroid or digital camera to take an individual picture on the child’s first day and a picture of the child with the class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔ Use tutors/volunteers/mentors to provide one-on-one support. Even if the student does not need remediation, this can provide a connection with someone else in the school.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### When the Student Departs:

- **✓** Have classmates write letters to their departing peer. If a student leaves without notice, the letters can be kept in the office file until records are requested and then sent to the student with the official record transfer.

- **✓** Prepare a “Goodbye Book.” It can be as simple as sheets of paper stapled or tied together with yarn or as elaborate as a laminated and spiral-bound booklet. Give students time to autograph the book and brainstorm with the departing student about special memories. For example, younger students can draw pictures with language experience sentences.

- **✓** Maintain a departure file with sample work that the student can bring to the new school. Consider including exemplary work (laminate, if possible), journal recalling events from classmates (“Goodbye Book”), individual and class photos, self-addressed stamped envelopes to your school and class and stationery for the departing student to write back, a letter from the teacher introducing the student to his/her new teacher, trade books the student has read, and a note listing the similarities shared by schools to lessen anxiety of the unknown that children wonder about when starting in a new school. If there is time, contact the new school and provide the departing student with answers to questions that have been identified.

- **✓** Use technology to keep in touch. Explore e-mail correspondence with the new class.

Source: National Center for Homeless Education

Finally, **classroom teachers should personalize student learning in ways that are respectful of their unique circumstances**. The NIUSI recommends that teachers develop and administer a personal interest survey that captures information about new students’ strengths, knowledge, and skills. Similarly, teachers can learn about and accommodate students’ learning styles through use of multi-modal learning activities. Also, teachers can integrate mobility into the curriculum through discussions about how moving provides opportunities to visit new places, meet new people, and learn about different places and topics.

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93 Figure content taken verbatim from: Ibid.

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