



Keeping it Real in Family Partnership: A Facilitator's Guide



Sharing Digital Stories from the OST Field

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Keeping it Real in Family Partnership is a storytelling project that hopes to inspire conversations about how Cambridge out-of-school time practitioners and families from diverse cultural backgrounds partner to best support our children. Stories highlight promising practices and explore the experiences of families and OST practitioners. Cambridge OST professionals are encouraged to use these stories to enrich their organization's staff development efforts .

Overview:

This facilitator's guide is intended to provide instruction and inspiration for how members of the Cambridge OST community might use the Family Partnership Stories produced by the Agenda for Children to enrich staff development efforts.

This guide provides: a brief summary of each story, story-specific reflection questions, and ideas for interactive activities that can help deepen participants' engagement with the material.

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Story Title: Finding Common Ground Across Culture



Story Summary: Nelhai Mallebay-Vacqueur, a teacher in the King Open Extended Day program, shares an account of her journey working to build bridges of cultural understanding with the families of the children in her program. Reflecting on your own biases and assumptions is a key first step in this process, she explains. Through Nelhai's story we learn that putting in the time and effort to find common ground with families can improve relationships with them and, ultimately, improve outcomes for children

Youtube Link: <https://youtu.be/qlr3DSaQh0>

Reflection Questions:

- How can we ask parents about their experiences and expectations for their children and for us? How can we learn about their hopes and dreams for their children?
- How can we work with children and families to create a shared common culture in our classrooms based on equity, inclusiveness and justice?
- How can we find common ground with families and explore our common values? What do we do when our values and families' values don't align?

Activity Suggestion:

1. In pairs, participants share A) An example of a moment when they have successfully found common ground between family culture and OST culture and B) Their thoughts on the impact of the moment they described on their relationship with the parent
2. Participants watch the video, "Finding Common Ground." Instruct participants to take notes on the practices & perspectives they observe around building relationships with parents.
3. Participants pair share on A) The practices and perspectives that most resonated with them and B) An example of one action that the participant could take to deepen their relationships with parents.

Story Title: Building Empathy

Story Summary: Joseph Corbie, director of the Fletcher-Maynard community school in Cambridge, MA shares about his experience keeping it real and building empathy with parents. Empathy, he explains, is the cornerstone of making parents feel welcome and is key to overcoming challenges related to family disengagement: "I try to come from a place of encouragement, whether that person was there yesterday, was there from day one with this child or just got there. I try to say, I'm happy to see you or it's good to meet you."



Youtube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MU-B6LCPv6s>

Reflection Questions:

- What does it sound like to "come from a place of encouragement" when you can tell that things are hard for the families you work with?
- How do you contribute to creating a compassionate environment for your families?
- What are the strategies you use to build meaningful relationships with families?

Activity Suggestions:

1. In pairs, participants share A) An example of a moment when they empathized with a parent and B) Their thoughts on the impact of the moment they described on their relationship with the parent
2. Participants watch the video, "Building Empathy." Instruct participants to take notes on the practices & perspectives they observe around building relationships with parents.
3. Participants pair share on A) The practices and perspectives that most resonated with them and B) An example of one action that the participant could take to deepen their relationships with parents.
4. Invite pairs to share out the outcomes of their discussions.

Story Title: Showing Us What They Know

Story Summary: Shandra Jones, whose daughter participated in the 2018 CitySprouts summer program, reflects back on the garden party that capped off the summer: "For us, it was just really exciting and fun to be in the garden... mingling with other parents, seeing all the kids working together as teams and showing us what they knew." In this story, we learn about what makes the CitySprouts garden party a welcoming and engaging event for families.



Youtube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iN7TWXRmgwg>

Reflection Questions:

- What about the garden party makes it an attractive event for families?
- Why makes a physical space feel inclusive and welcoming ?
- What is your organization's strategy to ensure families are able to see and understand what their child is learning in their OST program?

Activity Suggestion:

1. Before watching the video, ask participants to pair share what opportunities they believe exist at your program for parents to see and understand what their child is learning.
2. Watch video. Ask participants to take notes on what practices and perspectives they feel were effective for creating an inviting atmosphere for parents
3. After watching the video, ask participants to get in pairs again and reflect on the following questions: A) How might you help parents better see and understand what their child is learning in your program?; B) What actions might you take to make your program more inviting for parents?
4. Ask participants to share out the outcomes of their pair discussions

Story Title: Showing Them That They Matter

Story Summary: In this story, Ayesha Wilson shares her journey learning about the diverse cultures of her students. "Building trust with families and being culturally proficient, run hand-in-hand," Ayesha explains. In her story we learn how curiosity, openness and humility can be the bridge to forming strong relationships with youths' families.

**Youtube Link:**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZoGB_wJwck

Reflection Questions:

- When the parents in this video say that the Work Force program feels, “like a family,” what practices do you think they have in mind?
- How many staff members in your organization share cultural identities with students and their families?
- What steps could individuals on your staff take to deepen respect for the cultures and identities of the families you are partnering with?
- What does it mean to “be there for families” that are in your program?

Activity Suggestions:

1. Before the training, print out copies of a definition of cultural proficiency that you like.
 - a. Link to a sample definition:
2. At the start of the training, hand out copies of the definition and ask for volunteers to read aloud.
3. Ask participants to pair share their thoughts on A) What they like about the cultural proficiency definition and B) What they might adjust or add to the cultural proficiency definition.
4. Watch Video. Ask participants to take notes on what practices and perspectives they found compelling.
5. Ask participants to pair share on the following questions: A) What steps could individuals on your staff take to deepen respect for the cultures and identities of the families you are partnering with?; and B) What does it mean to “be there for families” that are in your program?
6. Ask for volunteers to share the outcomes of their discussions.

Story Title: Building Dialogue

Story Summary:

Vanessa Fisher, Director of the Frisoli Youth Center, tells us how she engages families by building dialogue & relationships: "I don't think there is any single way you can be in touch with a family without really knowing who that youth is".

We join Vanessa at the Frisoli Youth Center to learn how a new approach to family phone calls has helped strengthen their family partnership practice.



Youtube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pkn0T0nJGI8>

Reflection Questions:

- Are there small things that you can change about your family engagement strategy that will shift the quality of conversations with families?
- How often do you talk with families for more than 60 seconds?
- How does the way young people engage with your program change if their family has a meaningful connection with your program staff?

Activity Suggestions:

1. Before watching the video, ask participants to 1) Write down their estimate of how often they talk with parents for more than 60 seconds; 2) Ask participants to pair share their responses and discuss their thoughts on the why behind their answer.
2. Watch video. Ask participants to take notes on practices and perspectives that resonate with them.
3. After the video, ask participants to pair share on what practices they believe could improve their communication with parents and caregivers.
4. Ask for volunteers to share the outcomes of their discussions.

Story Title: Creating a Welcoming Culture

Story Summary: Shakti Rovner, a mother of youth enrolled at the Cambridge Community Center, shares her perspective on the value of family nights at CCC. Family nights provide an invaluable opportunity for families to simply be together, she explains: "Maybe kids that have parents that work so hard, it's just that one hour that they spend with their mother or father just to sit and do something fun. And for the parent, it's like, let me come and do an activity. My child will remember that I spent time with them."



Darrin Korte, executive director of The Cambridge Community Center, explains how family engagement at CCC is about families taking ownership of the center, an idea that has deep roots in the center's history.

Youtube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RVjXVwT650g>

Reflection Questions:

- How does Cambridge Community Center's approach to strengthening family life lead to meaningful family engagement?
- Why is this important in the life of a young person?
- What would it take for your program to create casual community owned
- space for families to be together?

Activity Suggestions:

1. Ask participants to write down A) One example of an opportunity for families to spend time together at your program; and B) One example of an action they have taken to help a family feel "ownership" at your program; and C) One example of an obstacle to families feeling a sense of ownership at your program.
2. Ask participants to pair share on their answers to part 1.
3. Watch Video. Ask participants to take notes on what practices and perspectives resonate with them.
4. After the video, in pairs ask participants to share one practice or perspective from the video that you feel could help families feel more welcome in your program.
5. Ask for volunteers to share the outcomes of their discussion.

Story Title: Celebrating Families

Story Summary: Nelhai Mallebay-Vacqueur, a lead teacher at King Open Extended Day, shares her perspective on the key to successful family partnering events at out-of-school time programs. She explains how successful events start with celebrating diversity and cultivating inclusive environments. We join Nelhai at a King Open Extended Day's annual Family Engagement event "The Meal of Thanks" and hear from a parent and children about the meaning and benefits of the event. Click the play button above to listen to the story.



SoundCloud Link:

<https://soundcloud.com/user-538091403/koed-meal-of-thanks>

Reflection Questions:

- What about Nelhai's approach to engaging parents contributed to the success of the event?
- From the perspective of the parent highlighted in this audio story, what was the major benefit of this event?
- What is one take away from this audio story that you could apply to your work environment?

Activity Suggestions:

1. Before listening to the audio story, ask participants to write down 1) What opportunities exist for parents to get to know one another at your program 2) How your program celebrates the diverse cultures of your students' families.
2. Ask participants to pair share their answers.
3. Watch video. Ask participants to take notes on what practices and perspectives stand out to them.
4. Ask participants to pair share on what practice or perspective from the story they would like to mobilize in their own work.
5. Ask for volunteers to share out on the outcomes of their discussions.

Story Title: Parent Voices on Family Partnership



In this story, we hear a collection of parents' thoughts about how Cambridge out-of-school time programs can better partner with families. Treating parents as peers, taking the time to get to know families on a deeper level and being intentional about communication are examples of actions that build stronger family partnerships.

YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/JsAmlpXmvG4>

Reflection Questions:

- How do you approach intentional relationship building with parents of your program participants?
- What opportunities do parents have to learn about what children are doing in the program and how they can support the learning?
- How do you tailor your communication to meet the needs of your families?
- How do you incorporate the knowledge gained from your relationship with parents into your work?

Activity Suggestion:

1. Before watching the video, ask participants to write down 1) What are the ways that we build trusting relationships with parents and caregivers 2) How do we currently provide opportunities for parents and caregivers to get involved? 3) How do we currently communicate with parents? How often? About what topics?
2. Ask participants to pair share their answers.
3. Watch video. Ask participants to take notes on what practices and perspectives stand out to them.
4. Ask participants to pair share on what practice or perspective from the story they would like to mobilize in their own work.
5. Ask for volunteers to share out on the outcomes of their discussions.

Story Title: Parent Voices on Committing to Racial Equity



In this story, parents in our community open up about ways in which out-of-school time programs can work towards racial equity. They talk about the importance of centering youth of color in programming by establishing trust and responsive systems of accountability. Engaging parents and making explicit commitments to promote racial equity are key steps when moving forward to create change.

YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/kZViRuqbjcs>

Guiding Questions

- How can parents and youth get involved in creating an anti-racist, equitable programs?
- Do you create opportunities for staff to talk with families about racial equity?
- How do you approach/resolve/tackle harmful incidents related to racial identity that have occurred in your program?
- How do you approach youth of color in a way that centers healing and affirmation?
- What action steps have you taken to make your programming more equitable?
- Have you or do you intend to share your actions steps with families?

Activity Suggestions

1. After watching the video, brainstorm ways the program can have conversations with and ask parents and caregivers about how they are talking about and commitment to racial equity with their children at home?
2. As a staff, define the program's commitment to racial equity? Review your system for noticing, addressing, and healing racial harm when incidents happen in the program. Ensure that your system includes closing the loop with parents.
3. Come up with a long term plan to demonstrate your program's commitment to partnering with families around racial justice and equity work.

About Cambridge Agenda for Children Out of School Time (OST)

Our mission: is to convene, catalyze and support the youth serving community in Cambridge for the shared purpose of increasing equity, access and innovation and sustaining the highest quality OST opportunities and experiences for all children, youth and families.

We believe:

1. All young people have the desire and capacity to succeed and contribute to their communities if provided with access to appropriate resources and supports.
2. Young people and families are better served when the systems and institutions that support them are aligned and connected.
3. For all young people to succeed, barriers to equity and access need to be directly addressed.
4. Opportunities and experiences for youth are enhanced when people across different levels of power and perspectives learn together, design together, and build mutually beneficial partnerships.
5. All people have the capacity for change and growth. When adults who work with youth are provided with opportunities for continuous learning, clear expectations and accountability, there is a positive impact on opportunities and experiences for youth.
6. Cultural competence and respect for diversity are essential to our work and success.
7. Our work is guided by data, research and best practices, all of which are necessary to raise awareness about how success is possible for all young people and to advance the growth of the OST field.
8. Lasting change requires attention to systems while grounding our work in the developmental needs and experiences of youth and children.

For more information, visit our website: www.agendaforchildrenost.org

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