



Parent Organization Equity and Inclusion Tool

“DOs” and “DON’Ts”

This is a self-guided tool designed to help parent organizations and leaders within those groups pursue equity and inclusion, and to disrupt practices that support racism, classism, and other –isms, whether intentional or unintentional.

Communication

- ☐ **DO** in-person outreach, and make personal asks/invitations for higher impact.
- ☐ **DO** reach out to families early and often through their preferred communication channels.
- ☐ **DO** communicate in all major languages spoken by families.
- ☐ **DO** reach out to parents whose race, class, language, nationality, and education background is different than your own.
- ✗ **DON’T** only communicate with parents via email or listservs.
- ✗ **DON’T** assume everyone can read and write in their home language.
- ✓ **Remember:** The effort to reach across the community is worth it.

Meetings

- ☐ **DO** an ice breaker, aim to be interactive, and provide interpretation.
- ☐ **DO** pay attention to the times of meetings – who can come and who cannot?
- ☐ **DO** create meeting agendas with all parents in mind and include agenda items that address needs and desires across the community.
- ☐ **DO** pay attention to who speaks the most in meetings – and who does not – and deliberately structure meetings to ensure equitable participation across race, class, language, nationality, and education.
- ✗ **DON’T** assume that people are uninterested because they did not come to the meeting
- ✓ **Remember:** Approach ALL parent meetings as important community building sessions.

Participation

- ☐ **DO** assume that all families in the school have something to contribute, and they are more likely to participate if they feel welcome, are included, and if they are asked directly.
- ☐ **DO** listen to what parents across the community say should be done for the group to be more inclusive and representative.
- ✗ **DON’T** ignore or depreciate the ways in which families already participate or contribute to the school.
- ✗ **DON’T** assume that families who do not have race, class, language, nationality, or education privilege have not contributed to the school in meaningful ways.
- ✓ **Remember:** Formal parent organizations are not the preferred way for many parents to participate at school. All contributions that parents make to their children’s education are valuable.

Decision-Making Power

- ❑ **DO** pay attention to how race, class, language, nationality, and education privilege play out in meetings and decision-making
- ❑ **DO** form relationships across race, class, nationality, and language differences to build the influence of families underrepresented in decision-making
- ❑ **DO** allow parents a chance to vote and be a part of decision-making even if they are not in the parent org
- ✗ **DON'T** make decisions – even if it slows the process – without the voices and representation of parents who do not have race, class, language, nationality, or education privilege.
- ✓ **Remember:** Pursuing equity and inclusion mean being clear about how injustice shows up, finding ways to confront it, and changing the systems that create and sustain it.

Group Dynamics

- ❑ **DO** actively seek to encourage, follow, and respect the leadership of lower income families and parents of color.
- ❑ **DO** provide opportunities for group members and leaders to get to know each other across race, class, language, nationality, and educational background.
- ❑ **DO** recognize the diversity in your community, openly discuss intentions to be inclusive, and encourage people to voice their concerns.
- ❑ **DO** anticipate that issues of fundraising and how to spend money are likely to cause tension.
- ✗ **DON'T** continually utilize one person or a small group of people to make the parent organization seem more representative of the school (i.e. tokenism).
- ✓ **Remember:** Relationship building is key to breaking down walls and barriers.

Fundraising & Events

- ❑ **DO** have concrete ways to utilize different kinds of monetary and non-monetary contributions. Value them equally.
- ❑ **DO** choose events that come from and reflect the ideas, traditions, cultures, and strengths of families represented in the school.
- ❑ **DO** refer to other sections of this equity and inclusion tool.
- ✗ **DON'T** disrespect parents or traditions by putting on nearly identical events, or not supporting fundraisers and events already taking place.
- ✗ **DON'T** only recognize the actions of just a few event organizers or high-dollar donors.
- ✓ **Remember:** Fundraisers and events should involve the entire school community to build and strengthen it across race, class, language, nationality, and educational background.

Note 1: With regards to family engagement in schools, Teaching for Change defines a parent as anyone who shares responsibility for the well-being of a child, including but not limited to: guardians, grandparents, a parent's partner, siblings, extended family members, neighbors, friends, mentors, or a combination of the above.

Note 2: Definitions: **equity** is providing people with what they need to be successful, and takes into account historical and present-day injustices and inequalities. **Inclusion** authentically brings traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision-making. **Privilege** refers to the unearned, unquestioned, and often unconscious advantages, assumptions, entitlements, choices, and expectations bestowed on people based solely on membership in a particular social group. Examples include white privilege, male privilege, class privilege, heterosexual privilege, education privilege, etc.

Note 3: For further readings and resources on gentrification, parent organizations, and equity visit teachingforchange.org/equityinparentorgs.