



TITLE: Networking – Building a Circle of Trust (*Who do you ask?*)

DESCRIPTION: This session will help parents learn about building and strengthening their networks within their communities and the school that their children attend. Parents will identify those community and school stakeholders who are allies and are willing to help the parent and student succeed in education and in life. They will find out who the key people are and how to contact them when necessary.

DEVELOPER: Jermaine Soto, Director of Operations for the Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, Vanderbilt University

SERIES: This is Module 4 in the 5-part “Developing Self-Advocacy Skills” series. While it is recommended to start with Module 1, “*Our Culture is a Positive Tool in Schools,*” this module can be used on its own.

Facilitator Guide

OBJECTIVES/LEARNING TARGET(S)

At the end of this session, parents should:

- Understand the importance of building a strong social and school network.
- Identify the people within the community who feel like allies.
- Identify people in the community who feel like obstacles/challenges.
- Review the staff/faculty roles within a school.
- Discuss how these people affects the parent and child’s schooling experience.
- Identify the 2-3 people within the community and school who will be part of the parent’s circle of trust (information, safety, change, etc.).

CONNECTION TO THE NYS MEP THEORY OF ACTION

Developing Self-Advocacy Skills

- The workshop focusses on discovering who key people are within schools and communities and developing strategies to contact them when necessary.
- The workshop instills a sense of empowerment by guiding parents to make deliberate and purposeful choices to speak up for their needs.
- The workshop provides parents with the tools and knowledge necessary to know what accommodations they need and ensure they receive all the services they qualify for.
- The workshop helps understand the importance of willingly asking questions when something is unclear or needs clarification.

Identity Development

- Building a sense of expectation that they belong in the school.
- Begin to develop a circle of support by thinking about who are the allies in their life.

WORKSHOP/MODULE DESIGN

This module is designed for use with a group of parents, but it can be adapted for use with an individual parent within a home. This module can be adapted for use with adolescents.

Participant Agenda

- Introduction: Building a Strong Community and School Network
- Activity: Community Mapping
- Activity: Key People in Schools
- Closing & Next Steps: Building a Circle of Trust

SUPPLIES AND MATERIALS

- Participant Handouts (*English, Spanish, Karen, Burmese*)
 1. Participant Agenda
 2. Self-Advocacy Continuum
 3. Community Mapping
 4. Key People in Schools
 5. Circle of Trust
- Markers/Pens, Paper

Facilitator Note: *PREPARE AHEAD:* During the Activity, “Key People in Your Child’s

School,” the third column of the handout has a place to write in the actual names and phone numbers or email addresses. You may want to have some of this information available before the session starts.

A school district’s website will have some of the information. The Migrant Educator who works in the district may have some of the information you need about the specific roles in the districts your participants live in. Unfortunately, school districts can differ as to the roles played by different positions. For example, it might be the school nurse, the main office or an attendance person you contact when a child is out sick.

STAFFING NEEDS

- When this session is being done with a group at a local Parent Engagement location, childcare will be needed.
- Interpretation should be provided when the parents and facilitators speak different languages or more than one language is present.

Facilitator Note: The estimated times in this Guide are based on using one language. When adjusting to incorporate a second language, a general rule is to double the time needed.

ADJUSTING FOR USE WITH INDIVIDUAL FAMILY IN THE HOME

If you are facilitating in a home with one family, the activities become conversations between you and the family with everyone sharing.

ADJUSTING FOR USE WITH ADOLESCENTS

These workshops will work with young people. Review the Facilitator Guide, and decide what elements you will use with students. You may need to modify some of the activities to work with your adolescents; however, all of the Participant Handouts remain appropriate.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

(10 minutes)

Facilitator Note: Welcome the group to the workshop, state the name of the workshop, and then move into introductions. As you know, workshops are often foreign to migrant parents whether they are immigrants or not. When participants are shy, move around the group and give attention and a warm smile to each person as they introduce themselves.

In addition to “Name,” pick one question from the choices below for participants to use when introducing themselves. Feel free to think of your own question to use instead.

Questions

- Name
- Share an activity you like to do with friends or family.
- Share one quality that makes a person trustworthy.
- Share one thing you like about the community you live in.
- Share one thing you like about the school your child attends.

WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

(5 minutes)

Key Points

- This is part of the journey on the Self-Advocacy Continuum.
- It is important for parents to develop an understanding of school and community networks.
- This workshop will help parents identify key stakeholders that can help the parent self-advocate.

It might sound like: *We know that you have experience advocating for things you need, and interacting with schools to get what your need for your child can be hard. Parents have told us*

that when they move to a new community, they need extra help getting to know what resources are available.

Facilitator Note: If you are facilitating this in a home with one family, personalize the conversation instead of using the general reference to *parents*.

When you look at the Self-Advocacy Continuum handout, there are arrows that cross each other in the middle, showing the journey we go on. When we arrive in a new community, we often need help from someone else, like the migrant educator, to help us negotiate issues with the school. Then as we get to know how things work, and what is available in our new community, we can be more independent, and take over more of the advocacy for our children and ourselves.

There are three years of eligibility for Migrant Education services. During this time, it is our goal to support you as you increase your skills for self-advocacy. These activities are one way to help you build strength as you become more independent at advocating in schools.

This session helps you develop an understanding of school and community networks, and how to access the key stakeholders in those networks to help you and your child succeed in education and in life.

Facilitator Note: If participants attended Session 1, 2, or 3 this “Workshop Overview” would be a good opportunity to connect the Sessions together.

It might sound like: *This is the fourth session in a 5-part series focused on the journey of developing self-advocacy skills. As previously mentioned, this is a journey, a process, with each session providing a step along the process and empowering you to self-advocate in your child’s school. The first session allowed you to understand the importance of your culture. The second session allowed you to develop a Testimonio, your personal story based on your personal life experiences and cultural experiences. The third session helped you learn how to effectively communicate with people in different spaces.*

INTRODUCTION: BUILDING A STRONG COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL NETWORK

(5 minutes)

Key Points

- What is an ally?
- Who is an ally?
- Who might become a helper/ally?
- Are there people out there that can be an obstacle?

It might sound like: *When something goes wrong, do you know who to talk to in your community? How about if something goes wrong in your child’s school – do you know who to talk to? Who do you speak with to get information? Who do you speak with to celebrate good news? It is important to think about and know who is your ally (someone who has your best interests in mind and are there to help you) and who is a person that will challenge or oppose you (someone who makes life hard for you or doesn’t have your best interests in mind).*

As we start to understand this, we can build a network of people that can help and support us in our community and in our children’s schools. These are the people we can reach out to in times of need, when we need information that will help our child gain academic success, and when we want to celebrate the good things our children do. During our time together, we will begin to identify the people in our community that are with us and those that are our biggest challenges. We will also be able to identify those that may help in some areas better than in other areas. We will find out who the key people are in our children’s schools and continue to learn when and how to contact them if necessary. Finally, we will create a list of those people in our community and in our children’s school that we can trust and reach out to when necessary.

ACTIVITY: COMMUNITY MAPPING

(15 minutes)

Key Points

- Identify who has and can help within the community.
- Identify who has not and cannot help within the community.
- Begin to understand what makes or does not make an effective ally within a parent’s community.

It might sound like: *We are going to take some time to think of the community you live in and who are the people that support you and who are the people that are challenges/obstacles to your well-being/success. Let’s start thinking about some of these people:*

Facilitator Note: This activity is to help parents begin to see that they might have a network in place already. This activity lays the foundation for beginning to build a network that includes the school.

Take one or two responses from participants for each question. Feel free to add or change the questions based upon your knowledge of the group.

If you are doing this in a home, make this a conversation and then have the family fill out the worksheet.

- *Who do you go to if you have trouble with your car?*
 - *If you don't have a car, who do you go to if you need a ride to the grocery store, to a meeting, to an appointment?*
- *Who do you go to if something is not working in your home?*
- *Who do you go to if someone is sick?*
- *Who do you go to if your child is struggling with their homework?*
- *Who do you go to if you ran out of ingredients for the dinner you are making?*
- *Who do you go to if....?*

Great! You named some people that are there for you when you need help/support. These are examples of people who are part of your social networks. We are going to do an activity in which each of you will fill out a worksheet and think about the allies, or helpers in your life.

Are there some people that may help with some things but cannot help with other things? For example, a METS tutor can't drive someone to the grocery store, but can be a wonderful ally/supporter in helping you resolve an issue at the school.

Here is the worksheet, Community Mapping. We are going to start by building a list of people who are allies. Now think of and write down three or four people that you trust and who support you in different ways. Then write down why you put that person there. You will have a few minutes to do this on your own.

Person that is WITH ME	Why did you put this person here?
<i>Neighbor Juanita</i>	<i>Can watch my kids when I need to go out for a short time</i>
<i>Migrant tutor</i>	<i>When there is an issue with the school.</i>

Facilitator Note: This is a good time to have the conversation about the Migrant Tutor/Educator can help with somethings now, but the Migrant Tutor/Educator has a schedule with other students, so may not be available when a family needs help at a meeting. It isn't wrong for a parent to identify the Migrant Tutor/Educator as a person who is "with them." But it is good to start thinking of someone else who might become an ally.

In reality, we also have people who are obstacles, that may challenge us. It feels as if for some reason these individual do not want us to succeed. If you have someone like this in your life, it might not be appropriate to list the person's name for anyone to see, but you can think about why this person is an obstacle. Again, we'll give you all a couple of minutes to think about this.

Facilitator Note: On many farms, workers need to pay a high amount to the person who provides the ride to the store or appointments. While the service is available, the person might not be an “ally” for the family.

Person that is AGAINST ME	Why did you put this person here?

Keep these people in mind. We are going to create a circle of trust and some of these people may fit in there.

ACTIVITY: KEY PEOPLE IN SCHOOLS

(25 minutes)

Key Points

- Identify key people within the schools.
- Begin to learn the roles of different people within the schools.
- Develop an understanding of the appropriate people to contact for different issues within the schools.

It might sound like: *Do you know who all the people are that work in your/your child’s school? Besides your/your child’s teacher(s), who else do you know at your/your child’s school? Do you know what they do at the school? It is important to know the different people that work in a school. It helps to know who you need to speak to whenever you have an issue. It is important to know who you need to speak to when you need to advocate for yourself or for your child. This information is part of your rights and responsibilities as a parent.*

To start off, you will receive a worksheet entitled Key People in Your Child’s School. These are some of the people that work at a school and the work they do and what they are responsible for. Let’s take a moment to review the roles and responsibilities.

Facilitator Note: The first column on the handout lists many topics that participants may have questions or concerns about. The second column lists the person in school who would be the contact person in many schools. Unfortunately, each district and each building are different. Personalize as best you can for each participant and make note of who needs follow-up information.

If using this activity with teens, use the chart to identify when the staff people are available for questions and the best way to contact.

Now that we have a general understanding of what the people at your child's school do and what they are responsible for, we are now going to do an activity to that will help us think about some real-life situations that may be happening in our experiences with schools. We will think about what person in the school is responsible and who we should contact.

Process

1. Select one of the sample scenarios to read.
2. Ask participants who they could contact at school?
 - a. Use the handout, Key People in School, to help participants figure this out.
 - b. Encourage parents to problem solve.
3. Continue with three to five more scenarios.

Facilitator Note: Use the first two columns of the handout as a guide during this activity. As you walk through the questions, find the person on the worksheet, and highlight the connection between the person and the topics they address.

To help parents understand the roles staff and faculty play within the school, feel free to use the scenarios below as a guide. Add/substitute with your own scenarios, and/or ask parents for real questions they have had. Tailor it to fit the local schools and include questions that touch on scenarios that impact the local community, that help introduce important and necessary power players within the school to the families.

Sample Scenarios

- *Your child is sick and will be absent today. Who do you talk to? (Nurse, Main Office Secretary)*

Facilitator Note: Schools do want parents to call, but schools **also** need a written note sent into school when students are absent.

- *Your child has trouble completing homework in math. You do not know how to help your child at home. Who in the school can help? (Classroom Teacher, ENL Teacher, Guidance Counselor)*
- *You are interested in volunteering at your child's school. You want to know if there are programs for parents. Who can help you with this? (Classroom Teacher, PTA)*

- *Your child is getting high grades and you want them to be in honors classes. Who do you talk to? (Classroom Teacher, Guidance Counselor/Advisor)*
- *Your child is scheduled to go on a trip but there is a charge, and you cannot afford it. Who do you talk to? (Classroom Teacher, Social Worker)*
- *Your child has problems reading. Everything that has been done by teachers to help has not helped. You also notice that your child mixes words up when trying to read. Who do you talk to? (Principal, School Psychologist, Special Education)*
- *You have concerns that your student is being bullied at school or on social media. Who do you talk to? (DASA Coordinator)*

Facilitator Note: In New York State, every building has a DASA Coordinator.

- *A note comes home from the school to sign up for a 15-minute parent/teacher conference. You need an interpreter and more time, because a meeting with interpretation takes longer. Who do you talk to? (Classroom Teacher, ENL Teacher)*
- *You have met with your child's classroom teacher or guidance counselor multiple times and you have implemented the strategies recommended to you, but your child is still having problems and is about to fail. Who can help you now? (Principal, School Psychologist, Special Education)*
- *Your child is being bullied by other kids. The teacher, guidance counselor and school principal don't think it is a big deal. But your child continues to come home upset every day and does not want to go back to school. Who do you talk to? (Social Worker, School District Office)*

Facilitator Note: Classroom Teachers are listed in most every category. When a parent has a good relationship with the teacher, they can be the first place to ask when parents do not know who to contact in the School District.

Wonderful. You should have a stronger understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the people in your child's school. This worksheet, Key People in Your Child's School, is to help you remember who the key people are in your child's school and who you should speak to when necessary.

The last column is blank. We can work together to fill out the last column. Put down the information you know, and we will share the information we know, and see what is left to figure out.

For example, put down your child’s teacher’s name and the number or email to reach her. Do this for all the roles. After this is complete, you should put this worksheet in a place within your home where you can use it whenever an issue comes up and you need to contact the school.

Facilitator Note: This is a good time to discuss that information can be sent to school in a note to the Classroom Teacher.

Some schools have a designated bilingual person to take calls from parents who speak a particular language.

CLOSING & NEXT STEPS: BUILDING A CIRCLE OF TRUST

(10 minutes)

Key Points

- Begin to identify those people who can help and serve as allies.
- Begin to identify those people with the potential to serve as allies.
- Develop a contact list of those people the parent identifies as an ally.

***It might sound like:** Now that we worked on understanding who supports and/or challenges you in your community and who the people are at your child’s school and the roles they play; we can begin putting together a list of those people you can contact when you need help. These will be the people you know who will support you and encourage you as you advocate for your rights. If you feel you don’t have people that can serve as an ally or supporter, we can use this time to think of who can potentially be that person for you.*

Let’s pull out the Community Mapping worksheet and take another look at the people you identified as Allies, people who are with you.

We will try to each come up with 3 people that we can trust and count on. These 3 people will be part of our Circle of Trust. Use page one of the Circle of Trust handout to write down your ideas and start filling in names.

- *Who **in the community** do you trust to support you as you advocate for yourself? Why did you choose this person?*
- *Who **in your child’s school** do you trust to support you as you advocate for yourself? Why did you choose this person?*
- *Is there another person you think should be in your circle of trust? Why?*
- *Is there someone else **with the potential** to be a new Ally to support you? How can you get to know this person better?*

Facilitator Note: Page 2 of the Circle of Trust handout has a circle with spaces to write in people and contact information. Encourage participants to move names to their Circle of Trust, and to add the contact information they know.

We learn from the Self-Advocacy Continuum that it takes time to build Allies and a Circle of Trust in a new community. If participants can learn how to engage in an active search for Allies, they can help regain their sense of strength they may have lost with the most recent move.

It has been great spending time together today. Thank you for your time and commitment to your children's education.

APPRECIATIONS

(5 minutes)

Key Points

- Time to share appreciations for self, others, or a new concept or idea learned.
- Create a climate that honors individual risk-taking.
- Create a forum for supporting each other.

It might sound like this: *We like to close our workshops by taking time to share something you appreciate about yourself, someone in the group, or an idea or concept that you have learned. Appreciations are important because they create a climate that honors individual risk-taking. It can be hard to share in front of others. Workshops are a new way to learn for some of you. Appreciating what we have learned from each other is a good way to support each other.*

Facilitator Note: If you are facilitating in a home, first appreciate something about what the parent shared. Then ask the parent to identify what they appreciated most about what they shared today.