



FLAMBOYAN
FOUNDATION

ACADEMIC PARTNERING

**CREATING
MEANINGFUL
EXPERIENCES WITH
FAMILIES**

INTRODUCTION

Educators are the experts on curriculum and pedagogy, and families are the experts on their children, from the earliest years to and through adulthood. Partnering with families is an opportunity to share power which can build or sustain trusting relationships and, ultimately, support student success.

How you deliver the content of academic partnering meetings or conversations, such as parent-teacher conferences, can show that you have considered the needs of the family and are dedicated to growing a meaningful partnership in service of their student.

Use this resource when you are preparing to partner with families to ensure your engagements are successful. It will help you consider how the information and resources you share support families as they play each of the Five Essential Roles.

In this document you will find:

- Guidance on how to create meaningful academic partnering experiences with families; and
- Sample outreach and a sample feedback form to get started right away

BEFORE THE MEETING

Co-construct the agenda | You should go into every meeting with a plan for what you want to share and ask. It builds trust with families when they see the intention and thoughtfulness you've put into your time together. The agenda should include the input you gathered from families while scheduling the conversation. Once the agenda is drafted, share it with families and include resources — such as question stems — to help them feel ready to engage in the conversation.

Prepare data | Sharing student data is a hallmark of academic partnering. Make sure the data:

- Are easy to explain and understand, e.g., using visuals such as charts and graphs;
- Are relevant to and illustrative of the skills the student needs to focus on right now; and
- Highlight examples of successes.

Remember that data can — and should — include socio-emotional benchmarks and can be quantitative and/or qualitative.

Gather resources | Academic partnering is an opportunity to share relevant resources with families. While sometimes ideas come on the fly, you should also prepare which resources you want to share in advance. Consider the following when pulling resources:

- **Bite-sized:** This isn't the time to share a dozen activities with a family. Decide on the one or two most relevant resources you want a family to take with them, and start there. Be mindful not only with the number of resources you share, but also of making sure families can reasonably incorporate the resources into their lives at home.
- **Familiar:** Share resources that you and/or your students have used prior to the conversation. This will ensure you are able to answer questions or provide support, if needed.
- **Think outside the box:** Resources can be flash cards or games. They also can be apps, YouTube videos, or question stems. Get creative and make it fun!
- **Socio-emotional and academic:** It may be easy to think of at-home activities you want students doing to support academic goals, but that's not the only important topic to cover! Use your time to share age-appropriate resources relevant to the socio-emotional growth of students as well. For example, families with older students may benefit from resources about study habits and organization.

Secure interpretation and translation as needed | Ensure ample time to secure translation and interpretation support/services. For example, submit materials like data and activities for translation, secure interpreters, provide interpreters with a guide of expectations, and have a plan for responding to things you do not know or are best explained by someone else. Ensure families are provided with information on how to access interpretation supports and translated materials (e.g., Zoom Interpret, Google Translate, or Teams closed captioning translation).

DURING THE MEETING

Share power | Be cognizant of the power dynamics that typically arise during engagements like parent-teacher conferences, and make moves to share power throughout the conversation, such as:

- Leading with the question, “What do you hope to get out of this conversation?”
- Avoiding educational jargon and acronyms such as PARCC, RTI, DRA, Common Core, etc.
- Asking the family if they have additions or changes to the agenda
- Starting and ending on time
- Saving time for questions
- If using interpretation, making eye contact with the family when speaking, not the interpreter

Practice | If you’re sharing an activity or game, take time to practice it with families (and the student, if they are present!). Examples include sharing your screen in real time to show a family how to log into the online platform to check grades, playing the at-home math game you’ve printed, or reviewing questions families can ask their students after reading to assess comprehension.

Set goals + align on next steps | Co-constructing goals during an academic partnering conversation is a powerful way to make sure everyone is on the same page and to provide a basis for continued communication between families and teachers. Before wrapping up, make sure everyone feels clear on their next steps to support the student. In conversations with older students, the student should also set a goal for themselves.

Request feedback | Immediately following the conversation, or as soon as possible, ask families for feedback on how it went. This could be a few simple rating questions on a half sheet of paper, or open-ended prompts completed on a Google Form. However you do it, design the feedback to get a sense of what you should continue to do or do differently next time to support families in academic partnering. See sample feedback form below.

Ask yourself:

- What are the most relevant data to share with this family? Is it presented in a way that is accessible?
- What activities or resources can I compile or create so the family can support learning at home?
- How will I know families are confident about how to support their student at home?
- How will I know families and students are clear about goals and next steps?
- What will I do to ensure shared power so families feel at ease and able to share their honest thoughts, wonderings, and needs?

APPENDIX

A. Feedback Form

Student Name:

Nombre del estudiante:

Teacher:

Maestra/o:

Please circle a response. (Por favor escoja la respuesta apropiada)

1. This meeting helped me better understand the grade-level academic expectations for my child.
Esta reunión me ayudó a entender más las expectativas académicas del curso para mi hijo/a.

Strongly Disagree
Muy en Desacuerdo

Somewhat Disagree
Algo en Desacuerdo

Somewhat Agree
Algo en Acuerdo

Strongly Agree
Muy de Acuerdo

2. This meeting made me feel more confident doing academic activities at home that support my child's learning.
Esta reunión me dio más confianza para poder cumplir en casa las actividades académicas que apoyarán el aprendizaje de mi hijo/a.

Strongly Disagree
Muy en Desacuerdo

Somewhat Disagree
Algo en Desacuerdo

Somewhat Agree
Algo en Acuerdo

Strongly Agree
Muy de Acuerdo

3. This meeting helped me to better set goals and monitor my child's progress.
Esta reunión me ayudó a establecer metas y seguir el progreso de my hijo/a.

Strongly Disagree
Muy en Desacuerdo

Somewhat Disagree
Algo en Desacuerdo

Somewhat Agree
Algo en Acuerdo

Strongly Agree
Muy de Acuerdo

4. This meeting made me feel more motivated to be involved in my child's academic learning.
Esta reunión me motivó a estar más involucrado/a con el aprendizaje de mi hijo/a.

Strongly Disagree
Muy en Desacuerdo

Somewhat Disagree
Algo en Desacuerdo

Somewhat Agree
Algo en Acuerdo

Strongly Agree
Muy de Acuerdo

5. This meeting gave me tools to support learning at home for my child.
Esta reunión me dio las herramientas para apoyar el aprendizaje de mi hijo en casa.

Strongly Disagree
Muy en Desacuerdo

Somewhat Disagree
Algo en Desacuerdo

Somewhat Agree
Algo en Acuerdo

Strongly Agree
Muy de Acuerdo

6. What I liked most about this meeting is...
Lo que me gustó más de esta reunión es...

7. What I would change about this meeting is...
Lo que yo cambiaría de esta reunión es...

B. Sample Outreach

Modify the below outreach to meet your needs! Consider things like home language, in-person or virtual learning, and the strength of the relationship when deciding how to schedule academic partnering meetings and gather information to co-construct the agenda.

First outreach, sent a few weeks before the conference date(s)

Dear Family,

In two weeks, we will come together for a Goal Setting Conference. During this time, we will talk about your student's progress so far this year. We will set goals, and I will share some resources and activities to support learning at home. Conferences will be about 30 minutes long, and we can connect over Zoom or FaceTime.

This form will help me find a time and way of connecting that works for both of us! **Please complete this form by Wednesday, September 30th.** I will confirm your day/time by Friday, October 2nd. Please mark all possible days and times that work for you.

Which time of day can you meet?

	Yes, I can meet!	No, I cannot meet.
Morning, 7am-11am		
Afternoon, 12pm-4pm		
Evening, 5pm-8pm		

Which days of the week can you meet during the week of October 12th?

	Yes, I can meet!	No, I cannot meet.
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		

Do you prefer to meet on Zoom or FaceTime? Put your contact info below to tell me which!

I prefer to meet on Zoom using this email:
I prefer to meet on FaceTime using this phone number:

Thank you! If you have any questions, please reach out to me.

Second outreach, confirming date/time and asking for input on conference

Dear Family,

Thank you for completing the Goal Setting Conference scheduling form. Our conference time is scheduled for:

- Date at Time
- We will use Zoom/FaceTime (if Zoom, share link)

I want to make sure our conference is meaningful to you. Please review the following questions for discussion during the meeting.

- How do you keep track of your child's progress?
- What do you think your child does really well in school? How do you know?
- What are some of the ways you have been (or wish you could) support your child's learning at home?
- Where would you like to see your child improve? Why?
- Please write down additional issues or questions you wish to discuss at the conference.

Thank you! I look forward to seeing you and your child next week!

Optional questions for virtual/hybrid learning:

- ✓ What are some strengths you've observed during virtual/hybrid learning?
- ✓ What has helped your child succeed during virtual/hybrid learning? What does that success look like?
- ✓ What motivates your child and keeps him/her engaged?
- ✓ What has been most challenging for your child during virtual/hybrid learning? What does this challenge look like at home?
- ✓ What are one or two shifts or changes to remote instruction that I could make to better meet your child's needs?



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