SPEAKING “PARENT” IN A CULTURE OF DIVERSITY

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OBJECTIVES

- understand the process of immigration as it relates to parent involvement in schools
- explore asset-based communications as a means to increasing parent involvement
We've been brought to this school by Mr. Rosenberg, who, two days after our arrival, tells us he'll take us to classes that are provided by the government to teach English to newcomers. This morning, in the rinky-dink wooden barracks where the classes are held, we've acquired new names. All it takes is a brief conference between Mr. Rosenberg and the teacher, a kindly looking woman who tries to give us reassuring glances, but who has seen too many people come and go to get sentimental about a name. Mine - "Ewa" - is easy to change into its near equivalent in English, "Eva." My sister's name? "Alina"? poses more of a problem, but after a moment's thought, Mr. Rosenberg and the teacher decide that "Elaine" is close enough. My sister and I hang our heads wordlessly under this careless baptism. The teacher then introduces us to the class, mispronouncing our last name - "Wydra" - in a way we've never heard before. We make our way to a bench at the back of the room; nothing much has happened, except a small, seismic, mental shift. The twist in our names takes them a tiny distance from us - but it's a gap into which the infinite hobgoblin of abstraction enters. Our Polish names didn't refer to us; they were as surely us as our eyes or hands. These new appellations, which we ourselves were yet to pronounce, are not us. They are identification tags, disembodied signs pointing to objects that happen to be my sister and myself. We walk to our seats, into a roomful of unknown faces, with names that make us strangers to ourselves.

http://www.lossesintranslation.com/quotes.php
WHAT ARE WE COMMUNICATING?  WHAT IS UNDERSTOOD?

- A Singular Context
  - Unfamiliar procedures
  - Regimented structure
  - Hierarchical nature

- One-Way Communication
  - Newsletters
  - Report Cards
  - Flyers

- Personal Obstacles
  - I Know/I Have
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNDERSTANDING PARENTS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Understandings of Intelligence</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• A Score</td>
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<td>• Practical</td>
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<td>• Academic</td>
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<td>• Flexible, Diverse, Cultural, Experiential</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Understanding of School</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Teachers</td>
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<td>• Tests/Grades</td>
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<td>• Homework</td>
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<td>• Expectations/Feedback</td>
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<td>• Useful or Not</td>
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<td>• Deadlines/Punctuality</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Understanding of Learning</strong></td>
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<td>• Active/Passive</td>
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<td>• Instant/Formative</td>
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<td>• Questioned/Accepted</td>
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<td>• Constructed/Obtained</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Understandings of Self</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Competent</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Related/Assimilated</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Autonomous</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Or NOT?</td>
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UNDERSTANDING PARENTS

- **Contribution Comes Last**
  - Language
  - Employment
  - Housing
  - Education

- **Obstacles**
  - Displacement/Trauma
  - Isolation/Denial
  - Dependency on Aid
  - Self-Worth
  - Intimidation
  - Homesickness
  - Depression
  - Disillusionment

http://www.officiallanguages.gc.ca/html/stu_etu_imm_02_ch2_b_e.php
UNDERSTANDING NEEDS V. UNDERSTANDING ASSETS

- Deficiencies
- Fragmented responses that are problem specific; INDIVIDUAL
- Individuals are CONSUMERS of a solution; not a part of it
- Diminishes Voice

- Solutions
- Interdependence is built; dependence of one asset on another; COMMUNITY
- Identify ways people can give of their talents; CONTRIBUTE
- Empowers Voice
SPEAKING PARENT

Current Communications
- Student-focused
- School-focused
- Needs-focused

“to effectively address the challenges that face communities is to have a good knowledge of the resources available to work on local issues.”

THE AIM of COMMUNICATION MUST BE TO..
- BUILD PARENT UNDERSTANDING OF OUR CONTEXT
- BUILD OUR UNDERSTANDING OF PARENTS AS ASSETS WITHIN OUR CONTEXT

New Communications
- Parent-focused
- Community-focused
- Asset-focused
STARTING THE CONVERSATION

- SOLUTIONS - WEAR 'EM ON YOUR SLEEVE

- RESEARCH
  - Families, Friends, Colleagues, Community
    - Community Profile
    - **Family** Surveys
    - Capacity Inventory
    - Student/Family Interview Projects
    - Asset Maps
ENGAGE

- Compile Research
  - CulturePages, CommunityPages

- Match Parent Assets to Your Curriculum and Your Students
  - Early Planning – Better Results

- Culture/Language Specific Open Houses
  - School Tour, Procedures, “A day in the life of our students”

- Culture/Language Specific Parent Panel for Teachers
  - Let Parents Speak, Give Voice and Gain Understanding

- Share Community/Class Asset List with Families
  - INTERdependency Empowers, Empowerment Allows for Contribution

- Community Visits
  - Use Community Space
  - Participate when you can

“If you create a culture in which parent involvement is part of the curriculum, you create an environment in which parents feel welcome, free to ask questions, and make suggestions.”

-HTSGUIDE (edutopia.org)
BECOMING FLUENT

- Language Days
- How To...
  - Videos
  - Guides
- Volunteer Portal
  - For community members to sign up
- Conference Guides
  - Outline Goals and Comments
  - Invite Questions
  - Maybe Translated
- Techs and Apps
  - Dash4teachers
  - Remind/WorldLEns
  - Videotape Events
  - Skype/FaceTime Conferences
- Thank You Notes
- Tweak Events that Exist
- DON’T DO IT ALONE!
RESOURCES

- ABCs of Parent Involvement
- Get Involved Parent Videos
- Dash4teachers
- Remind
- Parent CAMP
- FACEBOOK
- Multi-Lingual Avatars
  - Project Prep for Next Week
  - WorldLens
- Home to School Connections Guide
- Home Visits
- Mapping Assets
- Loyola and Language Matters
MOVING FORWARD

- ONE Lesson
- ONE Focus/Task
- ASSETS To Engage
REFERENCES


