**Optional Personal Notes/Reflection Tool for Synchronous Family Partnerships PD**

**Core Belief # 1: All Families have dreams for their children and want the best for them.** We emphasize all here because often we interpret family patterns and behaviors as not having hopes and dreams for their children’s well being and success. Poverty, mental health issues, housing, and other systemic and structural factors impact families engagement in their children’s education, but families DO care and want the best for their children.

* 1. Is there a time that sticks out in your mind related to this core belief?
  2. I do/don’t struggle with this belief because:
  3. What could you consider if/when you struggle?
  4. What strategies do you use for families to share their hopes and dream for their children?
  5. What might this look like in a distance learning or hybrid model?

**Core Belief #2: All families have the capacity to support their children’s learning**. Strength-based thinkers look at the world with the belief that everyone has their own unique toolkit. This exercise is a way of examining the implicit biases and assumptions educators may have about families in their schools Often people will use a deficit-based lens versus a strength-based lens as it relates to families. Even if these concerns stem from our caring and concern, the one-dimensional focus on our family's shortfalls can blind us to their strengths.

One of the instructional models guiding principles is to actively discover and use the abilities, knowledge, perspectives, and experience of families to support student learning. Use the categories to discuss the strengths and different types of knowledge and abilities that your families have. Use only asset-based language. *Categories – Race and Ethnic Diversity, Socioeconomic Diversity, Occupational Diversity, Educational Diversity, Religious Diversity, Political Diversity, Talents, Other*

* 1. Discuss the strengths and different types of knowledge and abilities that your families have. Use only asset-based language.
  2. Are you making the most of the strengths and assets your families have to offer? Why or why not?
  3. Strength-based thinkers look at the world with the belief that everyone has their own unique toolkit. How could you enhance the way you utilize the strengths, the tools, and the assets of your families in a distance learning or hybrid model?

**The Risk of Deficit-Based Thinking** Have you heard these statements or similar statements before?

* *The families are the problem and there is no sense engaging them; they are in the way.*
* *Just give me the kids… the families are dysfunctional.*
* *Because of their limited education, it does not make sense to share data with them; they will just be overwhelmed.*

The risks of deficit-based thinking can lead to lowering expectations. Believing that our students need to be saved from their culture, communities, or families runs counter to building relationships with families and respecting the valuable knowledge that they bring to the learning environment. General expectations of the instructional model include:

* Collaborate with families to evolve the academic program and their support roles
* Work with families to build their capacity to support learning
  1. When you hear negative statements about your students and families how do you respond?
  2. How do you hold high expectations for all students and families?

**Core Belief 3: Families and school staff are equal partners.** Embracing equal partnerships as a core belief means that you know that your families have skills, ideas, and knowledge about their children and community that are of value to you. A guiding principle in the instructional model is to work with families as equal partners int their students’ education. When families see that you value them as members of the team of student achievement and development, they will also value your skills and knowledge as their child’s teacher.

* 1. What does it mean to be equal partners? Does equal mean “the same”? Why or why not?
  2. What do you already value about the families you work with?
  3. What can you do to further show families that they are valued and respected?

1. **Core Belief #4: The responsibility for cultivating and sustaining partnerships among school, home, and community rests primarily with the school staff.**
   1. Research shares that parents need to trust their school before they become active participants. But this can be a complex barrier to overcome, as their mistrust often stems from racial tension and disrespect that leaves parents weary of educators. With this in mind, what could you or your school do to promote trust and start more authentic lines of communication between parents and staff members?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **To promote trust, my school could:** | **To promote trust, I could:** |
|  |  |

**Reflection**

“*I assume that we all have prejudices, not because we want them, but simply because we are so continually exposed to misinformation about others – Beverly Tatum*

* 1. Take some time to consider the words above and then reflect on an experience where race, class, or another difference made your relationship with a student’s family more difficult. Which essential core belief could you have embraced more heavily in order to build a more successful relationship? How?
  2. How can continuing to be more aware of this core belief help you guide your family relationships, especially in a distance or hybrid learning model?