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Project Recuerdo: A Critical and Culturally Sustaining Bilingual Family Journal Project

Ice Breaker

1. What stories do you wish you knew of your own family?
2. What family stories might you ask of your students to record in their journals? How do those stories connect with the curriculum that you use?

¡Adelante! Steps

Step 1- Write two questions that your students could ask their families.

Step 2- How could the writing content contribute to instruction in your classroom or at your school?

Step 3- How could you connect families, school leaders and the greater school community?

FAQs

About how long does a writing activity require?

I usually give my families at least three weeks to complete the journal activity. Then, I give myself an extra week to collect journals and reach out to families that have not returned them.

Do families ever feel uncomfortable with sharing their personal experiences?

Yes, sometimes; however, this is a great opportunity for relationship-building and teamwork. By sharing my own stories, I attempt to model vulnerability, and it seems to help them feel

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more comfortable and lends to the development of trust.

Do you ever have families that struggle with completing the activity?

Occasionally, but it is mostly at the beginning, and it is an opportunity to reassure families that they DO have academic skills. From my experience, all families begin to feel more confident and see the value in sharing their stories after trying it once. An advantage to this project is that you and your families have multiple opportunities throughout the school year.

How can this be adapted for ECE and primary students?

Some teachers have asked for illustrations in combination with words, short phrases or a few sentences. Families can also do more writing with a gradual increase in writing from the students as they acquire stronger writing skills.

Troubleshooting

I would recommend that you ease into it. Try it every few months, don't be discouraged if families struggle with this project...it's an opportunity to gain trust, validate and attain 100 percent family engagement...families will start to feel comfortable with this project after a few tries, not every lesson has to be so complex...it can be as simple as writing a poem, having a rich conversation, or writing a short constructed response, write questions exactly how you would like for your students to ask the family member and be specific about how much writing you want, give yourself an additional week after the due date to connect with families that haven't turned in their journals, be clear with families about how this project works.

Maestra Michelle López

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