

# Strategies for Effective Teaching and Learning

## Recommendations for Providing Families With Culturally Sensitive Services

- Provide information using the family's desired language and preferred means of communication—written notes, telephone calls, informal meetings, or even audio recordings.
- When appropriate, recognize that extended family members often play a key role in a child's educational development. Give deference to key decision makers in the family.
- Use culturally competent interpreters who are not only familiar with the language but also knowledgeable about educational issues and the special education process.
- Seek cultural informants from the local community who can assist teachers in understanding culturally relevant variables such as nonverbal communication patterns, child-rearing strategies, gender roles, academic expectations, medical practices, and specific folkways that might affect the family's relationships with professionals.
- Attend social events and other functions held in the local community.
- With the help of other parents or volunteers, develop a survival vocabulary of key words and phrases in the family's native language.
- Address parents and other caregivers as “Mr.,” “Ms.,” or “Mrs.,” rather than using first names. Formality and respect are essential, especially when speaking with older members of the family.
- In arranging meetings, be sensitive to possible barriers such as time conflicts, transportation difficulties, and child care issues.
- Conduct meetings, if necessary, in family-friendly settings such as local community centers or houses of worship.
- Invite community volunteers to serve as cultural liaisons between the school and the pupil's family.