

Module 4: School Systems and Multiple Cultures

1.1 Parent Engagement

WestEd presents the Parent Engagement Migrant Modules; a module series developed on behalf of the California Department of Education, English Learner Support Division. School Systems and Multiple Cultures: Bridging the Differences to Support the Child. Migrant Education Office—English Learner Support Division—California Department of Education. Visit the CDE website for more information (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/>). This presentation was posted in October of 2019.

1.2 Navigating the Module

The following information will help you navigate this module:

- Use the menu on the left side panel and the navigation bar on the bottom of the screen to control this module.
- The tab key can also be used to navigate forward through the module components; shift+tab can be used to move backward.
- Use the audio button at the bottom right of the screen to turn the slide's audio narration on and off.
- Use the captions button at the bottom of the screen to turn the captions on and off.
- Use the transcript button at the bottom left of the screen to turn the transcript on and off.
- Transcripts for the complete module can be accessed in the resources menu.
- The following keyboard shortcuts have been enabled for ease of use:
 - N = Move to the next slide
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- The module will automatically save any progress made if connected to the Internet.

1.3 School Systems and Multiple Cultures: Bridging the Differences to Support the Child

Welcome to School Systems and Multiple Cultures: Bridging the Differences to Support the Child. This is the fourth module in the supporting parent engagement module series. Remember that you may view these modules in any order. In this module we will explore different school systems and how parents can partner with schools to get the best education for their children. While there are families from many different countries whose children go to school in the United States (U.S.), when comparing U.S. schools with schools from other countries, we will be using schools in Mexico as our example.

1.4 Module Objectives

In the United States, going to school is a big part of a child's life. Some children go to a preschool at age three and begin to meet other children and adults at a very young age; other children have their first school experience in kindergarten. Children spend up to six or more hours a day at school interacting with many other people. As parents, it is important to know what is expected of your children while they are at school and how you can help your children in the many years they spend in school. By the end of the module, you will have done the following:

- Received background information about different school systems and the programs offered in schools
- Explored cultural considerations for your child going to school and the school's impact on culture
- Reflected on the importance of home language
- Discussed how creating relationships with schools supports children's learning
- Practiced new strategies and planned to use them

1.5 Make it personal! (1)

As we move through this module, we will be addressing the cultural changes that children may experience as they become more accustomed to the U.S. culture regarding school, behavior, rules, and overall attitude. As children get exposed to U.S. culture, it is important to be aware of how your child may change as they grow and how to understand them. They may be challenging at first, and it is important to talk with your children about these challenges. Some changes may not be okay with your family and that is fine. It is important to communicate with your child and to help them understand the beliefs and actions of your family and why you expect them to behave a certain way. An example of this might be that in U.S. schools many students walk home after school. On their way home they might stop at the corner store to get a snack or just spend time with friends. In many U.S. homes, students come home from school and start their homework right away. In some homes, there may be other chores or responsibilities that must be done right away, even before homework can be started. Because homework is a part of the U.S. culture of school, it is important to find a way to work it into the home routine. Students do not need to do their homework as soon as they come home, but they do need a quiet, clear space to complete it; and they need parent support to make sure it is done to the best of their ability. This is a very simple example of how culture at home may change because of the expectations of U.S. schooling.

1.6 Cultural Connections (1)

Throughout this module, there will be chances to look at schools, your children, and your family through a cultural lens. This means that we will explore how the school experience connects or interacts with your family's culture. Here are a few questions to think about:

- What things are honored most in U.S. schools?
- Are they different from what I know to be honored in schools in Mexico?
- As my child becomes a part of the U.S. school culture, what do I expect see?
- Am I okay with the U.S. school culture changing my child as they assimilate to their school environment?

Take some time now to think about some changes you have seen in your children since they began school, or things you've heard from friends that might change about your child once they begin attending school in the U.S. Keep this cultural piece in mind as we

discuss differences in the school systems and how you as a parent should be an advocate. This way you can be prepared when these issues arise in your own homes.

1.7 Comparing Schools: U.S. and Mexico

This part of the module will provide information on what schools are like in Mexico and what schools are like in the U.S.

1.8 Make it personal! (2)

In order to better understand schooling in the U.S., let us first reflect on our own school experiences. By considering the questions below you may gain a better understanding of the feelings you have about schools in general—for both you and your children:

- What is your first memory of school?
- What are your feelings about school and education?
- What education goals do you have for your children?

Sometimes our own experiences are reflected in our children's attitudes and beliefs. Having a positive attitude about school and encouraging your child to enjoy and work hard in school are huge first steps in making school important and meaningful for children.

1.9 A Closer Look at Schools in Each Country

There are some significant differences between schools in Mexico and schools in the United States. Select the images to learn more about education in each country.

1.10 A Closer Look at Schools in Each Country: Schools in the U.S.

School in the U.S. is considered compulsory, also known as required, for children from first through twelfth grade. Parents are held legally responsible for their children's school attendance and can face penalties such as fines if their children fail to attend school. There are typically four stages of school in the U.S.:

1. Preschool-which is optional
2. Elementary school-which includes kindergarten
3. Middle school-sometimes called junior high school
4. High school

We will learn more details about each of these stages.

There are many different types of schools in the U.S. that offer some or all four stages of school:

- Public schools are state-funded and free to attend.
They follow state standards and the regulations of a school district.
- Charter schools are state-funded and free to attend but are more independent of school districts and school district regulations.
There is typically an application or request process to attend charter schools.
- Magnet schools are also public schools that are free to attend but usually have a specific focus such as science or reading.
- Private schools are available at a cost to families and have an application process to get into the school.
Private schools have their own standards and regulations.
- Post high school education (college or trade school) is fee-based.

Many students in the U.S. get scholarships, money from organizations or colleges, and loans to help pay for college. Others have a job while they attend college and may take a longer time to complete their college education and receive a degree. Community colleges now offer free or low-cost tuition for those who qualify. And the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM)-the largest University in Latin America-has a satellite site in Los Angeles (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México en Los Ángeles) that offers degrees at no cost for Mexican nationals and affordable fees for foreign students.

Close this slide by selecting the X.

1.11 A Closer Look at Schools in Each Country: Schools in Mexico

School in Mexico is considered compulsory, also known as required, for children from preschool-which is the same kindergarten in the U.S.-through ninth grade.

There are typically three stages of school in Mexico:

1. Primary school (primaria: 1st– 6th grade)
2. Junior high school (secundaria: 7th– 9th grade)
3. High school (preparatoria: 10th–12th grade)

Tenth through twelfth grade is optional and comes with a cost to the parent.

Post high school education (college or trade school) comes at a cost.

Close this slide by selecting the X button.

1.12 A Closer Look at Schools in Each Country: Preschool

Let's take a closer look at the differences between the U.S. and Mexico in early education. Select the images to learn more about education in each country.

1.13 A Closer Look at Schools in Each Country: Preschool in the U.S.

In the U.S., preschool is for three- and four-year-old children. Preschool in the U.S. is not required, but children who attend preschool see the benefits for many years. Preschool supports a child's development, including language, math, science, and many other content areas. Additionally, children who attend preschool learn how to make friends with other children and thrive in a group setting. There are many options for preschool in the U.S. Some options include state-funded preschool, Head Start preschool, private preschool, and home-based centers and childcare providers. State-funded and Head Start programs have low cost options for families who qualify. The curriculum taught in preschools may vary in terms of how the curriculum is delivered. For example, Montessori preschool programs focus on self-directed activity, hands-on learning, and collaborative play between children. Other preschools use a project approach, which allows teachers to guide children through in-depth studies of real-world topics. Child Care Resource and Referral centers are available in every county in the state and can share preschool options with families. Some programs offer free or low-cost options for families who qualify. Close this slide by selecting the X button.

1.14 A Closer Look at Schools in Each Country: Preschool in Mexico

In Mexico, preschool starts at age three. One year of preschool is required prior to first grade and is free. Preschool in Mexico happens before first grade and there are multiple preschool options (state and federally funded, CONAFE or Consejo Nacional de foment educativo, indigenous, migrant). There are also some nursery schools available for children under the age of five in Mexico.

There are both public and private preschool options in Mexico. Close this slide by selecting the X button.

1.15 A Closer Look at Schools in Each Country: Elementary and Middle Schools

Let's take a closer look at the differences between the U.S. and Mexico in elementary and middle school education. Select the images to learn more about education in each country.

1.16 A Closer Look at Schools in Each Country: Elementary and Middle School in the U.S.

Curriculum and standards, or the materials and information taught in schools, is different in the U.S. and Mexico. In the U.S., materials and standards are different from state to state because most funding comes from each individual state. What a student learns in Arizona could be different than what is taught in New York. While many states in the U.S. now follow the Common Core State Standards, there are still variations to those standards from state to state. The federal government of the U.S. does fund some programs for special populations of students, such as students who live-in low-income homes, students with special education needs, and students from homes where English is a second language. The way that schools divide grades may also be different from country to country. And within each country there may be further differences still.

Some school districts in the U.S. choose to divide grades in different ways.

An example of this might be that one elementary school may be kindergarten through sixth grade, and another might be kindergarten through fifth grade, with sixth grade being in the middle school. There may be differences from district to district, but ultimately all students are expected to attend school from kindergarten through twelfth grade in the U.S. Many schools in the U.S. do not receive enough funding from the government to do some of the projects and fieldtrips they would like to do. They will often send home letters asking for money or donations to help pay for particular programs or activities. If you are able to afford these additional fees it is helpful to the school; but if you are unable to pay the fees, or if paying the fees would put you in a financial hardship, know that ALL children will be supported for the activity no matter who pays and who does not. There can be NO REQUIRED fees to attend any school required events. Activities that occur outside of school-like football games and dances- can come with a fee, but students are not required to participate. Close this slide by selecting the X button.

1.17 A Closer Look at Schools in Each Country: Elementary and Middle School in Mexico

In Mexico, funding for schools comes primarily from the national government, although there are more states that are being given funding to set their own standards. In Mexico, the materials used (textbooks, teaching guides, etc.) and standards (specifically WHAT is taught) is decided nationally by the Mexican government and all students in Mexico learn the same thing. Mexico prints and distributes textbooks for students. Mexico has multiple options for elementary school (state and federally funded, CONAFE or Consejo Nacional de foment educativo, indigenous, migrant). Primary schooling (primeria) is from first through sixth grade. Secondary schooling is in two sections: secundaria (from seventh through ninth grade) and preparatoria (from tenth through twelfth grade). Secundaria is free but does come with fees for textbooks and uniforms. Close this slide by selecting the X button.

1.18 A Closer Look at Schools in Each Country: High School

Let's take a closer look at the differences between the U.S. and Mexico in high school education. Select the images to learn more about education in each country.

1.19 A Closer Look at Schools in Each Country: High School in the U.S.

In the U.S., high school is typically the last four years of compulsory education-ninth through twelfth grade. High school students are required to complete a certain number of credits (earned by accumulating letter grades or marks of D or better) to graduate and receive a high school diploma. In the U.S., a high school diploma, and successful completion of high school, is often seen as a minimum requirement to move on to a successful career. With a high school diploma, students have many different options for their future. Those options range from moving into the working field, going to a community (two-year) college, or attending a four-year university for further education. The type of high school programs in the U.S. are rapidly changing and more options are becoming available for students. A traditional high school holds classes from Monday through Friday, with a general 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. schedule. But many school districts now offer programs that look different than a traditional school. They have independent study programs, early college programs, and alternative credit programs for students that need something different than a traditional setting. The most important thing about high school is completing it and earning a high school diploma. That is the

goal for all students that attend school in the U.S. Close this slide by selecting the X button.

1.20 A Closer Look at Schools in Each Country: High School in Mexico

In Mexico, required and free education ends in ninth grade. Beginning in tenth grade, families must pay for students to attend any additional schooling. There are many options for the types of schools you can attend for high school in Mexico. Preparatoria has two degree tracks: academic or technical. The academic track provides general education followed by specialized study and the technical track prepares students to begin work right after completion. Some schools are in buildings, like traditional schools. Other schools allow for independent study-which means students get the curriculum and teach themselves- while others offer classes that can be taken at different times, depending on schedule. There is also an option for Instituto Nacional para la Educación de los Adultos for people 15 years or older who have not completed elementary or secondary schools but would like to receive an education. Close this slide by selecting the X button.

1.21 Middle and High School Summary

Now let's summarize middle and high school. In the U.S., middle school goes from sixth or seventh through eighth grade. Attendance is free. In Mexico, middle school-or secundaria-goes from seventh through ninth grade. Attendance is free. In the U.S., high school goes from ninth through twelfth grade. Students can earn their diploma or GED. Good attendance and passing grades are required to earn a diploma. Attendance is free. In Mexico, high school-or preparatoria-goes from 10th through 12th grade. There are two tracks: academic (with general education and a specialization) or technical (where students are ready to work immediately after completion). Attendance is free.

1.22 Preschool and Elementary School Summary

Let's summarize preschool and elementary school. In the U.S., preschool is for three and four-year-old children. Parents can select from various preschool options, including Head Start, state-run, private, or home-based. Attendance can be free or low cost for those who qualify. In Mexico, preschool starts at age three. Once year of preschool is required before first grade. Attendance is free. In the U.S., elementary school goes from kindergarten through fifth or sixth grade. It includes special education and programs for

English-language learners. Attendance is free. In Mexico, elementary school-or primeria-goes from first through sixth grade. Attendance is free.

1.23 Slow Down and Discuss

Let's take a moment now to discuss information from this module.

1.24 Cultural Connections (2)

High school culture can be overwhelming and can make children act differently than what parents are used to at home. There are many myths and rumors about what happens in U.S. high schools. As your child continues to become accustomed to U.S. schools, the high school culture is one you will see more and more in the actions and behaviors of your child. The culture of U.S. high schools can be very different from those in Mexico, and how students choose to handle high school culture can be different from student to student and school to school. This is part of what happens when a child is exposed to new and different people in other countries. Students should plan to graduate high school and many supports are in place to be sure your child graduates. In order to graduate, they must attend school and pass their classes (no Fs). As students are getting older, they may become less willing to follow the rigid expectations of high school. It is important that you continue to support and push your child to earn a high school diploma. Once they have a diploma there are many more possibilities for them to work in the U.S. High schools have many alternative opportunities for students to get through high school. They can take career pathways which prepare them for a career right after high school, participate in regional occupation programs (ROP) to get hands-on practice of a trade skill, and they can also attend independent and alternative day schools which might be a better fit for their learning style or current situation. During this time, students will want to spread their wings and find more independence; this is typical of high school culture in the U.S. It is okay to let children become more independent but remind them of your expectations and continue to monitor their attendance and progress in school; these are the essential pieces to graduating from high school. Continue to communicate with your child as you tackle the differences between U.S. culture and the culture in your home. It will be different and challenging at times but continue talking about what is important in your family and your culture. Be willing to accept some of the differences and changes your child will be enduring as they learn the ways of high school in the U.S.

1.25 Goals for California Schools

It is the mission of the California Department of Education (CDE) to create strong, effective schools that provide a wholesome learning environment through incentives that generate a high standard of student accomplishment as measured by a valid, reliable accountability system. The CDE has set three goals to meet this mission. This means that the state of California sees these three things as a priority to maintain a high level of learning and achievement among schools in our state:

- **Standards**—Adopt and promote rigorous academic content and performance standards. This means that there are a minimum of required things that students should know by the end of each school year.
- **Achievement**—Ensure that all students are performing at grade level or higher, particularly in reading and math. This is measured by the letter grades or marks given in each class to ensure that the standards set out for each year are being met by the student.
- **Assessment**—Ensure that all students are assessed using the same nationally normed tests. These tests are given out once a year. Schools will tell parents when the test dates are to make sure that the students come to school rested and ready for the test.

Each state's goals may vary, but many will be similar to California's.

As you navigate schools in the U.S., it is important that you understand the goals of the system.

1.26 Important Things to Know About U.S. Schools

As a parent, it is important to understand how U.S. schools work so that you are able to be a partner with the school on your child's education. You also need to know what rights you have, when you may feel like your rights aren't being met, and when to speak up. It is important to speak up for your children and to teach them to speak up for themselves. Schools are used to parents and students asking questions and they welcome questions from you. As we have previously shared, your child has rights in U.S. schools. If your child lives in this country, they have a right to a free and appropriate public education. This means that your child does not need to pay for schooling, that they cannot be removed without some form of alternative schooling being provided, and that they must be taught the same standards and have the same access to learning as any other child at the school. You must know what your child's rights are and be active

in ensuring they are being met for your child. Listed on this slide are some of the most important things to know for a students in U.S. schools. If you are unsure if some of these rights or rules are being observed at your school then find out if they are. Many districts have family liaisons, or support staff, specifically for Spanish-speaking families. Again, they will not always seek you out, but you can seek them out with questions or for support. Schools are busy places and it is easy for some things to missed or forgotten. Do not assume you are getting all of the information you need and do not be intimidated by the fact you may not speak fluent English. The more you advocate for your child, and the more you understand how schools work in the U.S., the more successful your child will be.

You are a *partner* of the school.

1.27 A Closer Look: Programs Available in U.S. Schools

There are many programs available to students through the U.S. school system. A nationally funded nutrition program is available for all students who attend U.S. schools-preschool through twelfth grade. This program provides breakfast and lunch to students through the school cafeteria program. Families must qualify for this program through an application that verifies income. Based on your family's income and the number of dependents in your family, your child may qualify for FREE or REDUCED rates for the meals provided at school. The income verification form for the Free and Reduced Lunch Program must be completed EACH YEAR and students will be charged for food consumption until those forms are completed and approved. Applications are accepted at the school year-round, so if financial situations change throughout a year, you can always complete a new form and see if you are eligible. Programs for students whose primary language is anything other than English are an important part of the U.S. school system, especially in areas with high populations of immigrant families. These programs are important interventions that support your child's journey to learn English and be successful in this country. These programs do not try to change your child's primary language from your home language to English or discourage students from speaking their home language. These programs support students in some of the academic language of English that they may not be accustomed to. Programs for English-language students are well-funded in many areas with a high population of immigrant families and can be invaluable to a student's school success.

1.28 Special Education Overview

Let's watch a video about special education and the services a child would receive in a special education program.

1.29 A Closer Look: Special Education Programs

Special education programs are for parents to know about and understand. The video gave general information about special education. The IEP process can be very overwhelming and intimidating for most families. The process identifies students who are struggling significantly in the school setting. Teachers or parents can request testing for these services. A child may be eligible for various special education services after a series of cognitive and academic tests and questionnaires are completed by teachers, parents, and students. These programs are specialized to meet the specific needs of each child. Parents play a big role in this process and no decisions can be made without a parent agreeing to the services. If a child is found eligible for special education services, there are likely to be significant learning, processing, or cognitive concerns that need to be addressed for the student. The goal of special education is to best support the child to be successful in school and in life. There are many programs to help parents better understand the special education process and it is important that you make a strong effort to be involved and ask questions for your child:

Parents should do the following:

- Be involved.
- Attend meetings with the school about your child's plan or progress.
- Ask any questions at any time.

Again, reaching out to a family advocate, English-learner support staff, or a parent liaison is a good idea if you are unclear of your rights. It is okay to keep asking questions until you understand what services your child is getting.

1.30 More Cultural Connections

It can be hard to accept help when needed, but the programs we have shared are important pieces to the U.S. school system. Students who have academic, language, or economic needs have every right to the same education as those who do not. The United States school system has been developed to ensure the rights of all students. These programs and more allow all students to have the most access to a free and

appropriate education. While school systems are not perfect, they continue to try to support all students at all levels. This may be different from your experiences in school, but if you continue to work with the school and your child, the supports your child needs to succeed should be available to them.

1.31 Activity: What would you do?

Let's look at a few situations and how a parent might ask for help or advice from the school.

1.32 Eligibility for English-Language Learner Programs

As you become more familiar with the school system in the U.S., you will often hear the term English learner being used. An English learner is a child who is identified as being exposed to a language other than English for a primary part of their home life. This status is determined through the "Home Language Survey" that is a part of the school enrollment packet. All parents are expected to complete this survey and answer each question as truthfully and honestly as possible. Whether or not your child will be considered an English learner is based on your answers on this survey. Select the Home Language Survey text box to see the language survey. This survey is available in multiple languages. If your child is an English learner, they will be given a test to determine how well they speak English in an academic setting. For many students, their first test will be in kindergarten. Select the ELPAC Testing text box to watch a short video on the test.

1.33 English-Language Learner Programs

Based on the results of the English Language Proficiency Assessment for California, or ELPAC, test, students will be identified as Initial Fluent English Proficient or English Learner. This identification will determine the types of support and interventions your child will receive in school. It could be that your child can speak English well enough that they can easily communicate with peers, but they may need support when speaking English on classroom topics. Or they may speak English well enough for some topics, but new topics may require additional supports. Each year your child will be retested to see how they have grown in their English proficiency and their classroom supports and interventions should change based on their growth. Your child will move through the proficiency levels. The schools will refer to these levels as well developed (ELPAC 4), moderately developed (ELPAC 3), somewhat developed (ELPAC 2), and minimally developed (ELPAC 1), but you will know them as emerging, expanding, and bridging as

their English language improves and their proficiency levels changes. Once your child is considered to be more advanced, they will be reclassified as a Fluent English Proficient (or RFEP). A child can be reclassified once they reach ELPAC 4. This is the goal that California has for all English learners in their schools-to be reclassified as RFEP. Being reclassified as RFEP means that the school has confidence that the child has a good grasp, not only of conversational English, but also of academic English-which can be tricky because it requires knowledge of English beyond the words spoken in general conversation.

1.34 What is dual immersion?

There is another type of program offered in some school districts called dual immersion. This is a program in which students are taught two languages at the same time. The goal of these programs is to have students be bilingual by the time they leave the school. Students are expected to read, write, and speak in both languages. The structure of these programs may vary depending on the school and the age of the child. Some schools have English spoken on certain days and Spanish on others, or they teach certain subjects in Spanish only and others in English only. These programs often accept English learners with priority placement for enrollment in the school. These programs are considered specialized learning environments and do not exist in all school districts. These schools are held to the same laws, rights, and expectations already discussed. Both English- and Spanish-speaking families seek out these programs. When enrolling your child in school, you can ask if your district offers a dual immersion program if you are interested.

1.35 Bilingual Bonus (1)

Do not let your home language slip as your child gets older and more immersed in U.S. culture. Being able to speak Spanish and English fluently is seen as a huge bonus in the job world. Students who are bilingual when they reach high school can be advanced to second or third level Spanish classes right away. These higher-level Spanish classes, called Advanced Placement courses, earn credit towards college classes. When your children get older, they will have an advantage when looking for jobs as many employers look for bilingual staff. Keep speaking to them, and asking them to respond to you, in Spanish.

1.36 Activity: A Letter to School

We have shared a lot about schools and programs in the U.S. Let's reflect on the things discussed with an activity. One of the messages shared is that, as a parent, you are a partner of the school and you need to be an active part of what your child is going through in school. This may be culturally different from what you experienced in school, but now your children attend schools that want parents to be involved partners in the education of their children. In the next section we are going to address becoming part of your child's community and being an advocate for your child. This activity represents the first step in being a partner in your child's education.

1.37 Importance of Family Engagement

In this section we will be addressing the importance of involvement at school and how you as a parent can become involved.

1.38 Parent Involvement Video

In this video we see the importance of being involved. Studies show students with parents who are involved in schools are more likely to graduate and to have more overall success in their life history. As we go through this section, consider the following:

- How might this be different from what you experienced as a child in your home country?
- Do you see the value of staying connected to and be involved with your child's school?

1.39 Make it personal! (3)

Before we move on, let's reflect on your comfort level with involvement in school and the ways you would like to be involved.

1.40 Getting Comfortable at School (1)

We've used the questions in the reflection activity and the list of possible options for involvement was a way to introduce you to different levels of involvement you can have at your child's school. Select each tab to learn more.

1.41 Getting Comfortable at School (2)

Low-level involvement is the minimum level of parental involvement that the school sees as necessary for your child to be successful in school:

- Ask your child about their day.
- Sit and read with your child nightly.
- Attend parent conferences, school performances, or classroom presentations.

1.42 Getting Comfortable at School (3)

Mid-level involvement is the next level of involvement and requires parents to perform additional actions beyond those needed to meet the minimum level of involvement.

The following actions are examples of mid-level involvement:

- Attending school functions, such as evening events/activities.
 - Communicating occasionally with the teacher.
 - Volunteering to chaperone field trips or other activities.
 - Attending meetings held specifically for English learner families (ELAC, DELAC).

1.43 Getting Comfortable at School (4)

High-level involvement is the greatest level of involvement and requires parents to perform additional actions beyond those needed to meet the low and mid-levels of involvement.

The following actions are examples of high-level involvement:

- Joining school committees (PTA, School Site Council, etc.).
- Schools are required to have opportunities for parents to share concerns and ideas about programs at school.
- Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) committees and school site councils are a great place to ask for programs for your children.
- Volunteering weekly in the office or classroom.
- Communicating weekly with the teacher.

1.44 Cultural Connection

U.S. schools may have different cultural expectations than schools in Mexico. While it may feel uncomfortable to be in your child's school, it is essential for you to be there. One of the best ways to get involved in schools is to participate in the Local Control and Accessibility Plan (LCAP) committee. This committee is designed to take parents' concerns and ideas into consideration when planning programs and services for children. As a parent, you are committed to your child and you want them to do well in all they do in school and life. At the same time, parents have many things to do to take care of their families that take up their time. In the U.S., schools expect parents to be involved and active in their child's learning. Many teachers and staff are still learning about the different cultures of the children who attend their school. Some teachers or staff may not understand why a parent does not get involved. We know that family-and especially our children-are incredibly important to us. But how you show your commitment to your children will possibly need to be different in U.S. schools. The next few slides give some simple examples of expectations for parents in U.S. schools and how you can support your children through school.

1.45 Engaging Families Video

This video is part of the California Department of Education's Preschool Program Guidelines and it illustrates how important families are in the lives of their children. The video gives examples of how schools engage families and how family engagement strategies are included in the program policies and guidelines.

You may notice examples about preserving home language and how important it is for teachers to get to know the families they serve to best help the children.

1.46 Expectations at School

Schools have procedures in place and expectations for parents and students in regard to these procedures. The following are examples of these procedures and expectations:

- Parents will attend conferences and meetings.
- Parents will call the school when their child is sick.
- Students will be on time each day.
- Students will complete their homework.
- Parents will communicate their concerns to the school.

An important expectation is the reporting of concerns to the school.

Each school should have bilingual staff that can talk to you and translate concerns to the correct person. A language barrier should never keep you from feeling like an important part of the school. Interpretation should be available at all events and you should expect it to be available. Schools often set up these types of services for Spanish-speaking families without the families even knowing that they have done so. Schools do this so all families can attend and be heard. Childcare is also often available at events so that parents with younger children can still attend.

1.47 Expectations at Home

The expectations that schools have for parents and students do not end at school. The following are examples of the expectations schools have for parents and students at home:

- Students will attend preschool prior to entering elementary school.
- There are many free or low-cost options for preschool available to families.
- Studies show children who participate in a preschool program do better in elementary school than those who do not.
- Parents will review papers that have been sent home and return things they have been asked to sign.
 - This means that your child must remember to share these papers with you or that you must remember to ask your child if there is anything you need to know or sign.
- Students should read nightly.
 - When children are very young, parents and children can read together.
 - Even going through a book and talking about pictures with preschoolers and kindergartners who cannot yet read is very helpful.
 - When children start learning to read, they can read to you.
- Parents should follow up on how a child's day went by asking them to talk about the day.
- If there are any problems or concerns, they should be reported to the school.
- Children should get a good sleep each night.

- The more sleep a child gets, the more they are able to learn and participate at school.

As mentioned before, some of these expectations may be very different from what you are used to doing with your child. If your child is older, they may resist your involvement because it will require them to be more accountable.

It is important to remember that by asking questions at school, by knowing what your child is doing, and by communicating your concerns, you are supporting your child to succeed in school and in life.

1.48 Bilingual Bonus (2)

Often times, school groups-such as the PTA-are looking for bilingual volunteers to support their non-English-speaking families. Here are some examples of groups that parents can join:

- The Parent Advisory Council (PAC) brings groups of migrant families together to gain information and inform regional offices of their needs.
- The Regional Parent Advisory Council (RPAC) is a parent advisory group that serves a region of the state in the same capacity as the parent advisory council.
- The Parent Teacher Association/Organization (PTA/PTO) helps fundraise and pay for various programs for the school that the school does not have the funds for. They raise money for a range of things including field trips, assemblies, music programs, school supplies, and so much more.
- The English Learning Advisory Committee (ELAC) advises schools on how to best support English learning students in the school environment.
- The District English Learning Advisory Committee (DELAC) advises the district on how to best support English learners in schools.
- The Local Control Accountability Plan Advisory Committee (LCAP) Advisory Committee advises the district on how to spend money that has been given to the district by the state. Much of this money is specifically marked to go towards English learners, low income families, and foster youth. These families must be represented on the advisory committee.
- The School Site Council is a group of school employees and parents who help guide the school in decision making, use of funds, and future plans. This group is always looking for families that can represent the English learner population.

Bilingual volunteers are such an asset to these groups! Even if you are not bilingual or completely comfortable speaking English in these settings, schools will often provide translation services for you so you can join and attend.

1.49 Activity: A Letter to School—Revisited

Let's look again at the letter you wrote to your child's teacher and why this activity was important.

1.50 Sharing Strategies

The last section of this module focuses on strategies. During this module, you have learned about school systems and the programs that they offer. You have also talked about how you might want to be involved in your child's education and the importance of parent involvement. Over the next few slides we will review the strategies on the tip sheet.

1.51 A Closer Look: Questions to Ask at the Start of the School Year

Trying to figure out what kind of questions to ask the teacher or principal can be intimidating at times. These are ideas for some questions you can ask at the start of the school year:

- How do we contact you?
- How much homework will there be?
- When will papers be sent home?
- Is my child at grade level?
- Is my child getting extra help?
- Are there after school programs they can attend?

These are just some of the questions you might ask. You might also have questions about riding the bus, the lunch and breakfast program, or after school homework help.

1.52 A Closer Look: Questions to Ask After Report Cards Come Home

You might have more questions after report cards and progress reports come home. This is a great time to talk to teachers about your child. Here are some questions you can ask:

- Is my child following classroom rules?
- What are my child's strengths?
- What areas do they need the most help with?
- Is there help at school for them?
- Can I come to the classroom and observe my child?
- Is there anything I can do at home?

The best way to get many of your questions answered is to attend school events and functions such as Back to School Night, parent conferences, school presentations, and Open House Night. Email is usually the easiest way to communicate with a teacher, but you can also leave a phone message or write a personal note.

1.53 Why be involved?

Think back to the video on parent involvement we watched earlier in the module.

There are numerous reasons to be involved with your child and their schooling.

Whether you are largely involved or involved on a smaller level, your child will benefit from your efforts. Parent involvement leads to the following positive outcomes:

- Improved child achievement
- Reduced absenteeism
- Improved student attitudes and behaviors
- Increased parent confidence

Being involved helps you to become a great advocate for your child.

1.54 Activity: Questions to Ask

You have heard some strategies on how to get involved in your child's school.

Now let's look a little closer at what you might want to know more about at school and the questions you could ask teachers and staff.

1.55 Make a plan. (1)

Many new ideas were shared in this module. You may be excited and ready to try some of the strategies you have learned. As parents, you are very busy and sometimes working and taking care of the family feels like it takes up most of your day. To support

you in trying these new strategies, there is a resource called Action Planning. Download this resource and answer the questions about what you are going to try with your children before the next meeting. Keep this resource with you so you can make notes as you try new things at home. We hope that you share your experiences with the group next time. You may find that others have had the same types of experiences.

1.56 Congratulations and thank you!

This concludes Module 4. Thank you for taking the time to complete this module!