



4 E's: Re-Imagining Family Support and Engagement

These tips were adapted from Iruka's (2013) article "The Black Family: Re-Imagining Family Support and Engagement" by Dr. Carol Wade (2022), which advocates for a paradigm shift from deficit-based to culturally-relevant family support and engagement. They provide a framework for cultural competency and humility when it comes to supporting black families.

"It is critical for programs seeking to be more effective in supporting and engaging Black families to change their frame towards cultural relevance and consider the **4E's – Exploration, Expectation, Education and Empowerment.**" (Iruka, 2013, p. 21)

Funds of Knowledge: These can include home language, family values and traditions, caregiving, educational activities, scientific knowledge, and more.

Cultural Wealth: "the array of cultural knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed by socially marginalized groups that often go unrecognized and unacknowledged" (Yosso, 2006)



Exploration:

- Pay attention to Black families' *Funds of Knowledge (FoK)*: culturally-based practices and resources (Wolf, 1966)
- Acknowledge the **cultural wealth** of Black young people and their families
- Ask young people and their families about their experiences with racism
- Ask about parenting practices and parenting values
- Remember that young people and their families are experts on their lives
- Be willing to listen and do not make assumptions



Expectations:

- Recognize barriers to engagement, e.g., time, stress, lack of information, social circumstances, etc.
- Build on families' FoKs and engage families in ways that are responsive to their needs
- Ask for feedback to better understand their goals and preferred methods of engagement
- Treat young people and their families like valued partners and contributors
- "Create a culture in which parents are expected to be intentionally and proactively engaged" (Iruka, 2013, p. 22)



Education:

- Recognize the impact of a history of disenfranchisement that has barred Black families from participating in high-quality educational systems
- Educate parents on how to navigate complex institutions and systems in order to ensure that they are able to advocate for their children
- Engage in partnerships with community and local agencies to share information, support advocacy, and promote access to resources and networks
- Ensure that Black young people and their families are connected to services and resources, but also to each other, to build social capital and networks



Empowerment:

- Empower families to be self-sufficient and equipped to deal with the challenges of parenting and life obstacles
- Provide families with the tools to achieve their goals, rather than "doing it" for the family
- Build on families' assets and capacities
- Educate families on issues around advocacy and networking
- Hold high expectations about their role as parents

REFERENCES

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