

Definitions

Family and Community Engagement

This document includes the WIDA definition of family and community engagement and other related terms. We recognize that definitions are contextual and fluid. We offer these as a starting point for you to build your understanding around the terms we use in our resources.

Communities refers to the broader environment and social circles that influence how children and youth live, grow, view the world, and experience their daily lives. Communities often consist of organizations, businesses, places of worship, and other locations where people gather formally or informally (for example, libraries, parks, and plazas).

Educators are teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, counselors, family-school liaisons, and many others who contribute to the learning and development of children and youth.

Families include caregivers, parents, siblings, extended family members, close family friends, guardians, sponsors, and other adults who contribute in significant ways to children and youth's development and education (adapted from Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Family and community engagement refers to the many and unique ways that families of multilingual learners, their communities, and educators partner to create a sense of belonging, share power, and collaborate to build responsive practices. It emphasizes the dynamic language and cultural practices of multilingual learners and their families and communities. It positions multilingual families as experts and ensures that their perspectives and experiences help shape educational structures and systems. It involves building strong connections between schools and communities and providing resources and support systems that encourage multilingual children and youth to develop, learn, and thrive.

Multilingual learners (MLs) are students developing two or more languages. The term multilingual learner arises from an assets-based approach in which we recognize the strengths and abilities of a student. This term emphasizes what a student knows rather than what they don't know.

Resource: Henderson, A. T., & Mapp, K. L. (2002). A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family, and community connections on student achievement. Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.