Final Student and Family Engagement Plan

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I want to begin by saying that I am very proud of the situations that I created while giving the first step to start more meaningful and result-oriented conversations. During my Madison Public Charter School (Pseudonym) residency, I was assigned to different grades as a Multilingual (ML) Apprentice Teacher to provide some background. My time was divided between PreK push-in and pull-out interventions, first-grade Pull outs with my mentor teacher and 1:1 interventions in 3rd and 5th grade. Also, the pull-out classrooms are shared, so I have to move between different spaces. Through time the student groups tended to change depending on the student's achievement, and my schedule changed during the first three months of the scholar year. Because of that reason, this engagement plan is divided into five different parts. I will start with the school and the staff information and then discuss the data grade by grade because I used different approaches due to their diverse dynamics. Finally, I added my reflection on this engagement plan and the process.

School

Madison PCS dedicate the first two weeks to Orientation and Personal Development workshops. I observe a high sense of community among staff and teachers; the way they interact with each other and the dynamics they plan to get to know each other created an environment of trust and confidence among teachers and administrators. Also, Madison PCS is partnering with *EL Education* which requires the implementation of CREW. This structure was taught and practiced during the first two weeks to guide teachers on how to do it in their classrooms.

The school is working to build a positive environment through different tools. For example, the "Madison message" that the staff received at the beginning of the week includes

relevant information for that week, photos that teachers take in the classrooms, and staff shoutouts for relationships, perseverance, and accountability. We have a "Team Huddle" twice per week for 5 min to have a moment of full staff sharing and to get some information that can be useful. These moments of direct interaction can promote a sense of community. The administration can probably share this information by email, but being together and taking 1 min to shout out feels like a dynamic way to connect. However, during the orientation and following weeks, I did not come across the Behavioral System that the school manages. That makes me doubt how well organized and structured the system is and how rules and expectations can be assets throughout the whole school. For this part of the plan, where I wanted to learn more about the school community, I reached some staff members to clarify some questions related to the norms in the school, and I felt supported in that matter. Still, I was unsure how to answer all the questions because I could give answers based on my observations made me assume that not everyone is entirely sure how it works. I thought the most appropriate thing to do, was inquire about the school norms.

A strength point that can relate to the socio-emotional approach is the "Crew System" that started this year in Madison PCS. The structure of Crew allows to build relationships (among students and between students and staff members) and enhance leadership and strategic planning. Its focus is on socio-emotional skills and builds upon each other. "CREW" is an essential support for the community because the whole school does, every child gets it, and also because it happens every day. (EL Education,2021)

A space that I value is the parent center; initially, I thought it was in charge of the first contact connection with the families, but the department coordinator explained to me that families could reach her for different reasons. They can contact the center for personal things such as documentation, job opportunities in the community or the neighborhood, and services that they do not know how to access. Even when this is not directly connected with the students,

building communication and trust with the families seems a great strategy to communicate with them and be aware of their situation. In my eyes, it demonstrates that Madison PCS acknowledges that some families need more support because they probably have different economic concerns to deal with. (Milner, Cunningham, Delale-O'Connor & Kestenberg, 2019, p.37). Get in touch with the coordinator to support my engagement plan because I was able to ask for background information for my planning. The coordinator contacted me if the parents I was interested in meeting were in her office.

Additionally, I knew that Madison PCS based its interactions and procedures on its Core Values (Curiosity, Respect, Resilience, and Leadership). We talk about the practices and structures that move us towards making everyone feel safe and valued during orientation. But I can not recall talking about the Culture Playbook, which includes that the cultural vision of Madison PCS is a Positive School-wide Culture and how through respect and empathy, we build community and relationships. Also include the setting, teaching, and upholding of high behavioral expectations that teachers and students should know, but I am not entirely sure they do. I believe the disconnection between what is happening in the school and the expectations that the Culture Playbook has, is that the principal in the school is new. The Culture Playbook is structured based on what they currently do and what they want to implement. Maybe I do not know the rules and behavior procedures because I am not a lead teacher in the school. The entire staff should be aware of the students' expectations, practices, and support we can offer. At the end of the first trimester, I had not received the incentives that the playbook described.

Staff

Since the beginning, something that I did not take into account was staff communication. I have tried hard to connect with the teachers I am related to, but I was not sure how specific

procedures worked until I needed them for my job. For example, how and when or why do referrals. I have been open with lead teachers when I have concerns about speech or developmental delays in kids; however, I did not receive any information about how to proceed. One of my best resources is not being afraid to ask and try to connect these strings that I do not find related. I decided to have a conversation with the Referral To Intervention (RTI) Coordinator about some students already referred or teachers have concerns about. In that discussion, I learned that the Coordinator preferred to receive referrals from the Multilingual (ML) teachers when related to ML students. By now, I can not work on the entire understanding of different areas in the school, but I can try to improve the ones where I am involved with open conversations with both sides, teachers, and RTI.

Also, I needed to fill out report cards for some ML students that will not receive the regular grades. Due to that, I have to contact some teachers to ask for their social studies and math feedback. Teachers take time from their schedules to talk about it; however, this process felt rushed and improvised because the ML teachers were informed late about the report cards.

It has been notorious that there is a disconnection between what the school is attempting and explaining specific procedures. Learning to put in extra effort and being attentive to the staff I am involved in is what I can do. A long-term goal is to ask for a communication plan to share with the ML team that allows better communication among the teachers involved.

Pre K

At the beginning of the year, I started doing push-in in PreK to complete screening, the lead teacher introduced me, and I spent some time with them and participated in the activities. I focused on the multilingual students, but I tried to talk with all of them. I also used the time during 1:1 in the IPT screening to introduce myself, ask them about themselves and assess their English knowledge with a coloring activity. When we finished the screening, I gave them a sticker that they could put in their hand or their shirt, and sometimes I put on a sticker in my

hand. That gave me a chance to engage with them, and writing about it seems so small, but at that moment for them is so important that even I saw them smiling with their eyes, and I told them, "thank you for being so patient." It is a nice feeling when we come across in the halls, and they say hi or try to fistbump because it is something that I do with them. Another interaction that I have with them is during dismissal. One of the Covid procedures included that parents are not allowed to walk into the building, so the parents are outside communicating with the aid teachers. They use a walkie-talkie to inform the lead teacher in the classroom with the students, while other teachers and staff pick them up and go with the students outside to meet the parents. I can talk with them while we walk and also sometimes I can talk with the parents outside even for a short time.

After the ML students were identified, a letter was sent to their parents to inform them that their kids would receive ML services, and they also shared a letter (*Pic.1*) with my information where I shared my email and phone where they could reach me, and I hoped it was a first step for them to know me. Over 30 virtual letters were emailed, and just one parent replied asking for more information about ML services. Because of the low effectiveness of the letters, my biggest question was what information I should add that would help other parents connect with me.

An essential approach in PreK was to create a good relationship with the lead teachers in case I needed to communicate with them or the parents ahead in the process. It concerns me with the limits of my position and when and where I should talk with them.

PIC. 1

This letter has Spanish and Amharic versions.

Hello

MULTILINGUAL LEARNER APPRENTICE TEACHER

ABOUT ME

I am Ms. Andrea and I was born in Colombia. I recived my Bachelor's in Graphic Design and Advertising. I also completed a training program as a Bilingual Teaching Assistant. This summer I began a Master's program in Transformational Education at Georgetown University. Now I am very excited to start my journey at Meridian as an Apprentice Teacher and support you in your learning process!

FAVORITE THINGS

I love drawing
Watching movies.
Going on walks.
Coffee shops
I loveeee food,
soups, tacos, sushi,
cakes or pasta!

Email

alarotta@meridian-dc.org

Trought time, I kept working on my relationship with the teachers. I step into the classroom open to support activities in centers and show my support in dismissal and transitions when the students go to the bathroom or recess. I believe that with time I became more confident and secure about my approaches to the students and the teachers. Also, I did not remember the names of all the teachers, so I worked hard on that because I know memorizing names is one of my weaknesses. I worked in that, and now I can tell that I have a good relationship with Lead teachers in Pre K and most apprentice teachers. That relationship helped me approach them with inquiries to build a more detailed profile of some kids I did not know about. As a result, teachers also contact me when they need something related to one of the ML students. As an example, the teachers performed the Brigance screening and asked me if I could do it again with the kids that speak in Spanish. After doing it, we cleared some information about the kid's language development, which added to the data about my students.

I worked hard to build relationships with teachers because of different reasons. Teachers know that I am an apprentice teacher, and it is the first time that they have an ML teacher working with them directly and consistently. I consider it is essential to have a good relationship with the teachers if I want to have some freedom when I need to pull out the kids. At the same time, they do not feel that I am stepping over they work with the kids. Also, if I have a good relationship with the lead teachers, the communication-related with students and their needs will be fluent, and if they want to know something, they will also approach me easily.

The dismissal was a critical moment for me to work in a family relationship. After feeling more comfortable and confident talking with the lead teachers, dismissal evolved into the moment I inquired about parents who had not been contacted. Also, I dedicate some time to helping the lead teacher if they need some extra information, which has developed a connection with some parents. For example, I talked with one mom who did not schedule Parent-Teacher night, and she answered that she was receiving the information in English, a language that she is not proficient in. Since that first approach, I guided her regarding how to download the app

(Remind) correctly and set them to receive the messages in Spanish. I also scheduled a call to talk with her, gather some information regarding home dynamics, and ask for any behavior that the student displays at home. I noticed a change of attitude from the lead teacher because, previously, her comments made me feel that she was upset about the apparently "indifference" of the parents. After that meeting with the mom at dismissal, I affirmed my responsibility to talk with their parents, and I approached them at that time.

Overall I have observed caring from every teacher in PreK. They are warm with the students and have clear directions and expectations. Each classroom has its routines and teachers' strategies; they are dynamic creative, and effective, and I have learned from them by replicating strategies in my spaces with them.

K- 1st Grade (Language cafe and Literacy Lab)

This is one of the spaces that has been harder to build for several reasons. This space was not part of my primary responsibilities at the beginning of the year, so I joined late. Also, I see this group with my mentor, and we have focused on academic skills over relationships. I do not have the same ownership of this space as others. On top of that, this group of students will sometimes change or add new students.

At the beginning of the year, I did not have defined routines with this group of students; my mentor teacher also tested those weeks using the Wida model. Together we have a Language cafe with K and 1st grade twice a week, Monday and Thursday with Kindergarten, and Tuesday and Friday with first grade. Each group is of 5 kids, and it has a duration of 30 minutes. We planned to start with the rules and the explanation of the activity. This space is dedicated to sharing and helping them talk and practice their speaking. We have to plan six weeks of activities (twice per week). I hope to implement dynamics that make the students comfortable engaging with the activities and effective time management.

I support 1st Grade for literacy lab, pulling out a small group of 5 students. This intervention is with my mentor teacher, and it's the space where I have fewer relationships with families. They did not receive the newsletter with my information, and I asked my mentor teacher about her relationship with them, and it does not exist either. I suggested that we send a note with the kids to let the parents know what we are doing in our interventions or find a way to engage them in the learning process. Also, we have a short time with them, but their relationship is effective, clear, and joyful.

I would definitely try to avoid threatening my students to call their parents if they do not listen. I heard that once during an observation in 1st grade, and it seems it is a common thing that happens in the school or is the only tool that teachers have to use to deal with the students' behavior instead of trying another way to deal with the issue at that moment. My reaction to that day was to ask for permission to talk with the student. I waited for the right moment to engage with the student. I started a conversation by asking him about the bottle with glitter that he was holding (The teacher has a calm down space in the classroom) after talking and letting him know that I was there to talk if he needed me. Finally, he agreed to come back to the main activity in the classroom. So my approach was quite simple; I do not know if effective because yes, he did come back to the activity, but it took some time, and I understand that I could do that because I could take my time and reach a closer step. In the pull-out space, if I notice that a student is not participating repeatedly, I try to have a 1:1 discussion about why it is happening and let the student know the importance of our activities and how they will be beneficial. This instance reminds me of when Milner affirms that "discipline and punishment are not synonymous" and how we should reject practices that will exclude the students, such as making them sit down apart or in individual spaces when they are punished (Milner, 2020). Providing a calm-down space is a first step to giving the student time to think about what happened but always approach the student to have a conversation afterward.

My next steps for 1st grade will come after winter break when the new groups are set. I will try to send a group of words every two weeks to practice with the parents at home, and we can look to connect with them through that activity.
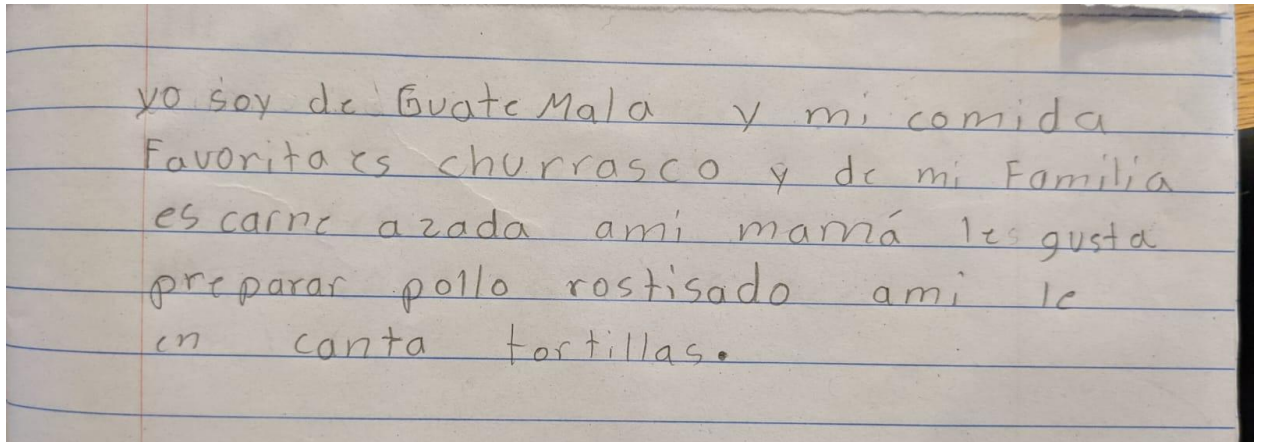
1:1 Interventions

In classes 1:1, I tried to engage with them in different ways. When I ask how they feel in their classes or throughout the day, that feels more real. I also asked them if they knew why we worked together and let them know that I was there for them. That helps us as an ice breaker, and I feel that they feel more and more comfortable with me. I decided to make this initial conversation because I had to pick them up or move to another classroom together. It is time that I do not want to lose. Our time is short, and honestly, both of them have been failing school regularly. I try to set a relaxed mood where they do not feel tied up. Both of them are really shy so sometimes I have to push them a little bit more without forcing them to share. One of the activities that I liked because we practiced speaking, reading, and writing was introducing ourselves, which also helped me learn about their lives outside of school. (Cassetta, 2019) For example. Elvin, the fifth-grader, told me things that he likes to do, and that helps me have a conversational topic ahead and pick interesting topics for him in future classes (*Smith Fisher & Frey, 2015*). I tried to be more dynamic with Ashley and play games to gain her trust with Ashley. Also, I created activities that help me know more about where they are, their strengths, their improved skills, and how I can help them do it. I understand that 1:1 time is just a pair of eyes just for them and that sometimes silence is normal but also, I let them know that the time that we have is limited, and both of us have to make it valuable.

I am content with the relationship that I am building with my 1:1 students. For example, Ashley (Third grade) is less giggly and stops telling me that she wants to go home, and now she tells me more about things that she does or her friends at school when we are in transition of

our pull-out space. And I could not be happier about my relationship with Elvin (fifth) at the beginning, he was quieter and did not greet me in the hallways. The significant change was when I picked him up for intervention and noticed something was upsetting him. I tried to ask him if something was wrong, and he didn't want to share. So I continued with their intervention and tried to play with him until he seemed more relaxed. At the end of the intervention, I asked him again what was happening, and he told me that he had lost a folder with his assignments during recess. I asked him how he felt about it, but he replied by shrugging his shoulders. I gave him options between sad, mad, and worried, and he chose the last one. I told him that I would help him find it or recover the papers that were inside, and we could talk with the teacher the next day, but his compromise was to look for me in the classroom in the morning. He did, and together, we explained the situation to the teacher and solved the problem. After that, I noticed that he comes to me more often and is willing to ask questions; before, I was the one who asked all the time. I have noticed in both students that the better my relationship with them better the outcome of our interventions and is more effective.

In the middle of the first semester, a new student from Guatemala joined my fifth 1:1 intervention with Elvin. Before her arrival, I talked with her parents because she has a brother in PreK with whom I also worked. I engaged with her partners and asked about her background and language at home. That gave me many tools to work within the first two weeks after her arrival. During the interventions, Elvin changed his behavior to be more competitive, but also I asked for his help. That way, he can have a responsibility in the classroom to support her.

My approach with her was similar to the one I had with Elvin and also effective. I just tried to add the questions that allowed me to know more about her and what she likes in our greetings every intervention.

yo soy de Guatemala y mi comida
favorita es churrasco y de mi familia
es carne azada ami mamá les gusta
preparar pollo rostisado ami le
en canta tortillas.

Reaching the parents in dismissal for this group of students was not possible so I implemented a notebook for each student that we called "El Cuaderno Viajero", and I sent it with the presentation letter printed. I sent notes to their families in Spanish because I have asked my students if their parents speak in English with them, and they told me that that is not the case. These notes are short, include information about me and are usually questions about the family or the culture, such as what food they like more or what celebration they have. I used this culturally responsive approach to promoting a space that recognized their background (Rizzuto, 2017). Also, during those responses, they can practice their writing, and I can learn more about their culture and integrate it into the lesson plan.

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Hola familia!

Yo soy Ms Andrea, y estoy trabajando en intervenciones con Micaela para apoyarla e proceso de aprendizaje en la escuela.
Este ejercicio del cuaderno viajero es una forma de mantener comunicación con uste también de aprender e incluir aspectos culturales en nuestras lecciones.

Yo soy colombiana y mi comida favorita son las arepas! Las preparo al desayuno y le queso o huevo batido. A mi Pa' le encanta preparar caldo de costilla en las mañanas domingo y a mi mami le encantan los tamales.

Me gustaria saber cual es la comida favorita en su hogar y compartir acerca de algur especial que les guste preparar o ordenar.

Si tienen alguna pregunta sobre mi proceso con Micaela pueden escribirme o llamar contactos que aparecen en la carta de presentación que estoy enviando.

Saludos familia!

yo soy de GuateMala y mi comida
Favorita es churrasco y de mi Familia
es carne azada ami mamá les gusta
preparar pollo rostisado ami le
en canta tortillas.

I would like to say that my engagement plan with families has better results, but this is not the case. Nevertheless, I have assured a successful relationship with my students, which has given me an overview of their lives, and the flexibility to ask about their absents or activities at home. For example, Elvin's father rarely replies or just signs the letter information and has never contacted the lead teacher. In my case, because of my conversations with Elvin, I know that his dad's schedule is extremely packed; they see each other maybe once or twice per

week. This connection makes me aware of how difficult it is for the father to connect with the school, but I have created a safe environment for Elvin. He can ask for my help if he needs things he has done in this academic year. I have been open and direct with him, expressing that I am there and that I care and can tell because of his approaches that he knows that and appreciates it.

Overall Reflection

I acknowledge that I do not spend a lot of time with each student because I have a lot of space to cover, but when I am with the students, I am fully involved, and I invite them to learn, building trust and mutual respect. I procure having open communication with them, being positive, and asking questions about their behavior or a concrete situation, considering the different ages that I am working with. On some occasions, I have seen teachers positively bring the discussion in the halls, talking about respect and making compromises and amendments for those who have been harmed. (*Smith Fisher & Frey, 2015*) I have practiced that approach and observed my students' positive reactions when discussing different situations, and I observe their engagement and openness to establish compromises.

This engagement plan is a work in progress. I have high expectations about myself as a teacher to keep building my relationship with the students, always keeping a positive vision about them, and providing them with socio-emotional tools that help them grow.

Resources

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