

Family Voice *Matters.*

Conducting culturally and linguistically responsive
interviews in school evaluations.

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Every student has the potential to soar.

Today we work in *five segments*.

Segment 01

Introduction

The high-stakes outcomes of family interview, the deficit vs. cultural difference frame, and the core paradigm shift.

Segment 02

Module 1

Gathering developmental and family history with cultural humility.

Segment 03

Module 2

Mapping language, migration, and cultural context into evaluation data.

Segment 04

Module 3

Collaboration, interpreter equity, and the Sofía case study.

Segment 05

Conclusion and Q&A

Missing context directly compromises every outcome an evaluation produces.

Four high-stakes outcomes sit on the line of every interview we gather.

Stake 01

Data quality

The story the team hears is only as clear as the story the family is able to share with us.

Stake 02

Skewed eligibility decisions

Every score shifts meaning when the cultural and linguistic backdrop behind it goes unspoken.

Stake 03

Broken family trust

A single missed connection shapes how the family shows up to every meeting that follows.

Stake 04

Systemic disproportionality

The highest stakes play out where language, race, and disability collide in identification.

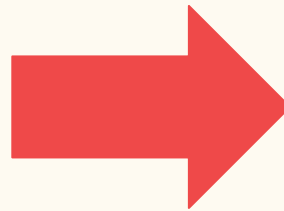
Where does our eye land when something *isn't working* in an evaluation?

Where teams can land

Fix the child.

Fix the family.

When something doesn't add up in the interview, the deficit eye lands on the child or the family first. The evaluator and the system rarely enter the question.



Where the framework lands

Examine the adult.

Examine the environment.

Move the eye to the evaluator's interview practices, the spaces we create, and the system that surrounds the family.

The question becomes "What conditions are supporting or constraining this child's learning?"

The interview shifts when we start listening with the family.

Families are essential experts.

01 · Their child's daily narrative

No standardized measure captures the full essence of a child's day the way a caregiver does.

02 · Context no one else can reach

What school means in the home.
What counts as rest, as faith, as food.
The small everyday things that shape a child.

03 · Goals ready to be named

Hopes, fears, and what a family wants to become possible once the picture comes into focus.

*Treated as an expert, a family **teaches the team** what the team could not learn on its own.*

Objective 01 of 03

Use culturally responsive interview practices to gather more meaningful family and developmental history.

A family interview is a clinical instrument. How we approach the interview shapes the findings.

1. Pre-interview setup

Five moves worth practicing every time.

2. Beyond the milestone checklist

Gathering history with cultural humility.

3. Honoring the parent experience

Compassionate partnership in place of pathologizing.

What you do before the first question sets the ceiling on what follows.

01 Match the family's language first.

Establish rapport in the language the family speaks before any substantive question.

02 Prepare a comfortable space.

Private, calm, no surprises. Explain what the conversation is, and what it is not.

03 Open with parent priorities.

Start with what they want you to know about their child, not with a symptom list.

04 Brief the interpreter.

Align on your role, the purpose, and the right of the parent to clarify with you directly.

05 Allow silences.

Bilingual interviews rarely run on schedule. Build in margin.

These five moves establish baseline rapport before the questions that follow carry any weight at all.

Four history lanes worth covering *beyond the checklist.*

Lane 01

Lead with parent observations.

Ask first what the family has already noticed. Their observations carry context your tools will not access alone.

Lane 02

Home routines and rhythms.

A typical afternoon. How mornings really run. The rituals around food, faith, and rest that shape who a child is becoming.

Lane 03

Family educational history.

What school has meant across countries, systems, and separations. Each layer adds or subtracts from today's profile.

Lane 04

The narrative beyond milestones.

Story of who the child has been, not the milestone list of who they are. Trust shifts before any test sits on the table.

Parents often arrive carrying something *we did not name in our referral.*

What parents may carry into the room

Non-linear grief.

Worry that has cycled, returned, and re-settled. The same fears they have been carrying since the referral letter or earlier still arrive on Tuesday morning.

Chronic sorrow.

A quieter, ongoing weight many parents carry while parenting a child with learning or language differences. Sustained, not acute.

A move worth practicing

Pause when grief arrives. Don't pathologize it. Hold it long enough for the parent to finish what they came here to say.

A shift in stance

***From pathologizing
to compassionate partnership.***

We hold space for what arrives instead of treating parent emotion as a variable to note in the margins. The clinical record requires their voice. Their well-being requires being with them.

Objective 02 of 03

Strengthen the quality of evaluation data by incorporating language and cultural context into information gathering.

Language exposure and cultural context are not appendix items. They are inputs that change which scores mean what.

1. Domain mapping

Where each language lives.

2. Migration stories

Transitions and interruptions.

3. Asset-based framing

Code-switching and dialect.

4. Compliance alignment

IDEA grounding.

Domain *tells you more* about a child than total exposure hours ever will.

Track where each language lives, not just how much of it there is.

Domain 01

Parents

The first language at home. Naming, comfort, correction, prayer.

Ask: what language do you use when you do not have to choose?

Domain 02

Grandparents

Storytelling, school pickup, weekly calls. The heritage register lives here.

Ask: who visits, who calls, who sends the recording?

Domain 03

Store & errands

Independent navigating. The language of shopping, asking, waiting.

Ask: where does the child speak for the family?

Domain 04

Peers

Friendships, recess language, in-group slang. The social register.

Ask: which friend speaks which language?

Replace the exposure-hour tally with a domain map. Each box can shift findings.

Every move *leaves a trace* in the child's profile.

Document the transitions. Interruptions and separations carry information who we are seeing today.

01	Schooling interruptions.	<i>Gaps in enrollment, repeat grades, lost years. Each one shapes what the team sees at the evaluation table. Each one explains something current findings cannot.</i>
02	Mid-year moves.	<i>Often invisible to the receiving school. A child "started fourth grade here" can mean four different things, including three that never shows up in records.</i>
03	Migration-related trauma.	<i>Separations from caregivers, supervised border journeys, family members left behind. The interview is not a place to narrate these. It is a place to ask, gently, and pause.</i>

Two language features worth *defending in writing*.

Reframing two features that often land as deficits and almost never belong in a write-up as gaps.

Reframe 01

Code-switching

As deficit	<i>Documented as inconsistent language use or as a sign of limited proficiency.</i>
As asset	A cognitive and linguistic strength. Bidirectional switching is one of the most reliable markers of strong executive function.

Reframe 02

Dialect

As error	<i>Logged as evidence of language delay or dialect as contamination of test validity.</i>
As marker	A regional and family marker. Identifying the dialect is part of evaluating the child, not the symptom.

Both belong in the write-up of the evaluation as gaps.

These practices *already align* with the standards we are bound to.

A non-discriminatory, non-monolingual frame is both clinical practice and a compliance position.

Standard 01

APA Guideline 12

Multilingual individuals are assessed in a language and manner consistent with their background and the purpose of the assessment.

The interview is where that alignment is built.

Standard 02

IDEA §300.304

Materials and procedures selected and administered so as not to be discriminatory on a racial or cultural basis.

Family interview practice prevents the frame that produces the violation.

The alignment

***A culturally and linguistically responsive interview is not extra work.
It is both the ethical baseline and the documented compliance position.***

Objective 03 of 03

Improve collaboration with families through interview approaches that foster clarity, trust, and mutual understanding.

Two-way clarity is the family interview's actual deliverable. The findings that come out of it are downstream of that collaboration.

1. High-yield prompts

Four question types.

2. Working with interpreters

Trained collaborators, not ad hoc.

3. Data triangulation

Narrative, scores, observation.

4. Sofia case study

An interactive practice.

Four *high-yield* question types worth leaning into.

Question type	Prompt worth trying
01 Open invitations.	<i>"Tell me what a typical afternoon looks like with your child."</i>
02 Domain mapping.	<i>"Who does your child talk with in each language they know?"</i>
03 Strength-first.	<i>"What has gotten easier for your child in the last year?"</i>
04 Story prompts.	<i>"Tell me the story of when your child first started school here."</i>

If the family can teach you something, you asked the right question.

The interpreter is *a core clinical collaborator*, not an external service.

Integrate them the way you would integrate a colleague. Brief them on purpose, on language, on the right of the parent to clarify directly with you.

Avoid

Ad hoc translation.

Family member.

Bilingual aide.

The neighbor.

The school secretary.

The student sibling on a phone call.

None of these belongs in a family interview.

Integrate

Trained interpreters.

Briefed on your role.

Aware of the purpose.

Allowed to slow you down when the parent pauses or a nuance matters.

Plan for parent-led clarification. Always.

Three sources *must converge* before the picture is honest.

Family narrative anchors the frame. Standardized data tests assumptions. Informal classroom observation shows what the child does live.

Source 01

Family narrative

Cultural and linguistic context, history, rituals, what they want you to know.

Anchors the frame.

Source 02

Standardized data

Formal tests and measures. Decision-tree data. The kind data points can stand on.

Tests assumptions.

Source 03

Classroom observation

What the child does live, in real place and with real peers. The informal record.

Shows what the child does.

Meet *Sofía*.

Sofía, seven years old, arrived in the district mid-year. Spanish at home, came from Oaxaca, Mexico. Building English at school.

Her grandmother visits weekly and speaks Mixteco. The team is exploring whether emerging language differences are masking or compounding learning concerns. The family interview is the next step.

Try this now

Map her language domains. Plan grandmother as a domain. Open with the family's priorities. Brief the interpreter on parent-led clarification.

What to consider this interview

01

Match Spanish first. Brief the interpreter on parent-led clarification.

02

Map Spanish by domain, including the grandmother's weekly visits.

03

Anchor in what Sofía already does at home, not what she cannot do yet.

04

Plan for pauses and translation lag.

Open with: *"What would you like me to understand about Sofía before we start?"*

Pick one practice.

Bring it into Monday's interview.

Notice what shifts.

Every student has the potential to soar.

Three Monday-morning practices, choose one.

01 Ten minutes of margin.

Add ten unbooked minutes to one interview this week. See what changes.

02 Domain mapping.

Add two domain questions to every intake until they become reflex.

03 Pre-brief the interpreter.

Before every interview: brief on role, purpose, and parent-led clarification.

Reach out

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Thank you.