



Culturally Sustaining Partnerships with Families Around the Globe

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Culturally responsive teaching, culturally sustaining pedagogy, and culturally relevant pedagogy are approaches that intersect and can be leveraged to support student achievement, as well as effective school-home partnerships (Gay, 2010; Ladson Billings, 2014; Paris, 2012). Robust partnerships between families and schools support the development and implementation of culturally reciprocity (Kalyanpur & Harry, 2012). One of the panelists, Dr. Osborne, summed up the purpose of this virtual event well when she said, "it is important that the two pillars of society, the home and the schools, have a mutual relationship and a mutual bond in which we can make a difference for the children because it is not about us."

Panelist Biographies

Culturally Sustaining Partnerships with Families Around the Global featured four panelists representing four different countries. **Stephanie Hamilton** (Dubai) is the mother of a child with Down Syndrome and a parent advocate. Ms. Hamilton has dedicated herself to seeking inclusive educational opportunities for her daughter while building a network of stakeholders to support one another and seek change in the education systems in Dubai. **Indumathi Rao**, Ph.D. (India) is a Regional Adviser for the Community Based Rehabilitation Network at Bangalore University. Dr. Rao advocates for the inclusion of people with diverse needs across South Asia. **Keitha A.M. Osborne**, Ph.D. (Jamaica) is a Senior Lecturer at Mico University College. Dr. Osborne educates future teachers; she teaches courses in special education. **Iva Boneva**, Ph.D. (Bulgaria) is the Chief Executive Officer of the Association for Shared Learning ELA. Dr. Boneva's work focuses on supporting children in accessing quality educational opportunities.

Summary

The session began with highlighting the necessity to use asset-based approaches to education by intentionally integrating culturally responsive and sustaining practices (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Paris, 2012). As noted by Dr. Jez, our job as educators is to learn about our learners and families so we can design curriculum and instruction that meets the needs of our communities. This panel engaged in a lively discussion focused on the benefit of robust home-school relationships with an emphasis on the value of networking and advocacy. Each panelist brought to life their own perspectives and experiences throughout the discussion

The panelists addressed the innovative ways in which family engagement has been supported within their contexts. Dr. Rao shared that mutual support groups were established in India. These groups provided a venue for parent-to-parent support and assisted parents in developing advocacy skills. Ms. Hamilton also addressed the ways in which parent-to-parent interactions play an integral role in



supporting educational access; she specifically highlighted the valuable role of social media in connecting stakeholders. Further, those connections served as a mechanism for collective advocacy for change. Dr. Boneva highlighted the need for schools to develop trust with community stakeholders through community engagement (e.g. visiting sewing circles).

When asked about their vision for the future, Dr. Boneva, Ms. Hamilton, and Dr. Osborne all shared their goal for inclusive educational opportunities to be widely available. Additionally, the panelist all pointed to the need for meaningful collaboration between schools and the community to meet this goal. Dr. Rao highlighted the need to build equal partnerships in parents, which also seek to reduce parental stress. Dr. Osborne pointed to the need to accommodate parents in order to support their engagement. Additionally, Ms. Hamilton would like to see an assets-based approach in which students' strengths are acknowledged.

Culturally Sustaining Partnerships with Families Around the Global concluded with dialogue, questions, and comments from the attendees; many of these questions and comments echoed the sentiments shared by the panelists. The practices shared by the groups included suggestions for supporting families by creating more welcoming policies (eg. hair, uniform, attendance), adjusting schedules to meet families' needs, and sharing information about their rights. A call was made for schools to be more flexible with the inclusive courses and pathway they designed for their learners and highlight the unique gifts each partner (learners, families, teachers, administration, community members) offers. The groups mentioned the power of building relationships with partners by hosting events at the school site. This can also be done by creating opportunities for partners to collaborate at different levels and within different spaces. One group mentioned the necessity to identify accountability measures for all partners when making systemic changes. They encouraged schools to hire more diverse teachers, recruit family liaisons, and/or organize a task force to provide voice for all partners to “lean in” to conversations about culturally responsive and inclusive practices. Finally, the group encouraged using innovate tools, such as social media and free messaging services, to share, listen, communicate, and problem solve with families. These recommendations can be an effective way to increase the number of voices at the table in schools, universities, and communities.

Recording

A recording of *Culturally Sustaining Partnerships with Families Around the Global* can be accessed on the DISES YouTube page or [here](#).

Panel Resource List

Iva Boneva, PhD

- <https://www.weraonline.org/page/WERAPublications>
- <https://www.ed.ac.uk/education/rke/making-a-difference>
- <https://www.inpsyed.net/>
- <https://wcedportal.co.za/>
- https://ec.europa.eu/info/education/teaching-methods-and-materials/available-educational-materials_en

Indumathi Rao, PhD

- [National education Policy –India 2020](#)



- [Right to Education in India -2009](#)
- [Rights Persons with Disabilities ACT 2016](#)
- [UN convention of the rights of persons with disabilities 2006](#)
- <https://askjan.org>
- Rao, I. (2002). [Country status on inclusive education/special needs documentation good practices, UNICEF, Regional Office.](#)
- Inclusion in classrooms ,Vol 1 & 2 (2018) CBR NETWORK, Bangalore.
- AA handbook (2021), CBR NETWORK
- [Udisha-Portage, \(ICDS\), Dept. of Women and Child Development, Karnataka CBR Portage to every village \(updated 2018\) CBR NETWORK, Bangalore](#)
- A Road map for the implementation of Rights of persons with disabilities ACT in India-(2018) South Kacker, Indumathi Rao et al.

Keitha A. M Osborne, PhD

- The Mico University College Child Assessment and Research in Education (CARE) Centre is a leading assessment centre in Jamaica. See the link to the centre which has links to various resources to help parents, teachers and others.
<https://themicocarecentre.org/node/86>
- McCam Child Development Centre
<https://www.mccamcentre.org/ParentingInformation/Article?Number=5&HeadLine=AddressingProblemBehaviorEffectively>
- The Ministry of Education, Youth and Information <https://moey.gov.jm/>
- Ministry of Labour and Social Security: Jamaica Council For Persons with Disabilities
<https://www.mlss.gov.jm/departments/jamaica-council-for-persons-with-disabilities/>
- A newsletter from the Ministry of Education : Special Education Unit
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1pSji7SP7agszstvkaYjHhANfkvMPdH1a/view?usp=sharing>

Stephanie Hamilton

- <https://peopleofdeterminationsservices.com/directives-and-guidelines-for-inclusive-education/>
- <https://www.down-syndrome.org/en-gb/research/>
- <https://www.autismawareness.com.au/resources-01/research/>
- <https://www.upsidedowns.co.nz/home>
- <https://www.dsrf.org/information/autism/>

References

- Gay, G. (2010). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice*. Teachers College Press.
- Kalyanpur, M., & Harry, B. (2012). *Cultural reciprocity in special education; Building family-professional relationships*. Brookes Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07317107.2012.732902>
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2014). Culturally relevant pedagogy 2.0: aka the remix. *Harvard Educational Review*, 84(1), 74-84. <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.84.1.p2rj131485484751>
- Osborne, K., Hamilton, S., Boneva, I., Rao, I., Jez, R. J., & Kealy, M. (2021). *Culturally Sustaining Partnerships with Families Around the World*. Division of International Special Education and Services Virtual Event. . <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3atHR2pWYSo>
- Paris, D. (2012). Culturally sustaining pedagogy: A needed change in stance, terminology, and practice. *Educational Researcher*, 41(3), 93-97.
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.3102/0013189X12441244>