



Teaching Cases on Family Engagement

Teaching cases are a valuable tool in preparing teachers and school administrators to engage effectively with families. Because the case method presents a story in practice, it offers students an active learning opportunity. Teaching cases involve real world situations and consider the perspectives of various stakeholders, including teachers, school leaders, parents, students, and other community members. Through case-based discussion, students enhance their critical thinking and problem-solving skills and consider multiple perspectives. HFRP’s research-based case studies reflect critical dilemmas in family-school-community relations, especially among low-income and culturally diverse families. As such, the case method is a useful strategy for helping educators learn to communicate and build relationships with families whose backgrounds may differ from their own.

To request instructor notes, please email fine@gse.harvard.edu.

Instructor notes available?

Title & Author	Student Gender	Grade	Race/ethnicity	Topic	
Bridging Worlds: Family Engagement in the Transition to Kindergarten Margaret Caspe (2013)	F	Kindergarten	African American	A child’s troubles in adjusting to kindergarten raise questions about the coordination of transition activities among preschools, schools, and families.	Yes
After School for Cindy: Family, School, and Community Roles in Out-of-School Time Teaching Case Ellen Mayer (2005)	F	2 nd	Not specified	Cindy’s teacher believes an afterschool program would help her, but her single working mother prefers to keep Cindy with her in the afternoons.	Yes
Daddy Says This New Math Is Crazy Becky Smith McCarthy (2004)	F	4 th	Not specified	A math teacher grapples with student and parent responses to a new curriculum.	No
Can We Talk About Family? Peggy Vaughan (2003)	M	1 st	African American	When a student shares information about his family in school, a teacher worries about whether this sharing will strain her relationship with the child’s grandmother.	Yes
Making a Decision About College: Should I Stay or Should I Go? Lad Dell (2003)	F	12 th	El Salvadoran	A high school senior is accepted to a good college to prepare for medical studies, but must decide between pursuing her dreams and fulfilling her family obligations at home.	No
Culture Clash at Intermediate School #91 Mary Katherine Moss (2002)	F	7-8 th	African American /Puerto Rican	New teachers must deal with disciplinary problems when their students’ race and class backgrounds differ from their own.	No
A Special Education Plan for Anabela: Does Supporting Her Needs Mean Holding Her Back? Peggy Vaughan (2002)	F	2 nd	Mexican	A classroom teacher must make a retention recommendation for Anabela, a special education student, knowing her family has opposed retention in the past.	Yes
Bilingual Voices and Parent Classroom Choices Margaret Caspe (2002)	F	1 st	Mexican	Parents and teachers must reconcile their differences about bilingual education.	Yes

Defining "Fine"— Communicating Academic Progress to Parents Holly Kreider , Margaret Caspe (2002)	M	1 st	Not specified	A teacher and principal consider how to better communicate academic progress with parents.	Yes
Setting Standards at Porter Road School Sylvia Sensiper , Margaret Caspe (2002)	Not specified	4 th	Not specified	A teacher must weigh the conflicting perspectives of parents, students, community members, and her teaching colleagues on mandated state educational tests.	No
School Won't Let Mom Talk About Her Casino Job Claire McCown (2001)	F	7 th	Not specified	A principal will not allow a single mother who works at a casino to speak during Career Week. How can this school reorganize to serve and respect all families?	No
Reaching out to the Only One out There Elizabeth Berges (2001)	M	11 th	Not specified	A teacher grapples with how to support a student struggling with his sexual orientation when the student's mother reacts negatively.	Yes
What's Going on With Tomasito? Ellen Mayer (2001)	M	2 nd	Mexican	Tomasito's embarrassment at having his parents drop by the school limits the development of a strong and communicative parent-teacher relationship.	Yes
Friction at Madison Family Literacy Program Maricel Santos (2001)	F	Pre-K	Not specified	A teacher arranges free speech therapy for young Junie, but becomes frustrated when Junie's mother does not fully participate.	No
What Words Don't Say Ann Barger Hannum (2001)	M	1 st	African American	Martin struggles with peer problems at his elementary school. How can his mother and teacher dialogue about sensitive issues related to race and class?	Yes
Resolving Issues at Johnson Elementary School Sylvia Sensiper (2000)	Not specified	Elem	Not specified	Parents decide to boycott a program because they think the parent coordinator used her school connections to place her son in a gifted science class.	Yes
Suspension at Aurora Middle School Sylvia Sensiper (1999)	M	Middle	Viet- namese	When a student is unfairly suspended, his mother feels helpless because she speaks limited English.	No
Tim Kelly: A School Responds to a Family in Need Holly Kreider (1999)1	M	2 nd	Not specified	Tim comes to school hungry, dirty, emotionally needy, and academically unprepared. His teacher believes his lack of care at home is contributing to his poor school performance.	Yes
Erik Greer Kris Balle (1999)	M	1 st	Not specified	Erik's teacher and mother struggle to build a partnership to address Erik's behavior problems in school.	No

For more teaching cases:

Heather B. Weiss, Holly Kreider, M. Elena Lopez, Celina Chatman-Nelson (2013) *Preparing Educators to Engage Families: Case Studies Using an Ecological Systems Framework*, Third Edition. SAGE Publications, Inc.

Heather B. Weiss, Holly Kreider, M. Elena Lopez, Celina Chatman-Nelson (2010) *Preparing Educators to Engage Families: Case Studies Using an Ecological Systems Framework*, Second Edition. SAGE Publications, Inc.

Heather B. Weiss, Holly Kreider, M. Elena Lopez, Celina Chatman (2005) *Preparing Educators to Engage Families: From Theory to Practice*, First Edition. SAGE Publications, Inc.