

# Expanding School Supports for Kinship Caregivers and Grandfamilies: Gaining Perspective to Inform Action

## *Community of Practice*

December 13, 2023

# Welcome and Community Building

# Introductions: Meet today's facilitators



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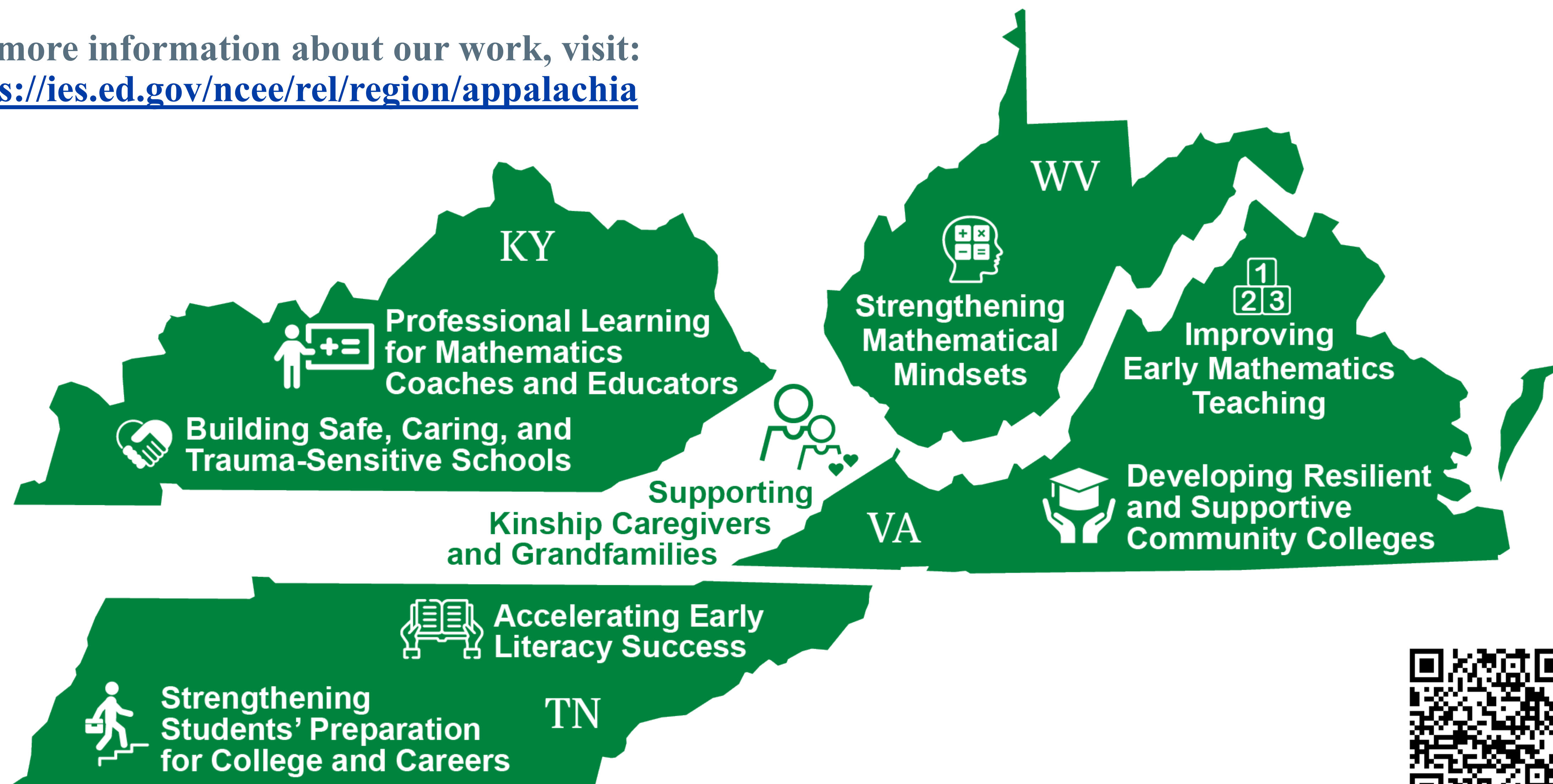
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# Community building

In small groups, provide the following:

- Your name,
- Your organization,
- Your role, and
- Share a time that you received a gift that really wasn't a fit for you.



# Today's objectives

- Learn from other members' experiences, ideas, and resources about how to better support kinship caregivers and grandfamilies.
- Better understand how to learn about the lived experience and perspectives of kinship caregivers and grandfamilies and incorporate what we learn into efforts to support students.
- Expand knowledge of strategies for how to better address the needs of kinship caregivers and grandfamilies.





# Agenda

- Welcome and community building
- Review and share-out
- Gaining perspective: Listening to kinship caregivers and grandfamilies
- Using perspective to inform action
- Wrap-up and next steps



# Group agreements



## **Processes:**

- Attend and be attentive during as many meetings as possible.
- Always keep the student and desired outcomes at the core of CoP activities.
- Share ideas, resources, and practices related to supporting students and families.

## **Behaviors:**

- Embrace family structure differences as assets that you can leverage to support student learning.
- Be friendly, respectful, and open to learning new things.
- Accommodate human differences, needs, and imperfections, including your own.

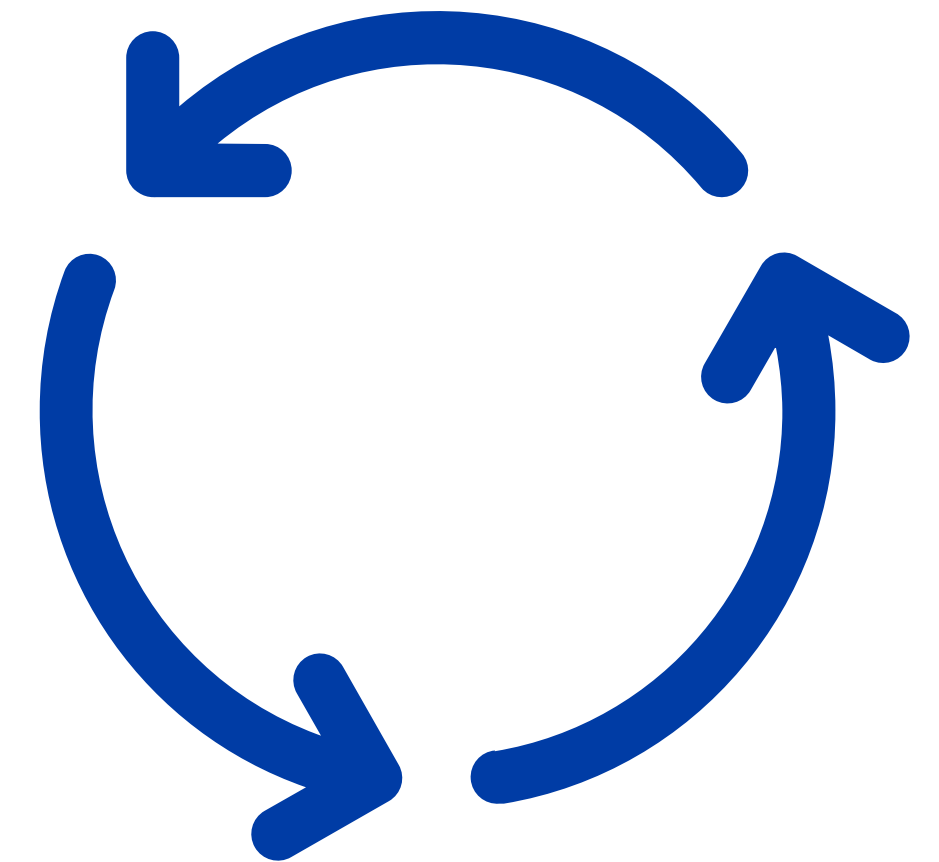


# Review and Share-Out

# Review of September meeting

Creating family engagement opportunities for kinship caregivers and grandfamilies:

- Step 1: Learn about unique needs
- Step 2: Recognize the difference between family involvement and family engagement
- Step 3: Build trusting relationships
- Step 4: Develop and implement a plan
- Step 5: Reflect regularly and adapt plan as needed



# Sharing out

Have you made any adjustments to planned activities to make them more engaging?

Milestone	Family Involvement Strategies	Family Engagement Strategies
Back to school		
First semester (or grading period)		
Family-educator conferences		
Holiday break		
Second semester (or grading period)		
End-of-school-year milestones		
Summer break		

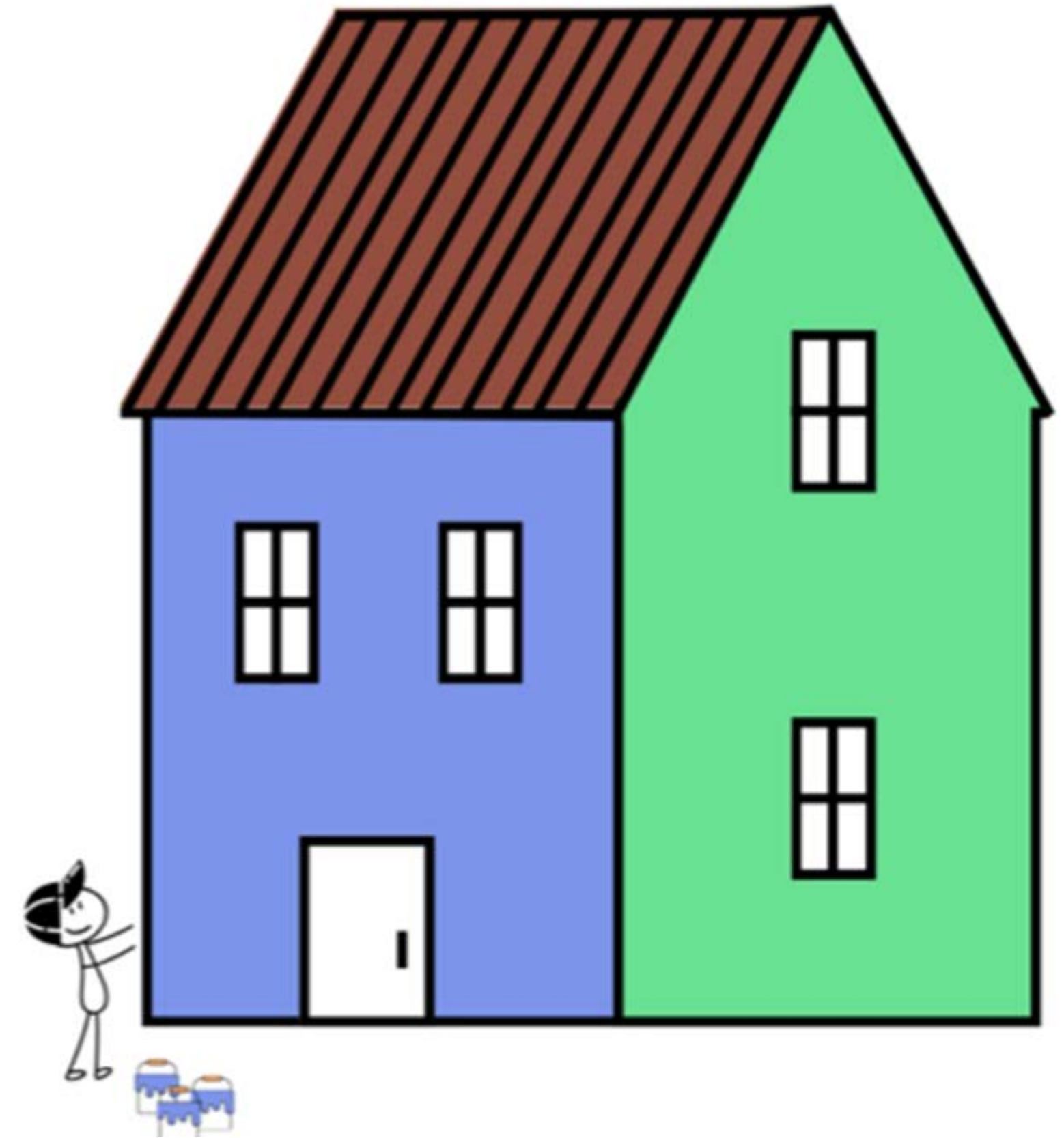


# Gaining Perspective: Listening to Kinship Caregivers and Grandfamilies

# The importance of understanding perspective

Understanding other perspectives can help educators:

- Clarify needs that should be addressed
- Identify underlying issues
- Prioritize areas for improvement



*(Corbett & Redding, 2017; Cuiccio & Husby-Slater, 2018; Farrell, 2020; Shakman et al., 2020; WHO, 2023)*



# Fireside chat with Sue Barton, grandmother and Community of Practice member





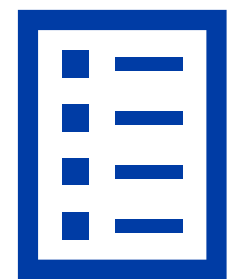
# Fireside chat: Reflection

- Content: What did you learn from listening to the conversation?
- Method: What did you notice about how the conversation was conducted?





# Pulling back the curtain: Empathy interviews



1. Plan



2. Listen



3. Take action



*(Nelsestuen & Smith, 2020)*





# Plan: Determine purpose and create a list of questions

- What do you want to know and what will you do with what you learn?
- Your list of questions should:
  - Begin with an explanation of why the questions are important and how the information will be used.
  - Use inclusive language and avoid jargon.
  - Design questions that ask for stories, not solutions or a list of issues.
  - Use an asset-based mindset, acknowledging skills and expertise the interviewee likely possesses.
  - Avoid assumptions.

*(Nelsestuen & Smith, 2020).*



# Sample interview plan



**Interview purpose:** Broaden our perspective about kinship caregivers' and grandfamilies' lived experiences to better understand how schools can support their children.

- Please help us understand a bit more about you or your child(ren).
  - How many children are you caring for?
  - What are their ages?
  - How long have they been with you?
  - How do they feel about school?
- What have schools done that worked for you?
  - What types of communications have worked?
  - What did they do to make you feel involved and engaged?
  - How have they helped you to help the child or children you are caring for?
  - What information was helpful?
- If there were no limits, what would you wish schools would do?
  - How could schools better help you to support the child or children you are caring for?

# Listen with empathy



- Pay attention to how the interviewee is feeling and responding.
- Be careful not to imply that a question has a right or wrong answer.
- Be aware of implicit biases and be sure to treat the interviewee with respect and an open mind.

*(Stanford HCI Group, 2018)*



# Listening to more voices

- A grandmother from rural Virginia,
- An aunt from suburban Virginia, and
- Another grandmother from rural Virginia.





# Share out



What did you learn from grandfamilies and kinship caregivers about what schools are doing well and what schools could do better?

What stands out to you about these perspectives?



# Moving toward action

How can we DO better in light of what we heard?

“Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.”

--Maya Angelou

# Using Perspective to Inform Action

# Take action



Use what you learned from listening to decide:

- What should I stop doing?
- What should I start doing?
- What should I continue doing?



*(Zukav, 2014)*



# Take action activity: Stop, start, continue



# Wrap-Up and Next Steps

# Community of Practice resource collection

Kinship Caregivers and Grandfamilies Community of Practice		
Resource Collection		
Directions: As you find resources to support kinship caregivers and grandfamilies within schools, please add them to this table.		
Resource title	Brief description	Link
Generations United. <i>Grandfamilies.</i>	Generations United coordinates a number of signature projects to strengthen intergenerational connections and improve the lives of children, youth and older adults in our communities.	<a href="https://www.gu.org/explore-our-topics/grandfamilies/">https://www.gu.org/explore-our-topics/grandfamilies/</a>
Are grandparents raising grandchildren receiving the services they need? <i>Journal of Childhood, Education &amp; Society</i> , 2, 167–177.	Grandparents play an important role in the upbringing of grandchildren and face increased levels of stress. Using family stress theory, the present study examined the effectiveness of service programs for grandparents raising grandchildren.	<a href="https://jces.com/index.php/jces/article/view/88">https://jces.com/index.php/jces/article/view/88</a>
<i>Why inclusive language matters.</i> American Psychological Association	Important tips to consider as you build your inclusive communication skills.	<a href="https://www.apa.org/ed/precollege/psn/2022/09/inclusivelanguage#:~:text=It%20can%20enhance%20our%20empathy,further%20exclusion%20of%20marginalized%20people.">https://www.apa.org/ed/precollege/psn/2022/09/inclusivelanguage#:~:text=It%20can%20enhance%20our%20empathy,further%20exclusion%20of%20marginalized%20people.</a>
2022 National Strategy to Support Family Caregivers.	The Strategy includes nearly 500 actions that can be adopted at every level of government and across the public and private sectors to ensure that	<a href="https://acl.gov/sites/default/files/RAISE_SGRG/NatlStrategyToSupportFamilyCaregivers.pdf">https://acl.gov/sites/default/files/RAISE_SGRG/NatlStrategyToSupportFamilyCaregivers.pdf</a> .



# Next steps

- Consider conducting empathy interviews to learn more about kinship caregivers' and grandfamilies' perspectives. Use what you learn to plan improvements to your efforts to meet their children's needs.
- Add any resource links to the resource collection that the group might find helpful:
  - Journal or news articles
  - Examples of well-written communications
  - Descriptions of effective supports
- Look for an email from us!

# Looking ahead

- Spring meeting topic: Navigating legal issues
  - Does this meet your needs?
    - Yes
    - No, and suggest another topic in the Chat



# Help wanted!

If you have examples of success with the chosen topic, please consider sharing your experience at our next session.





Questions?

Comments?





“Sometimes a change of perspective  
is all it takes to see the light.”  
— Dan Brown

*(Brown, 2009)*





# Thank you!



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## Website



## Newsletter



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