يا سلام
Ya Salaam

Connecting Arab Immigrant Mothers and public school teachers through a community building initiative

SHAZA JENDI

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A PROJECT IN LIEU OF THESIS PRESENTED TO THE COLLEGE OF THE ARTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF FINE ARTS, 2021.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express the deepest appreciation to my committee co-chairs, Professor Maria Rogal and Dr.Dori Griffin for their constant guidance and encouragement, without which this work would not have been possible. Your knowledge, and feedback was always inspiring and helping me throughout my thesis project. Thank you very much for being very understanding, flexible, and patient. It was a great privilege and honor to work and study under your guidance.

I would like to thank my committee member Dr.Tina Smith for your support, feedback, knowledge and time. I am extremely grateful for you assistance and suggestions throughout my project.

I am extremely grateful to my parents for their love, prayer, caring and sacrifices for educating and preparing me for my future. I love you both very much.

Also I express my thanks to my loving siblings Zeina, Abdul Razak, and Abdul Rahman, who supported me and kept me to strive towards my goal. You are the ultimate role models.

Ruwaida, Salama, Hala and Farah I am forever thankful for your support, love, and valuable prayers.

Most importantly, I wish to thank my loving and supportive husband, Mahmoud, and our son Omar for their love, understanding and continuing support to complete the project.

I also wish to thank the graphic design faculty at the University of Florida for their inspiration, and my fellow graduate students for their helpful feedback over the years.

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Abstract

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Ya Salaam, situated at the intersection of design, education, and Arab migration, explores how to foster opportunities for Arab immigrant mothers (AIMs) to more fully participate in their children's public school education.

My qualitative and quantitative research indicates that AIMs are often othered and less engaged than they hope to be (or other parents are) due to a range of factors. Whether these are cultural misunderstandings, language barriers, stereotyping, or other barriers, the result reflects negatively on their child's learning experiences and their own ability to support their children's education. I

n order to address this problem, I listened to schoolteachers and Arab immigrant mothers as they spoke about their experiences and aspirations. Being an Arab immigrant mother myself, my research is further reinforced by my position within the community. Given this, I was eager to look closely into methods and solutions to bring mothers and teachers together.

The result of my research is the Ya Salaam initiative, a range of activities and interactions co-designed with Arab immigrant mothers and teachers to build community and understanding for long-term benefit. Ya Salaam creates a sense of familiarity between public school teachers and Arab immigrant mothers, opening the door to many opportunities for parents to more fully engage in their children's education.

Project background

Parental engagement and communication

Referring to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention(CDC.gov, 2018), the definition of "Parent Engagement in Schools" is defined as " parents and school staff working together to support and improve the earning, development. and health of children and adolescents." Moreover, parental engagement reflects the engagement and communication efforts done by parents to be effective members in their children's educational journey. Parental engagement also refers to the level of interaction between teachers and parents.

Parental Engagement in the Arab world is extremely important and is a basic attribute in the Arab culture (Bazzi-Gates, 2015). This required teachers and parents be in contact frequently. Teachers communicate with parents knowing that their children's education is their priority (El-Badry, n.d.). Based on their financial,social, and educational abilities Arabs try their best to provide for their children the best resources to support their education, since they believe that good education grantees a bright future and a professional career (Shaheen, 2001).

One kind of communication in schools, is that between teachers and parents to stay in contact and share information. This communication is a two-way communication that can be described as interactive, equal, collaborative, and most importantly feedback orientated. Teachers and parents, both listen to each other equally and have the chance to learn from each other directly. Based on the background, culture, and educational level, every stakeholder in the child's education view parental engagement differently (Goodall & Montgomery,2014). Some parents believe that the classroom should be only directed and managed by the teacher, and to them teachers know best. Parents who have this opinion, think that reaching out to the teacher or providing suggestions means that they are invading his/her space. On the other hand, some parents who come from certain cultures where parental involvement is know as them being in contact for every single detail with the teacher and feel free to provide their opinion on any matter related to their children's school.

My experience with parental engagement

Living in the United Arab Emirates allowed me to understand what multiculturalism and co-existing means at a very young age. I lived in a community where I was surrounded by more than 80 families, around 200 individuals who come from different cultures, faiths and backgrounds. My mom used to exchange food from our Syrian culture with our neighbors, who used to also share their Yemeni, Australian, Korean, Ukrainian, Armenian, Lebanese, Palestinian, and many other international cuisines. I learned a lot from noticing what food each culture eats, what ingredients they used, what they read, what music do they listen to, and what life priorities they had always discussed. I learned a lot about other cultures and ways of living from discussions around these topics.

Furthermore, I recall visiting my neighbors and seeing their culture through their greeting, furniture, and even the way we used to communicate with each other. Mutual respect between cultures was always present, and in every aspect of life. I used to enter the elevator greeted by my Egyptian neighbors, go to school and sit next to my Jordanian friend, take the physics given by a Spanish teacher, the chemistry class by a French teacher, and the English class by an American teacher. Over 50% of my day was filled with learning and interacting with people from different cultures.

My school life was a major factor that gave me the chance to sit surrounded by my classmates from different countries, and build relation-ships on daily basis. School teachers as well were mainly American, British, and European (figure 1). The teachers had knowledge about the Arabic culture and were very understanding of all parents. I recall how teachers were always in contact with my parents, informing them of every detail and making sure that I had the needed support at home. This made my parents very comfortable and allowed them to provide needed support.

Figure 1

This picture is of me in Kindergarten with my classmates in my school in the United Arab Emirates.

The school my siblings and I were enrolled in is an American system private school that was aware of the multicultural presence in every classroom and worked on embracing that in every event and occasion.

One of the events that used to happen on yearly basis was the “International day” that allowed parents from different cultures to team up and reflect each other’s culture through the language, food, textiles, furniture and everything that related to reflecting a certain country. This required meeting and communicating between both families.

My parent were always excited about the international day and made sure to participate. We really enjoyed talking to parents and families who come from different cultures and backgrounds and my parents made sure to stay in contact with them even after the event. One of the most memorable events is when I joined the event was when my parents and I were paired with an Irish family where they both worked on creating the clothes (figure 2), and cooking their traditional food.

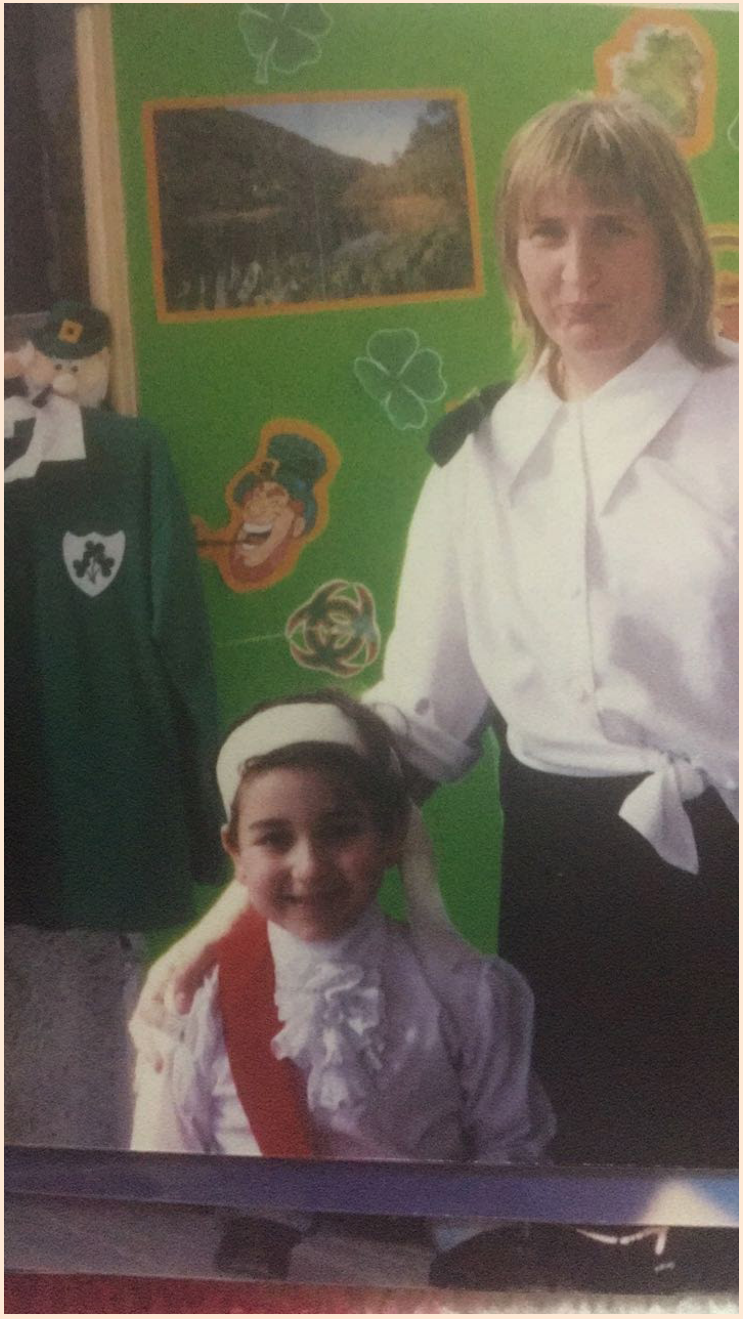


Figure 2

This is a picture of me in the”International day” with my class teacher who is British

From UAE to USA

After getting married in 2017, I moved to the United States to be next to my husband. It was a very big transition in my life. Feeling alone and different by the way I dress, the way I talk and think always made me feel excluded from the society. To be involved in the society, as well as to purse my dream in having a graduate degree in graphic design I applied to the MFA program at the University of Florida. During the program I was introduced to community building projects that allowed me to look into ways to implement design strategies and concept to serve community needs.

In 2019, I became a mom to a wonderful boy. Being a mom made me think of how can my son's future and educational life be affected by having Arab immigrant parents, and living in a diverse culture.

Figure 3
My family portrait

Arab mothers interest in parental engagement

In 2017, I volunteered at the Islamic center in Gainesville (figure 4). There, I had the chance to talk and be in contact with Arab mothers during drop off and pick up. From there our relationship grew and I had the chance to attend weekly gatherings and listen to their stories. I noticed that Arab mothers kept saying “Here is not like there.” This was said on every topic discussed. Food, culture, grocery shopping, schools, neighbors, social life, social norms and much more topics were always referred to as “Here is not like there.”

Figure 4

Photos with my students at the Islamic center in Gainesville, Florida

Arab mothers concerns for parental engagement

Being able to relate to most of their experiences, I was eager to understand what is the difference between American schools, and schools back in the Arabic countries.

Mothers mentioned their inability to be involved the way they want to in their children's education due to several barriers .These barriers include: cultural, social, and financial. Cultural includes being unable to understand the American school system, not knowing what to expect or what to do as well being unable to understand what is the best way to reach out to teachers. Social barriers include being unable to understand the language, having academic and family commitments that hinder their ability to join events, volunteer, and provide at home support. The financial barriers, include being unable to provide private tutors, or translators.

However, mothers highlighted their interest in being engaged in their children's education in every way possible, and being unhappy of how their relation with teachers and the school currently is. This made me concerned not only as a designer, but also as a mom whose child will enroll in school a few years from now. How will I be able to support him just like my parents did to me? Will his teacher's understand my expectations and listen to me? Will I be one of those moms suffering with my child's school not knowing what to do?

I decided to look closely to the matter and see how can I combine my design and research skills as well as being a mom to better enhance the experience of Arab immigrant mothers in American schools.

Problem statement

This project explores ways to foster interactions Arab immigrant mothers and public school teachers interact and communicate in an effective way to support their children's education.

According to my own interviews with people, I was able to define a list of barriers that hinder their communication with teachers. The barriers include social, economical, and cultural differences.

Communication issues

I decided to focus on three areas which are: Education, Equity, and Arab immigrant mothers. Based on my interviews I was able to notice that communication is the area where they all overlap and is causing issues between mothers and teachers (figure 5).

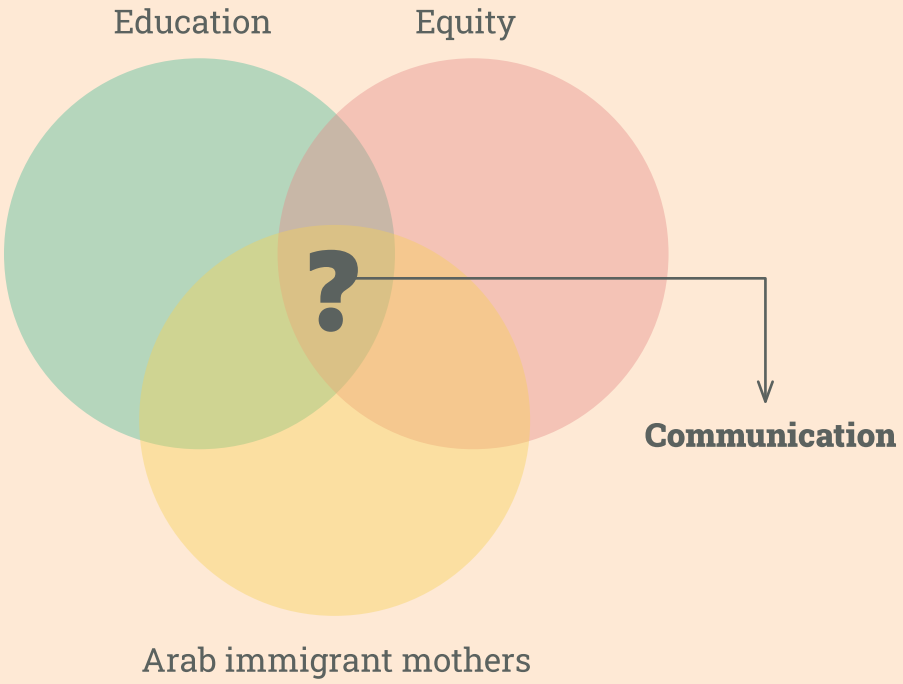


Figure 5
Areas of interest

Research question

How can design help create a safe space for Arab mothers and public school teachers to have conversations and build bridges to support their children's education?

With that in mind my main goal was to find way to create a sense of familiarity between teachers and Arab immigrant mothers. By " sense of familiarity" I mean allowing mothers feel comfortable and close to teachers. **It is my aim to provide Arab immigrant mothers with the important tools and resources for them to reach out and connect with teachers and the school system.** The question allowed me to explore and consider resources within the community that can be implemented and used by Arab mothers.

Target audience

In this project I organized my stakeholders into three layers (figure 6). My core stakeholders are Arab immigrant mothers living in the United States.

My direct stakeholders are public school teachers in the united states who teach k-12. The initiative acts as an opportunity for them to learn about Arab immigrant mother, their culture and listen to their concerns to look into ways to provide needed support and help.

My indirect stakeholders are the students of Arab immigrant mothers, the educational system and other parents. Students whose parents are Arabs, their educational success will be effected greatly by this initiative. Other parents will also that the initiative affected their relationship with Arab mothers as well as on the educational system as whole.

Throughout the project, I kept in my my target audience and focused on ways to address their needs and concerns.

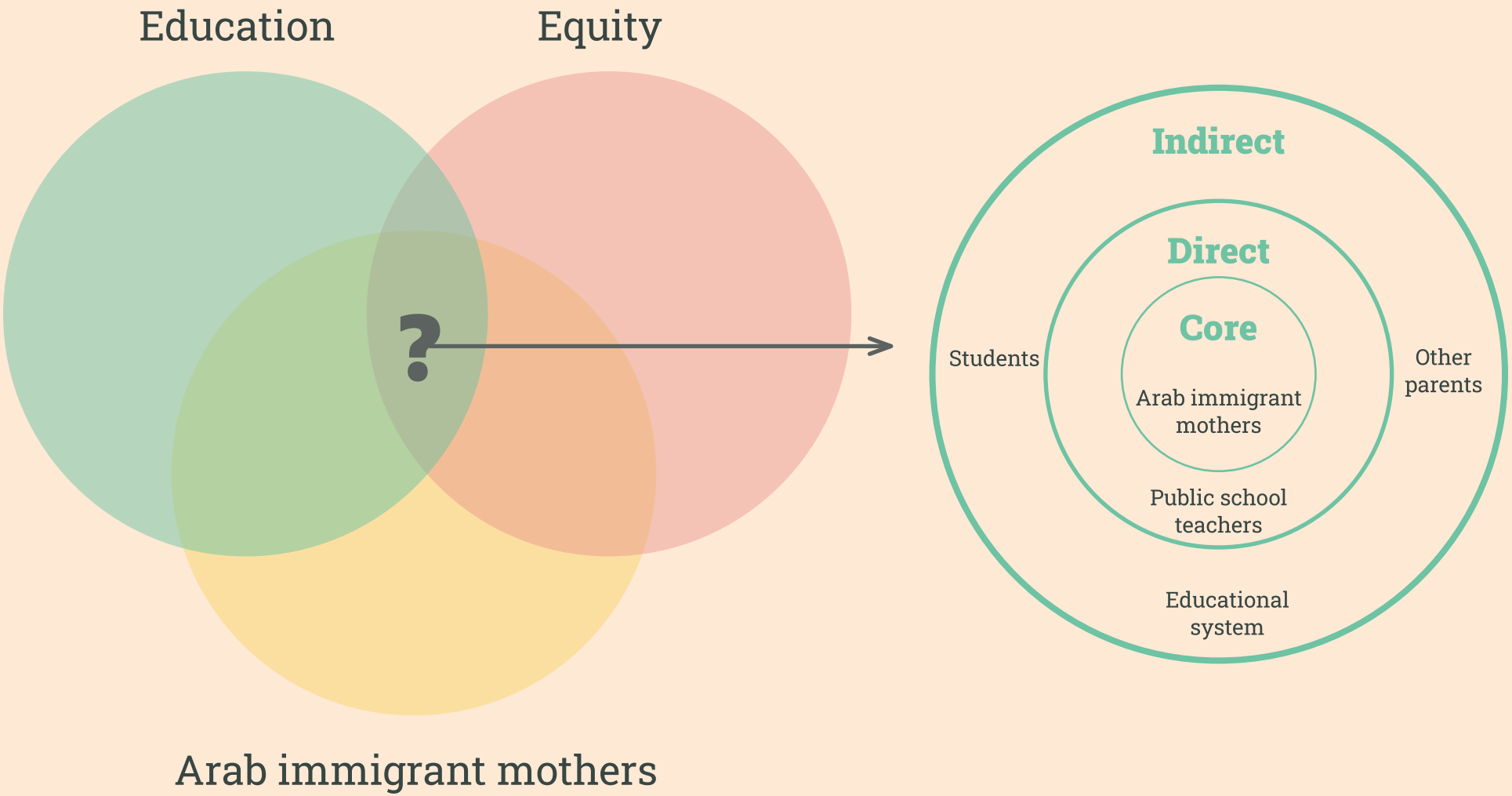


Figure 6
Stakeholders map

Delimitations

In this project I will not be including Arab fathers or people from different cultures. The project is focused on the interaction between Arab immigrant mothers and public school teachers in the United States. Arab immigrant fathers come to the United states to provide a better future for them and their families.. Struggling between adapting to the culture and providing for their families, Arab fathers tend to depend on their wives to take care of their children's education and school.

This creative project introduces an initiative that can take the shape of a community building session that allows Arab mothers and teachers sit together, exchange information, share ideas and concerns and most importantly build bridges. Due to Covid-19, I was not able to conduct the session, but rather I am proposing a comprehensive initiative that can be later implemented and carried out by any teacher around the United states.

Moreover, I will not go into details about the educational system in the United States, instead I am focusing on the parental involvement and engagement aspect of it. I will incorporate research findings into design process.

Justification

The project required the exploration of how design might help serve a communication issue by implementing design strategies, concepts, and methodologies. In addition, I looked into cultural design, responsive design, as well as speculative design strategies to better understand what strategies to follow. Furthermore, I looked into what platforms can serve my project and that includes learning about toolkits, applications, websites, video making and workshop design to better serve my study.

Methodology

Review related literature

To better understand my project, I started reading related articles, journals, case studies and publications around the following topics:

1) Parental involvement in the United States
2) Arab immigrants in the United States
3) Involvement of Arab parents in education
4) Immigrant families in the United states

I was interested in this topic since January 2019, during the course of obtaining my early childhood certificate which allowed me to read and learn a lot about the immigrant families and the educational system.

However, July 2020 is where I focused my research on Arab immigrant parents involvement in American public schools and what hinders them from being effective participants (Bazzi-Gates,2015). I also focused on the experiences of other immigrant to learn about what services, and resources were provided.

Throughout the process of my project, I continually referred back to literature in helping me inform my design.

Human centered co-design

The project was based on the strategy of co-design which Sanders and Stappers (2008) refer to as co-creation. Co-designing creates a better fit between what participants want and the initiative idea. This promotes a better outcome and higher satisfaction (Steen, Menno, & De Koning, 2011).

In my project I was able to work on co-designing my proposal with all participants which also allowed me to explore the concept of human centered design, which means starting with people and designing with them (IDEO.org, 2015). During my interviews, I informed participants that I will be asking them for continuous feedback to better design an outcome the serves their needs (Boy,2017). The continuous communication with participants allowed them to trust the process and see how their feedback is helping shape the final outcome. During the design process, every detail including color, layout and strategies was always discussed with participants and iterated my project as a project that related and belongs to people.

Storytelling

During the interviews, participants were telling stories about their experiences with the school and teachers of their children. The storytelling process gives the listener an intangible experience that reflects what was said, done and reflected in a certain situation (Young,2000).

When participants were telling their stories, I took note of what obstacles they were facing, what recommendations they were giving, and what concerns they reflected. I was able to create a list of all the obstacles they mentioned that hinder their involvement at the school, which are:

1) language barrier
2) lack of time
3) lack of resources
4) difference in culture

This list allowed me address those obstacles in designing my strategy, which made me think what can be done to overcome those obstacles, and create a safe space for Arab immigrant mothers and teachers talk and communicate?

Project process and design iterations

Process timeline

Understanding the problem

Gathering information and reading case studies

My literature review started in January 2020 when I first started taking classes in early childhood education. My interest in learning about parental engagement in public schools grew. As I learned about parental engagement in the United States, how parents perceive parental engagement and what is the view of immigrant parents on parental engagement. I designed a poster to reflect the importance of parental engagement (figures 7&8).

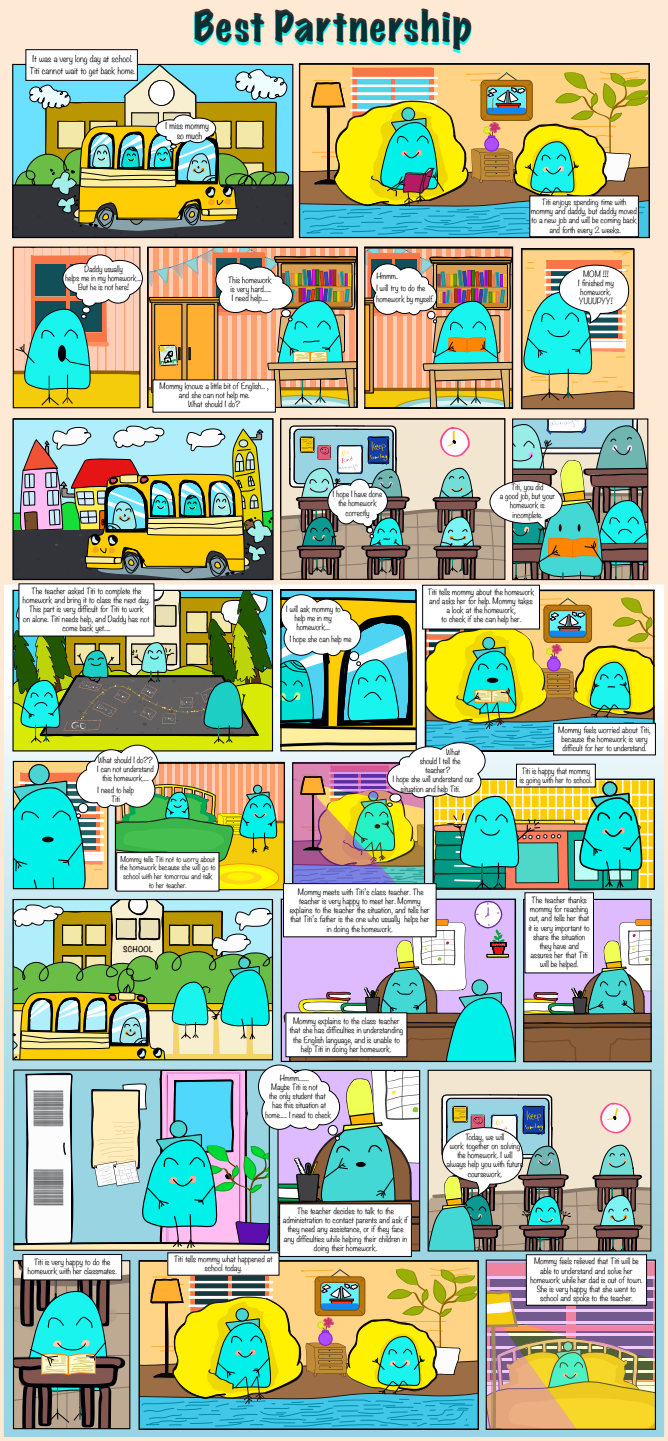


Figure 7

"Best partnership" is a poster designed in Sprin2020 to encourage mothers to communicate with teachers

The main goal of the poster is to encourage mothers to communicate with teachers. I also wanted to reflect what parents go through that hinder their ability to help their children and provide needed support. The poster focuses on the idea that teachers and mothers should be partners in their children's education.

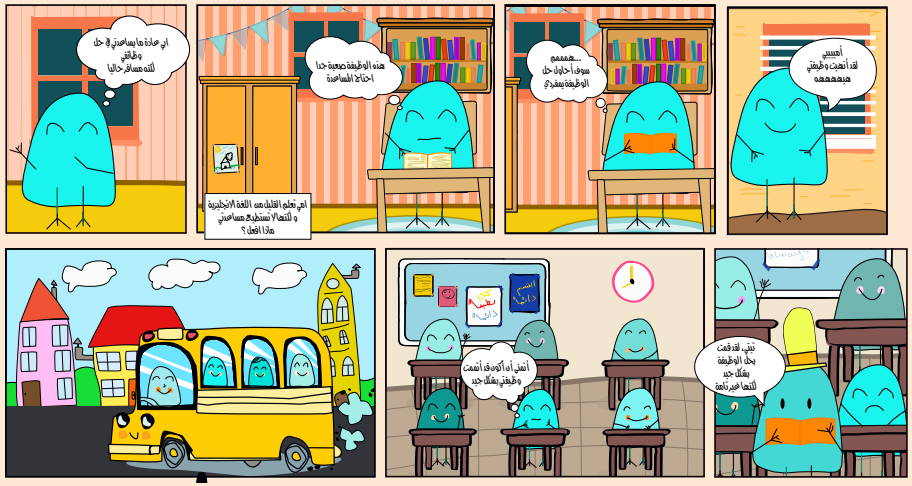


Figure 8

"Best partnership" translated into Arabic. The main goal of translating the poster is to encourage immigrant parents who suffer the most in communicating with the school and teacher to raise their voices

Teachers and the school create different opportunities for parents to get engaged, like volunteering and being part of school events. However several obstacles make it difficult for parents to get involved, like poverty, working long hours and living in an unstable houses (Lawson& Alameda-Lawson, 2018).

After reading an article about the difficulties that Korean mothers face when trying to get involved in American schools, I started wondering about the Arab community and relating some of the issues discussed in the paper to the issues they mentioned in the stories. Korean mothers felt othered and unwelcomed in the school (Sohn, Soomin & Wang, 2006). This is very similar to what Arab mothers noted. In addition, in her research Bazzi-Gates (2015) indicates that Arab mothers face multiple obstacles that not only prevents them from attending events and volunteering, but also being able to provide needed amount of support.

For example, Bazzi-Gates (2015) mentions that Arab mothers face language barriers, take care of their elderly and/or their young children, and some have transportation difficulties that prevent them from attending event and volunteering at school. Unfortunately, due to the very small number of Arabs in the United Sates, not much research has been done.

Interviewing mothers and public school teachers

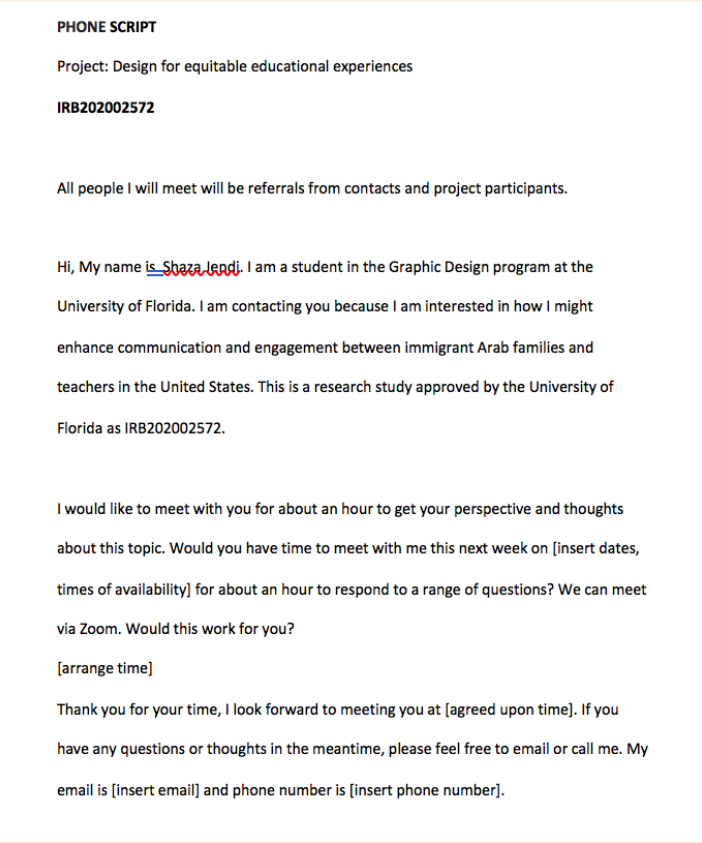
After going through the IRB (202002572) process, I was able to interview twenty-one Arab mothers, and two teachers.

The interview tone was very friendly and understanding. Questions were mentioned as part of the conversation.

Below are the questions asked to mothers:

1. Describe your relationship [involvement?] with your children's school.
2. Tell me about your experience of parent/child involvement with teachers/schools in your home country.
3. Tell me what happens when your child brings home a homework assignment.
4. Sub question: if the homework needs extra assistance, what do you do?
5. Are there other Arab immigrant parents at your child's school? If so, tell me about your interactions/experiences, if any, in this community or with these parents.
6. Talk me through how the Covid-19 pandemic has changed or impacted any of this [questions 1-5]?

Figures 9–12 feature the phone script and informed consent used with Arab immigrant mothers.



PHONE SCRIPT

Project: Design for equitable educational experiences

IRB202002572

All people I will meet will be referrals from contacts and project participants.

Hi, My name is Shaza Jendi. I am a student in the Graphic Design program at the University of Florida. I am contacting you because I am interested in how I might enhance communication and engagement between immigrant Arab families and teachers in the United States. This is a research study approved by the University of Florida as IRB202002572.

I would like to meet with you for about an hour to get your perspective and thoughts about this topic. Would you have time to meet with me this next week on [insert dates, times of availability] for about an hour to respond to a range of questions? We can meet via Zoom. Would this work for you?

[arrange time]

Thank you for your time, I look forward to meeting you at [agreed upon time]. If you have any questions or thoughts in the meantime, please feel free to email or call me. My email is [insert email] and phone number is [insert phone number].

Figure 9

Phone & email script followed when communicating with Arab immigrant mothers

Design for equitable educational experiences
IRB202002572

Parents Informed Consent

_____ BEGIN DOCUMENT HERE

Please read this document carefully before you decide to participate in this research study. **Your participation is voluntary, and you can decline to participate, or withdraw consent at any time, with no consequences**.

Study Title: Design for equitable educational experiences
Project: IRB202002572

Persons conducting the research:
Shaza Jendi, MFA student, School of Art + Art History, University of Florida
s.jendi@ufl.edu
9047385046

Mailing Address
School of Art + Art History
University of Florida
PO Box 100173
Gainesville, FL 32610

Purpose of the research study:
The purpose of this learn more about you and your experience with parents and teachers, and related issues, including what challenges and opportunities you identify and your thoughts about these.

What you will be asked to do in the study:
This study includes the following activities:
Informal, Unstructured, or Semi-structured Interviews—Meet with researcher and provide feedback on design processes, activities and experiences. Purpose: learn about your interaction with the school, teachers, and other parents (if applicable) in the school. You may be asked to share material data (notes, sketches, slips)

Time required:

Figure 10
Informed consent form given to mothers

Informal, Unstructured, or Semi-structured Interviews usually take forty-five minutes to one hour. They may run longer, depending on your availability and engagement. These will be coordinated and scheduled at a time and place convenient for you. Additional interviews may be requested. Participation is optional at all times.

Risks and benefits:
There are no more than minimal risks to your participation. There are no direct benefits of participation for you from interviews. If you elect to participate in a workshop with the researchers, you may benefit through knowledge exchange.

Confidentiality:
With your consent, and interviews may be recorded (via audiotape, videotape).

You may elect to be credited for your contributions. If you select this option, your name will be used, your interview and project contributions, and materials you provide will be credited.

You may also wish to remain anonymous. If you select this option, no personal identifiers are collected or recorded, although the project or client organization you are associated with will be identified. Your responses will be kept confidential to the full extent of the law. Data collected will be stored on a protected hard drive at the University of Florida.

The only people who will have access to collected materials are members of the research team. Interviews will be transcribed by the research team.

Compensation: No compensation is provided

Source(s) of funding for the research: No funding required.

May the researcher(s) benefit from the research?
We may benefit professionally if the results of the study are presented at meetings and in the classroom, published in journals, books, websites, creative projects, and/or posters—print and electronic,

Withdrawal from the study:
You are free to withdraw your consent and to stop participating in this study at any time without consequence. You can decline to answer any question you do not wish to answer.

Figure 11
Informed consent form given to mothers

If you withdraw, the data you have already provided with consent may be used unless you specifically inform the researchers otherwise, in person or in writing. Researchers may choose with withdraw you from the study if they determine your participation is disruptive, counterproductive, or has a negative impact on the study itself or to other participants or the researchers themselves. The decision is the sole discretion of the researchers.

Questions:
If you wish to discuss the information above, please ask questions now or contact one of the research team members listed at the top of this form.

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a participant, please contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB02) office: 098 PSY Bldg., University of Florida; P.O. Box 100173, Zip code: 32610, (352) 392-0433 or irb2@ufl.edu.

Agreement:
I have read the procedure described above. I voluntarily agree to participate in the study and I have received a copy of this description.

Check one:
___ I want to be credited for my participation and any materials.
___ I prefer to remain anonymous in materials.

_____
Participant Name

_____ _____
Participant Signature Date

_____ _____
Participant Contact information (email, telephone)Location

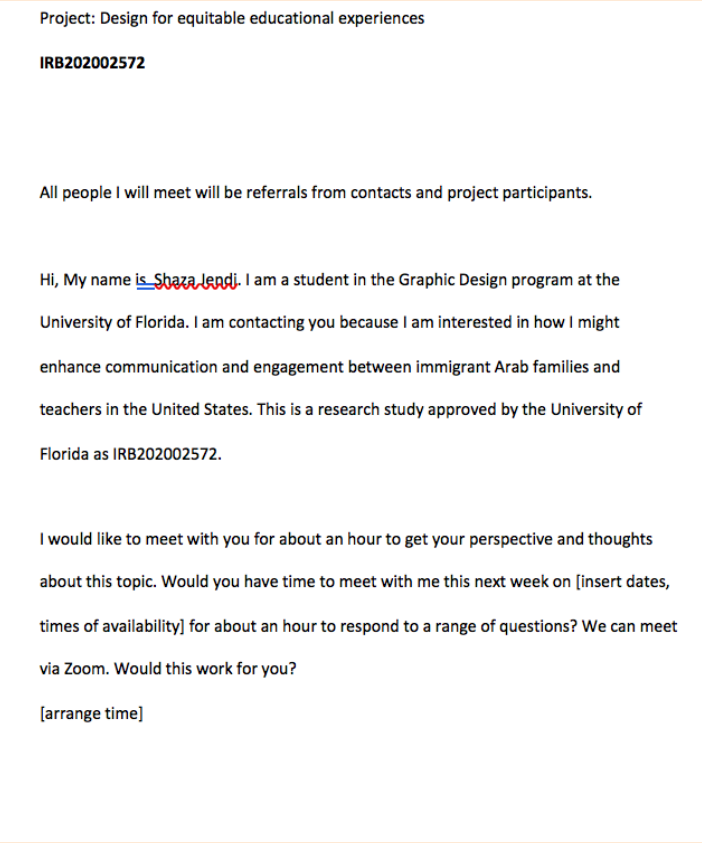
_____
Name of Person obtaining informed consent

Figure 12
Informed consent form given to mothers

Below are the questions asked to public school teachers:

1. Describe how immigrant parents are involved in their children's education. For example, with you in the classroom or with the school.
2. How do parents—in general—know how to get involved in school activities like volunteering? (Website, notes sent home, in-person communication, etc)
3. In general do immigrant parents get involved at your school? If yes, do they know how to get involved?
4. Describe your relationship with Arab immigrant parents and how you communicate with them? (Sub Questions: When Arab immigrant parents are contacted, is it in this communication issues with Arab immigrant parents? How does the school address the issue?

Figures 13–15 feature the phone script and informed consent used with teachers. Some interviews took place over Zoom, others happened at a location agreed on by participants (figures 16–20). .



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[arrange time]

Figure 13

Phone & email script followed when communicating with public school teachers

Design for equitable educational experiences
IRB202002572

Teachers Informed Consent

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Time required:

Figure 14
Informed consent form given to teachers

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Withdrawal from the study:
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Figure 15
Informed consent form given to teachers

Figure 16

An Arab immigrant mother is providing her feedback in regards to the initiative and session plan

Figure 17

An Arab immigrant mother talking about the session goals she have

Figure 18

Explaining what a “welcoming environment” is by an Arab mom

Figure 19

An Arab immigrant mother telling where she felt unwelcomed by teachers and other parents

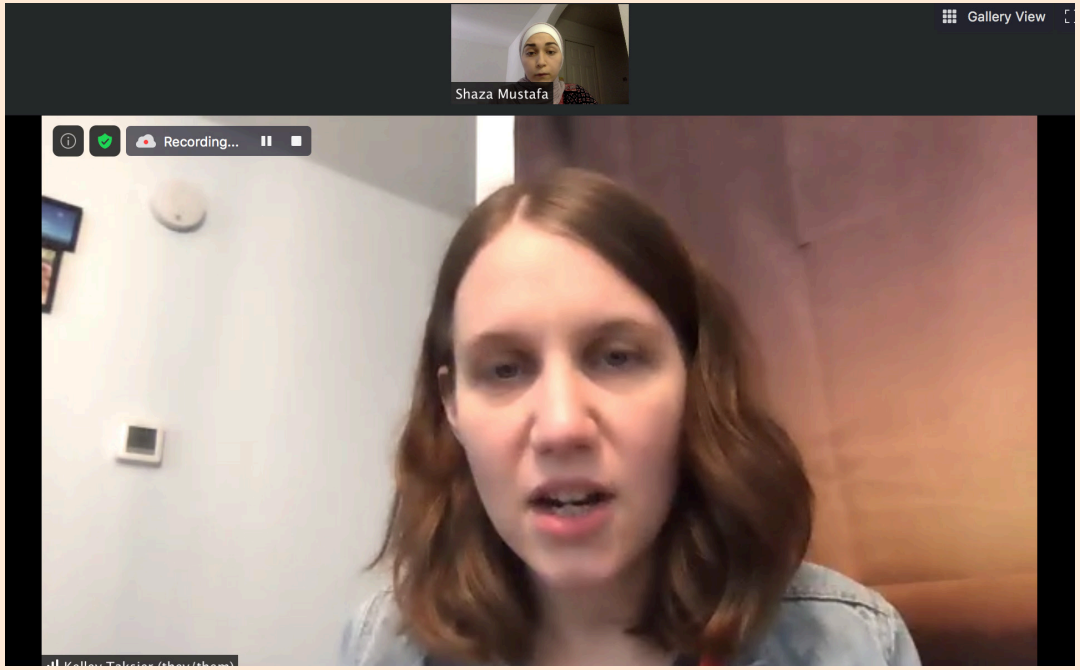


Figure 20

Public school teacher providing feedback for the session plan and strategy

Post interviews data analysis

After gathering the information from the interviews, I analyzed the data and looked into finding patters or common points. I was able to notice many similar ideas mentioned, recommendations given by parents as solutions and interaction ideas mentioned by participants. A poster to reflect data from parents has been designed (figure 21) to better understand in a clear way a summary of the interviews conducted with Arab immigrant mothers.

Due to the pandemic, almost all interviews took place via Zoom, which is an Online meeting software. Figure 21 summarizes the feedback I got from mothers. It reflects barriers described by mothers hindering their engagement, it contains a diagram reflecting their occupations, how they reflects their communication with the school, and how comfortable they are in reaching out to teachers. During the interviews concerns were mentioned, ideas were proposed, and stories were told. The stories helped me a lot in understanding what mothers expect and what they wish to have. Talking about their schools back in their home countries was a big part of all of the interviews. This was very critical as it allowed me in understanding where are they coming from, what lived experiences they have and understand what does parental engagement mean to them.

The poster differentiates between parental engagement in private schools vs public schools in the Arab world.

Figure 21

Reflection poster of the in person interview with Arab immigrant mothers

This poster (figure 22) reflects the difference between public schools and private schools back in the home country of the mothers interviewed. This was important to record as it helps in understanding their lived experiences and expectations.

Figure 22

Difference between public and private schools based on mother's input

Creating personas

After the interviews I created two personas based on the input and data analysis from mothers (Figure 23–28). Personas allows bringing target audience and their objectives into focus(Pruitt & Adlin, 2006). In designing my personas I relied on giving a small story about each person that reflect their struggles and concerns with the school. In the article “What are personas”(n.d.), personas are described as “Personas are the single most powerful design tool that we use. They are the foundation for all subsequent goal-directed design. Personas allow us to see the scope and nature of the design problem… [They] are the bright light under which we do surgery.”

Designing the personas allowed me to see what is the main problem my participants are facing and I was able to find out that “Communication” is the main issue. According to Babich (2017), personas “help designers to create understanding and empathy with the end users.” This is something I was able to sense when I showed the personas to teachers who were really able to understand and relate to each situation and person presented in the personas.

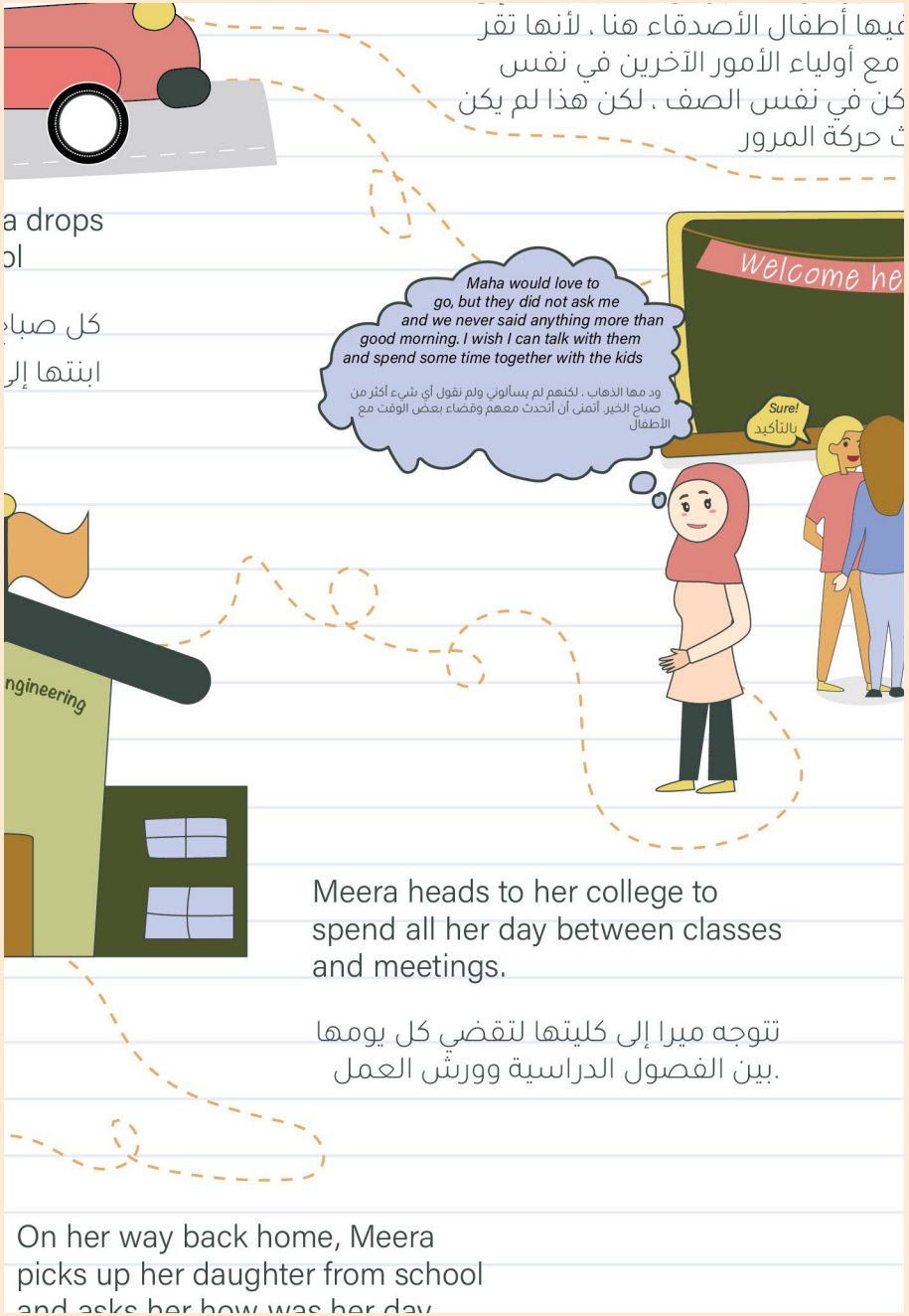


Figure 23
Persona one

Meera

ميرا

29 years old

٢٩ سنة

Moved from Saudi Arabia with her daughter, Maha,to persue her graduate Doctoral degree in Engineering. Her partner resides in Saudi Arabia and comes every 2-3 months for few weeks.

انتقلت من المملكة العربية السعودية مع ابنتها،مها، للحصول على درجة الدكتوراه في الهندسة. يقيم زوجهافي المملكة العربية السعودية ويأتي كل شهرين إلى ثلاثة أشهر لبضعة أسابيع

Languages

اللغات

English
الانجليزية

Arabic
العربية

Interests

الإهتمامات

School engagement level

مستوى التفاعل المدرسي

- Volunteer work
  عمل تطوعي
- PT conferences
  اجتماع أولياء الأمور
- Email communication
  تواصل عبر الايميل
- Attends events
  حضور المناسبات

Meera moved to Gainesville, Florida in 2018 after being awarded a scholarship to pursue her Ph.D. She moved with her daughter who was being educated in a private American system school in Saudi Arabia. She is a second-grader. Meera was very excited to move but was worried about being alone and having no help since her husband had to stay in Saudi Arabia for his work.

انتقلت من المملكة العربية السعودية مع ابنتها للحصول على درجة الدكتوراه في الهندسة. يقيم الشريك في المملكة العربية السعودية ويأتي كل شهرين إلى ثلاثة أشهر لبضعة أسابيع

Meera moved into a neighborhood where some of her friends from Saudi Arabia live in.

تنقلت ماريا إلى حي يعيش فيه بعض أصدقائها من المملكة العربية السعودية

Every weekend, Meera meets with her friends from the Arab community in a park. Most of them have children , but none of them is in Meera's school . Meera wanted to enroll her daughter to a school where here friends' children are enrolled in, since she acknowledges the importance of being in contact with other parents in the same school and if possible the same same grade, but that was not convenient in terms of traffic.

في نهاية كل أسبوع ، تلتقي ميرا بأصدقائها من الجالية العربية في حديقة. معظمهم لديهم أطفال ، لكن لا أحد منهم في مدرسة ميرا. أرادت ميرا أن تذهب ابنتها إلى مدرسة يسجل فيها أطفال الأصدقاء هنا ، لأنها تقر بأهمية التواصل مع أولياء الأمور الآخرين في نفس المدرسة وإن أمكن في نفس الصف ، لكن هذا لم يكن مناسبًا من حيث حركة المرور .

Every morning, Meera drops her daughter at school

كل صباح ، ترسل ميرا ابنتها إلى المدرسة

Maha would love to go, but they did not ask me and we never said anything more than good morning. I wish I can talk with them and spend some time together with the kids

Welcome here

hola!

Sure!

بالتأكيد

How about having breakfast with the kids saturday morning?

شو رأيكم نطلع نفطر سوا الأحد الصبح مع ولادنا؟

Meera heads to her college to spend all her day between classes and meetings.

تتوجه ميرا إلى كليتها لتقضي كل يومها بين الفصول الدراسية وورش العمل

On her way back home, Meera picks up her daughter from school and asks her how was her day.

في طريق عودتها إلى المنزل ، تلتقط ميرا ابنتها من المدرسة وتناقش اليوم معها.

After having dinner, Meera works with Maha on her homework and goes over her school work.

بعد تناول العشاء ، تعمل ميرا مع ابنتها في واجباتها المدرسية وتتابع عملها المدرسي

After putting her daughter to sleep, Meera prepares food for the next day

بعد أن تنام ابنتها ، تعد ميرا الطعام للیوم التالي

Everyday, after Maha sleeps and finishing housework, Meera starts working on her college work. However, tonight Meera is thinking of Maha's friends in school. She is wondering how can she approach other parents to hopefully build a relationship to joing events and gatherings and allow Maha to meet her friends outside school. She does not feel comfortable adding them on social media. Meera feels bad that she is too shy to approach other parents as it affects her and Maha badly.

كل يوم ، بعد أن تنام مها وتنهي من الأعمال المنزلية ، تبدأ ميرا العمل في دراستها الجامعية. ومع ذلك ، تفكر ميرا الليلة في أصدقاء مها في المدرسة. تتساءل كيف يمكنها التواصل مع أولياء الأمور الآخرين على أمل بناء علاقة للانضمام إلى الأحداث والتجمعات والسماح لمها بمقابلة أصدقائها خارج المدرسة. لا تشعر بالراحة عند إضافتها على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي. تشعر ميرا بالسوء لأنها تخجل من الاقتراب من الآباء الآخرين لأنها تؤثر عليها وعلى مها بشدة.

Figure 24

Persona one

Figure 25

Persona one - closeup

Meera is a 29 years old graduate student born and raised in Saudi Arabia. Meera moved with her daughter to the Unite States to complete her graduate degree in engineering. Her husband comes every few weeks. Meera is overwhelmed as she has to take care of her daughter, take care of the house, and also her own studies. She can barely find time for her to do anything extra. She feels bad every time she drops Meera that she does not talk to other parents and that they all gather and have their own community that she is not part of.

Yasmina
ياسمينة

27 years old
٢٧ سنة

Moved from Palestine to be with her husband who is a resident at the medical school. Takes English learning classes. Yasmina takes full care of her household. She drives and has her own car. She is a business management graduate and plans to earn a tax auditing certificate. Yasmina has three sons who attend school. Two of them are grade four and the youngest is grade two.

انتقلت من فلسطين لتكون مع زوجها المقيم في كلية الطب. تأخذ دروس تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية. ياسمينة تعتني بأسرتها. هي تقود سيارتها الخاصة. إنها خريجة إدارة الأعمال وتخطط للحصول على شهادة تدقيق ضريبي بمجرد انتقال أطفالها إلى مرحلة ما قبل المدرسة.

Languages
اللغات

English
الانجليزية

Arabic
العربية

School engagement level
مستوى التعامل المدرسي

- PT conferences
  اجتماع أولياء الأمور
- Email communication
  تواصل عبر الايميل
- Attends events
  حضور المناسبات

Yasmina first moved to Ohio and stayed there for 2 years and moved to Florida after her husband was offered a residency program. After enrolling her children in school, Yasmina focused on learning English to improve her reading and communication skills.

انتقلت ياسمينة لأول مرة إلى أوهايو ومكثت هناك لمدة عامين وانتقلت إلى فلوريدا بعد أن عُرض على زوجها برنامج إقامة. بعد تسجيل أطفالها في المدرسة، ركزت ياسمينة على تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية لتحسين مهارات القراءة والتواصل لديها

Yasmina and her husband decided to buy a house next to their children's school and also close to the Palestinian community.

قررت ميرا وزوجها شراء منزل بجوار مدرسة أطفالهما وأيضًا بالقرب من المجتمع الفلسطيني

Everyday the school bus takes the children to school, and Yasminagoes to her English learning classes.

كل يوم تنقل الحافلة المدرسية الأطفال إلى المدرسة ، وتذهب ميرا إلى دروس تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية

Yasmina attends Parent teacher conferences and records the meeting for her husband. Yasmina does not fully understand English so she records the meeting for her husband.

تحضر ياسمينة اجتماعات أولياء الأمور والمعلمين وتسجل اجتماع زوجها ياسمينة لا تفهم اللغة الإنجليزية بشكل كامل لذا فهي تسجل الاجتماع لزوجها.

As soon as her husband comes back from work, he reads teacher notes and what homework do the children have.

بمجرد عودة زوجها من العمل ، يقرأ ملاحظات المعلم وما الواجب المنزلي الذي يقوم به الأطفال.

After dinner, the father helps the children in doing their homework and reviews with them what they learned in school. He later reads to them a bedtime story.

بعد العشاء ، يساعد الأب الأطفال في أداء واجباتهم المدرسية ويراجع معهم ما تعلموه في المدرسة. في وقت لاحق قرأ لهم قصة قبل النوم

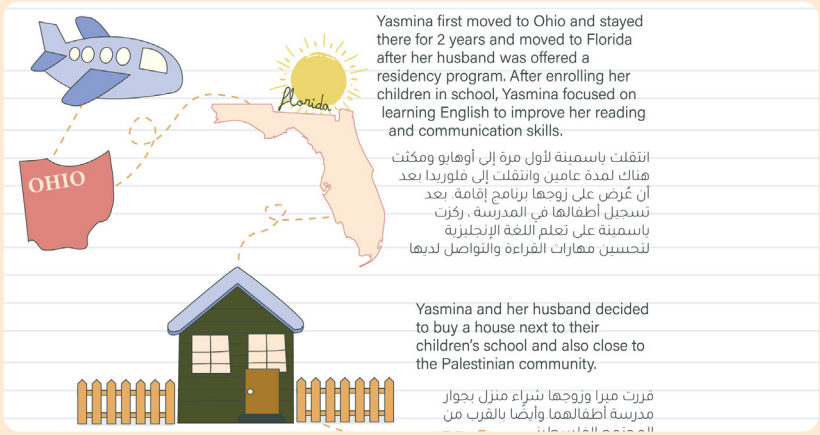
Yasmina and her husband sit to discuss the PT meeting after he listens to the recording. The father decides to discuss their concerns and follow up on the PT meeting by sending the class teacher an email.

ياسمينة وزوجها يجلسان لمناقشة اجتماع أولياء الأمور بعد أن استمع إلى التسجيل. يقرر الأب مناقشة مخاوفهم ومتابعة اجتماع عن طريق إرسال بريد إلكتروني إلى مدرس الفصل

Yasmina works every night on earning her certificate and prints out some exercise sheets for her children in Arabic to work on the next day.

تعمل ياسمينة كل ليلة على الحصول على شهادتها وتطبع بعض أوراق التمارين لأطفالها باللغة العربية للعمل في اليوم التالي.

Figure 26
Persona two



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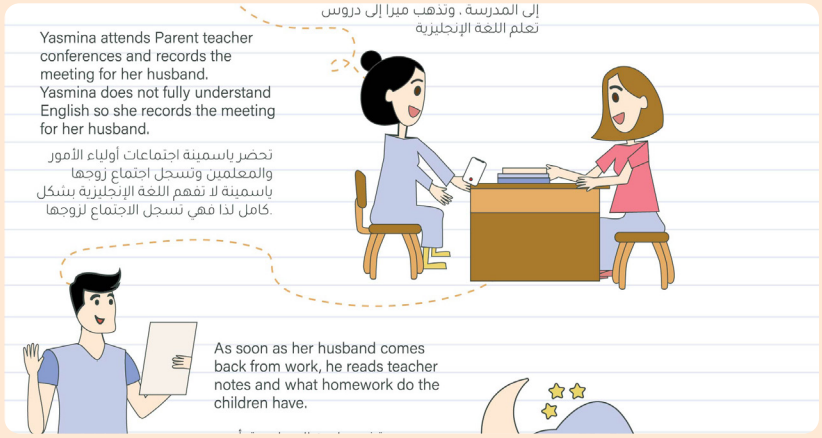
Yasmina and her husband decided to buy a house next to their children's school and also close to the Palestinian community.

قررت ميرا وزوجها شراء منزل بجوار مدرسة أطفالهما وأيضًا بالقرب من

Figure 27
Persona two-closeup



إلى المدرسة ، وتذهب ميرا إلى دروس تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية

Yasmina attends Parent teacher conferences and records the meeting for her husband. Yasmina does not fully understand English so she records the meeting for her husband.

تحضر ياسمينة اجتماعات أولياء الأمور والمعلمين وتسجل اجتماع زوجها ياسمينة لا تفهم اللغة الإنجليزية بشكل كامل لذا فهي تسجل الاجتماع لزوجها

As soon as her husband comes back from work, he reads teacher notes and what homework do the children have.

Figure 28
Persona two-closeup

Yasmina is a 27 years old mother of three little boys. She moved to the United States to be with her husband who is a medical resident. Yasmina is fully responsible of everything related to her household. She has issues in understanding and talking in English, making it very challenging for her to communicate with the teachers. She depends on recording any meeting she has and asks her husband to translate to her. This communication issues creates a lot of misunderstanding and confusion to her.

The personas helped visualize the problem

After my literature review, conducting interviews, designing personas, and analyzing the data, I was able to combine my findings and start thinking of a design strategy and approach to solve the problem. At this stage I was thinking What is the best way to facilitate interaction between teachers and Arab immigrant mothers in order for them to communicate “in an effective manner?”

Exploring design options

Looking at communication tools & services used in schools

Based on my interviews, I was able to learn that parents are able to engage and interact in the following settings:

1. Volunteering
2. Attending workshops
3. Participating in events
4. Being active on the LMS used in school
5. Talking to other parents
6. Attending PT conferences
7. Being in contact with the school community

After interviewing mothers, I was able to note their interests in being part of the above opportunities. Figure 29 shows my analysis. The most important observation was that Arab mothers really like the idea of the workshop and working together with teachers, however they noted that workshops are a one-way conversation, where they feel that only teachers can talk while they have to listen. Furthermore, discussions are put by teachers, and are only in English, and all logistics are decided by teachers, to better suit the needs of teachers. This made me ask them how do they see an effective workshop? I noted the feedback. Mothers noted that not all of their schools have a “LMS” which is short for Learning Management System that is used by some schools to connect teachers to parents(figure 30). Volunteering is one of the parental engagement opportunities encouraged by teachers, however, Arab immigrant mothers noted their inability to volunteer due to their language difficulties and having time restrictions.

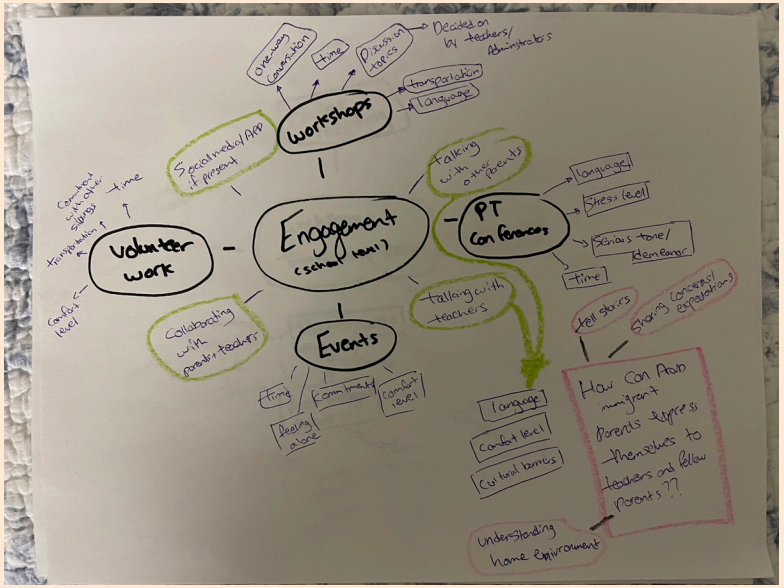


Figure 29

Sketch based on parents response to why can’t they be part of the engagement opportunities in school

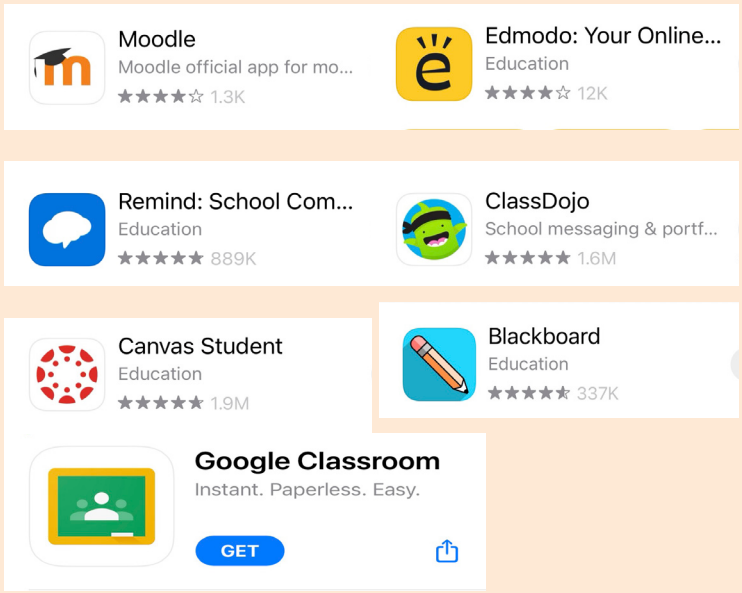


Figure 30

A list of "LMS" applications used by schools

Figures 31–35 show the brainstorming sketches done to understand what platforms could be used to address the issue, keeping in mind the advantages and disadvantages of each proposal provided by parents.

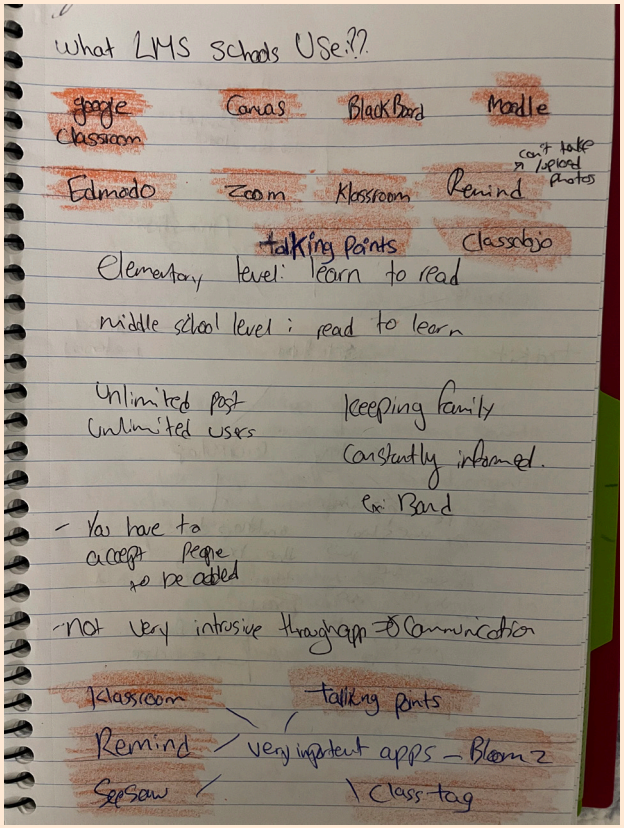


Figure 31

List of "LMS" applications used by schools

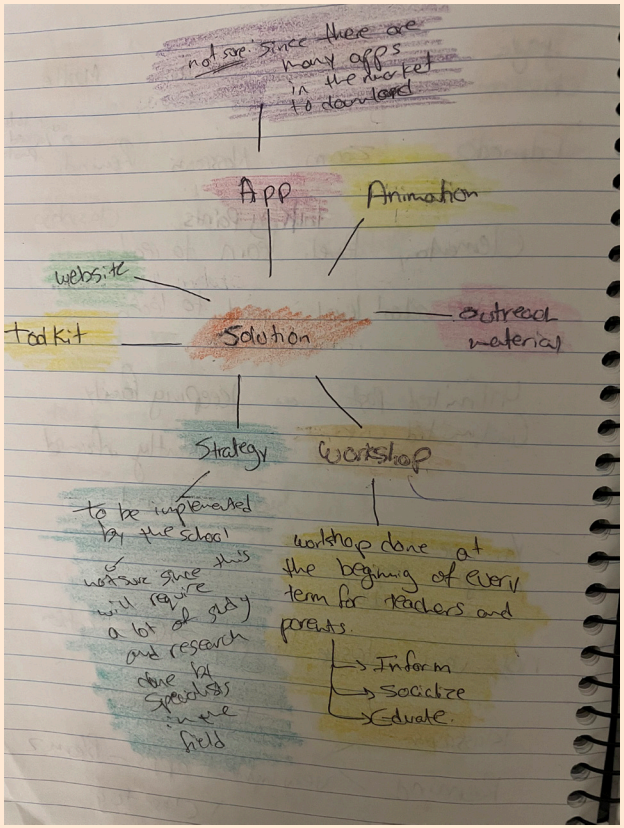


Figure 32

Design solution options

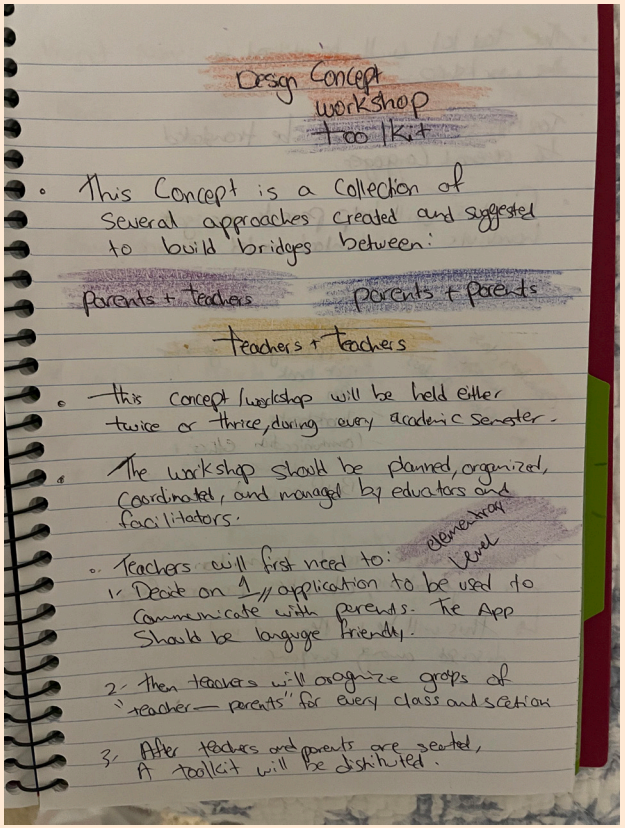


Figure 33

Initial concept of creating a workshop and a toolkit

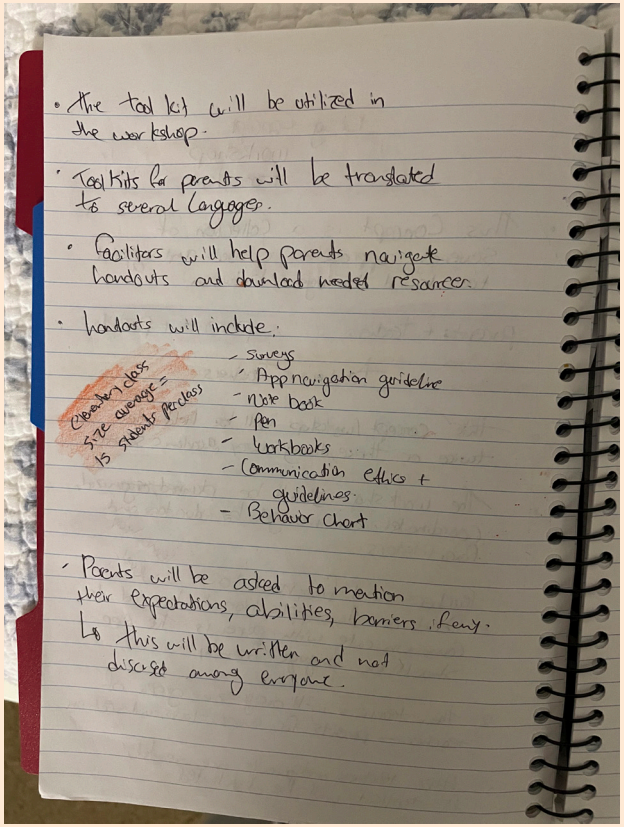


Figure 34
Toolkit description

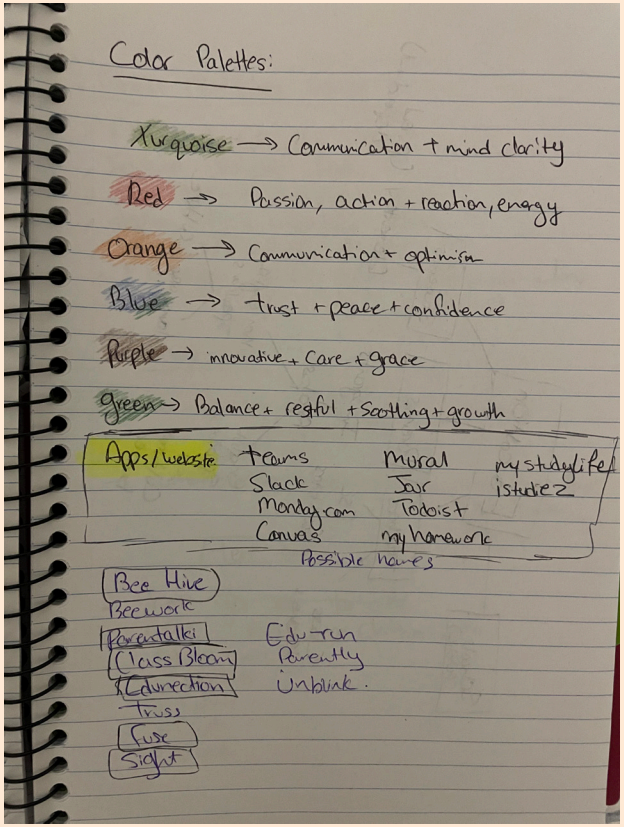


Figure 35
Branding brainstorming

Based on the feedback I decided to work on an initiative that takes the shape of a session. I highlighted that the main goal of the session will be **"Create a sense of familiarity between teachers and Arab immigrant mothers."** After creating a rough outline of the session, I went back to parents and asked how can a session help in creating a dialogue with teachers.

“Ya Salaam” initiative

Inspired by the process, I decided to work on the initiative with my participants and made sure to take their feedback and go back to them in every step. This allowed me to reflect their needs and know what their aims and goals are for the initiative. The initiative is designed to be carried out in the context of a session.

Out of the twenty-one mothers I interviewed first, fifteen of them were excited to stay in touch and help in designing and outlining the session.

Keywords

Equity | Education | Communication

Arab | Immigrant | Mothers

Engagement | Interaction | Teamwork

Cooperation | Inclusivity

Manage by participants strategy

After data analysis, I found out that the road to community building with Arab immigrant mothers requires their involvement, thus I decided to base my initiative on the concept of "Manage by participants" this means that session will be directed, managed and lead by potential participants. The strategy is rolled out gradually with two key steps.

Step 1: a facilitating teacher and a facilitating Arab immigrant mother will be delegated to manage and organize the session.

Step 2: facilitating teacher communicates with teachers to understand what information should be shared, what concerns should be raised, and what information would they like know. Facilitating Arab immigrant mother will also contact Arab immigrant mothers to know what their session goals, and aims are.

Initiative core values

Based on my whole research I was able to create a list of the core value the initiative has. According to Lencioni (2014), "Core values are the deeply ingrained principles that guide all of a company's actions; they serve as its cultural cornerstones." The core values for the initiative were based on what Arab immigrant mothers described what a session looks like to them, what would they want to achieve, and what are teachers hoping for from the initiative. The core values are to:

Facilitate effective conversations: create a safe space for participants to share information, concerns, and ideas.

Create a culture of warmth, belonging, and mutual understanding where everyone is welcomed: The initiative will allow participants share their knowledge, abilities and background information, building bridges and relationships allowing participants to create a sense of belonging and partnership.

Share important information and address critical questions and resources: Potential audience will be comfortable sharing information and resources.

Empathy building: The initiative allows participants share stories, experiences and expectations that allow participants to understand and relate to each other's experiences and emotions.

Initiative objectives

Create a sense of familiarity between teachers and *AIMs*

A sense of familiarity as described by mothers, means feeling comfortable, belonging and close to someone or something. When Arab immigrant mothers establish this sense of familiarity between them and teachers by talking to each other and expressing their concerns, abilities and difficulties knowing that they will be understood, makes them feel comfortable in talking with teachers and communicating with them on the long run.

By achieving the main goal, the initiative allows participants to also:

1. Build a team spirit
2. Strengthen relationships
3. Create mutual respect and understanding
4. Improve communication
5. Have fun together
6. Learn about each other
7. Set a friendly and warm tone

Desired outcomes

Both participants, Arab mothers and teachers will expect to have a stronger bond after the session. This can be measured by the comfort level mothers feel in reaching out to teachers, sharing information as well as having a strong communication. The outcome will be observed and measured by the following:

What will change? Engagement and participation rates of Arab immigrant mothers. Mothers will feel more comfortable reaching out to teachers, sharing their concerns, and participating with the school community.

How will it be measured?

- **Survey outcome**
- **Observations done by teachers**
- **Data collected by the school**
- **Communication and participation rate of Arab immigrant mothers**

What is the facilitator's guide?

This guide provides facilitators with complete instructions and materials needed to run the entire Arab Immigrant Mothers and teachers community building session. The guide further describes different roles assigned to participants and demands to make the session as relevant as possible to the target audience. Accordingly, pre sessions should be conducted to discuss community building session topics, strategies, activities and layout with participants. In addition, the facilitator's guide includes guidance for preparation, and tips on facilitating engagement and discussion between participants to fulfill meeting goals. Facilitators are encouraged to adapt or use additional methods to tailor the workshop most creatively to the needs of the audience. Facilitators can present real-life examples or share stories from their experiences to further customize the workshop and discussion topics.

The facilitator guide

The initiative is designed to be carried out as a session. I designed a facilitator's guide to be used by the facilitators managing and carrying out the session.

What is the facilitator's guide?

This guide provides facilitators with complete instructions and materials needed to run the entire Arab Immigrant Mothers and teachers community building session. The guide further describes different roles assigned to participants and demands to make the session as relevant as possible to the target audience. Accordingly, pre sessions should be conducted to discuss community building session topics, strategies, activities and layout with participants. In addition, the facilitator's guide includes guidance for preparation, and tips on facilitating engagement and discussion between participants to fulfill meeting goals. Facilitators are encouraged to adapt or use additional methods to tailor the workshop most creatively to the needs of the audience. Facilitators can present real-life examples or share stories from their experiences to further customize the workshop and discussion topics.

Session structure

Planning the session required in-depth understanding of each step, its importance, and understanding who should be carrying it out. I divided this into three stages:

Planning **Preparing** **Executing**

Planning the session is divided into three steps:

1. Discover & Define
2. Brief & Discuss
3. Inform & Consider

A detailed session plan is outlined in figure 36.

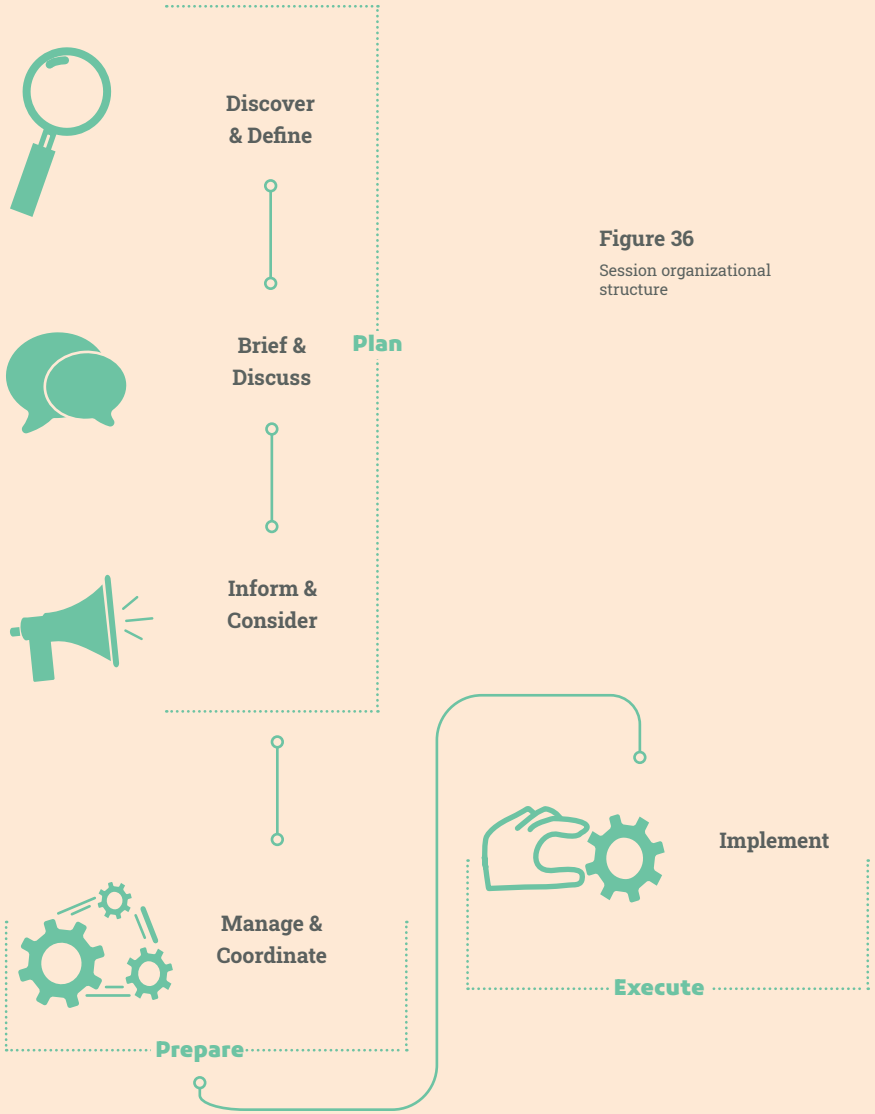


Figure 36
Session organizational structure

Feedback on the Facilitator's Guide and the Ya Salaam Initiative

After creating the structure of the initiative, I went back to my participants and asked them for feedback and ideas in regard to the session's structure. The ideas discussed were:

1. Who is supposed to do what?
2. Can mothers volunteer?
3. Is the environment welcoming?
4. Will there be a translator? caregiver?
5. How long will the session be?
6. Will we have a session plan given?
7. Who will we sit with?

From that point on, I decided to address the concerns mentioned by teachers and Arab mothers in my session plan. I first started with making sure delegating roles clearly to facilitators, letting them each know what should be done, and how. Check lists are also provided to better help facilitators organize their session plan structure. In addition, the feedback allowed the involvement of some mothers as volunteers in the session, based on their abilities. Translators and caregivers were also mentioned and I looked into how can a translator and a caregiver be provided. Based on the funding it will either be hiring a professional translator, or if the funding is limited, another option was mentioned which is consulting an Islamic center or an Arab community association that may provide a translator free of charge.

The session was first planned to be carried out for several days, but after the feedback, the session was planned to be carried out for one day as a seven hour session.

Being able to frequently get feedback from potential audience, I decided to walk them through the session and asked them to record it on designed sheets that are called empath maps. Munro (2020) states that "empathy maps help product teams build empathy with their end-users. It gets team members thinking from a user-centered perspective and helps them understand the users needs and wants.

Empathy maps (figures 37 & 38) allowed me understand my potential audience better, which helped me later in designing an outcome based on the results of the empathy map.

Looking at the maps below (figures 37 & 38), an idea of what each participants is expected to say when first invited to attend the session could be “Who is going to be there? Can I record the session? How long will it take? Should I prepare? ….” Participants will think of “ What will teachers say? What can they ask? Will a translator be present?” When asked what will participants do when they get invited they noted that they will ”Record the session, talk to other mothers, prepare questions, listen really well…” Most importantly I focused on noting their feelings which were described as “Shy, happy, excited, overwhelmed, afraid, anxious, attentive,empowered, confident, being afraid of feeling unwelcomed,…” The empathy map allowed me to look into how my potential audience react differently to the session invitation. However, I was still able to find out some patterns based on their response that helped me in creating a well though of session plan.

I also designed a user journey map to better see how the experience of the participants changes as they are walked through the session plan and structure (figure 39). Looking at the user journey map while working on the session plan allowed me to understand the expectations set by the audience, and giving a context of how will the audience act.

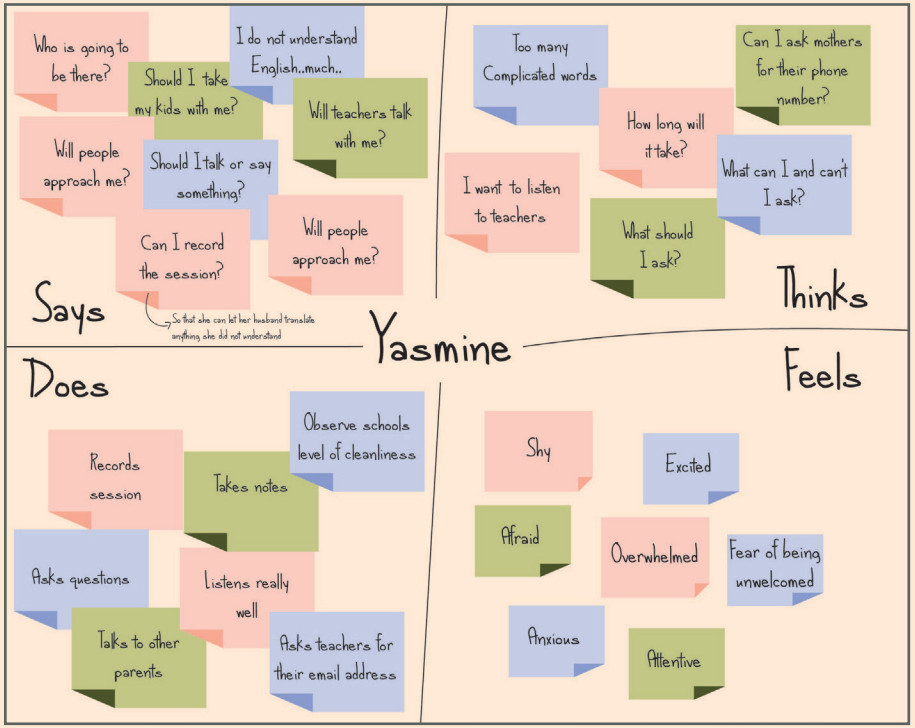


Figure 37
Empathy map one

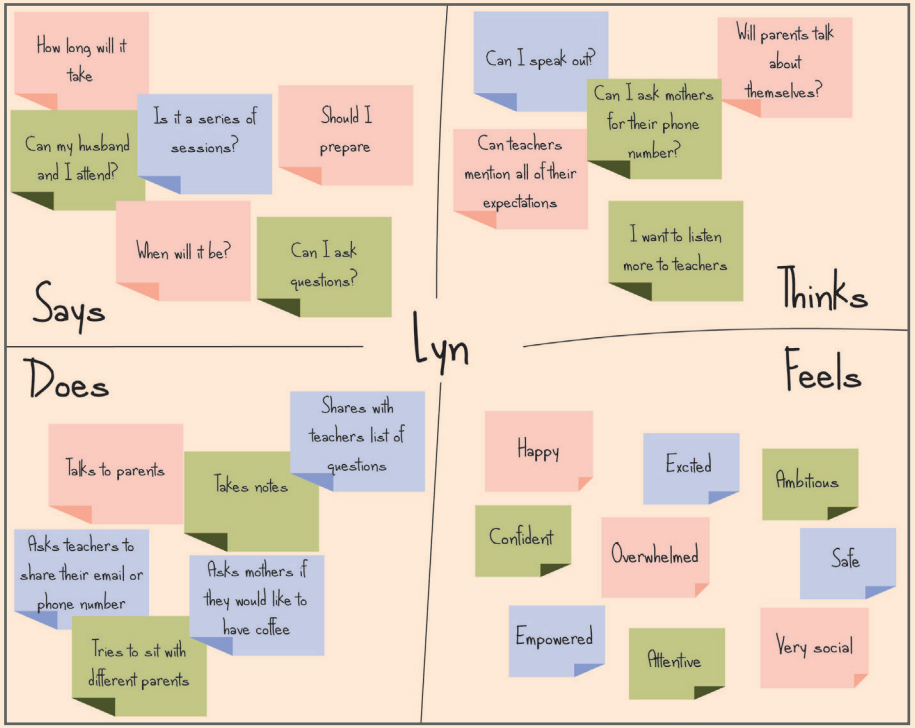


Figure 38
Empathy map two

Name: Talay
Age: 27 years
Context: Talay decides to attend the community building workshop.

Expectations:

- Shy to participate
- Know teachers closely
- Meet other parents
- Learn best engagement practices

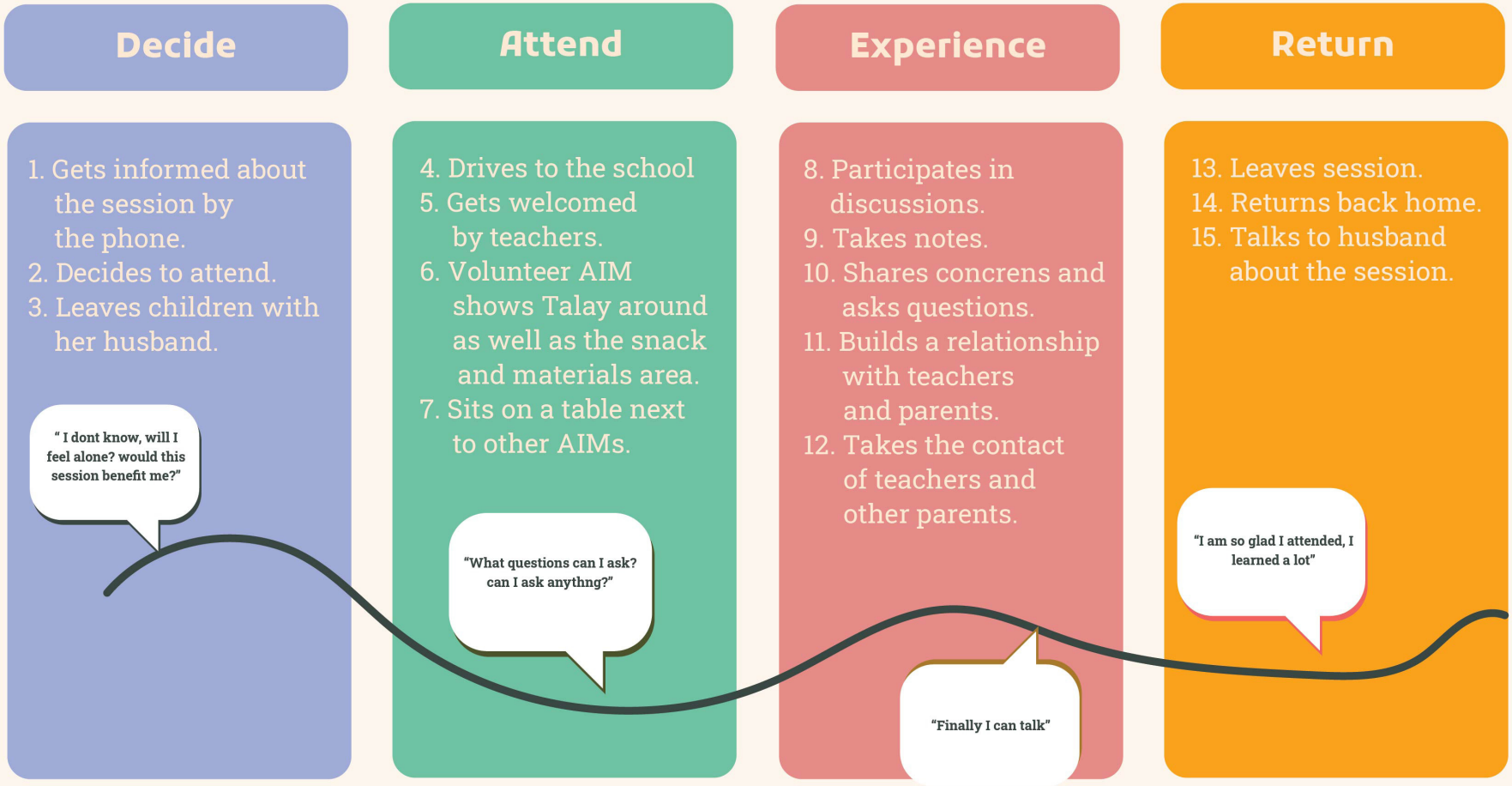


Figure 39
User journey map- Experiential

Understanding what is a "welcoming environment?"

During the interviews, I noticed mothers noting feeling "unwelcomed" in the schools their children attend. Mothers noted feeling unwelcomed from the moment they park their car till they leave the school. Describing the fence of the school as pushing them away(Maxwell, 2000) was something all mothers mentioned throughout the interviews. In addition, noting that all materials sent, and everything put in their children's classroom is in English and in some cases, Mexican and Chinese, and not seeing anything in Arabic made them feel distant and unwelcomed. According to Todd (2014), effective communication can be achieved by learning people's first language. Moreover, describing the tone teachers talk to them in was also giving them the feeling of being unwelcomed. Mothers noted that teachers usually talk to them in a "lecturing" tone where they feel themselves as only being told what to do and informed of what is happening and not asked their opinion or given the chance to discuss anything. Knowing what makes Arab mothers feel unwelcomed allowed me to design a session that incorporates all factors that make them feel welcomed and eliminated anything that might make them feel different and unwanted.

I later created a list of guidelines to be followed by facilitators to create a welcoming environment during the session:

1. Incorporate Arabic language in all materials and announcements. Teachers can agree on saying " Shukran" instead of thank you and"Ahlan" when seeing an AIM, which means welcome
2. Greet AIMs and highlight the importance of their presence
3. Provide continuous assistance
4. Have a clean and neat facility
5. Play oriental music in the background
6. Have a coffee, tea and cookie station
7. Create a discussion environment
8. Learn the names of the mothers and the correct the pronunciation

Branding

To create a brand that relates to the Arab community, Branding was a critical, and interesting part of my project. The brand identity guides viewers to understand how creative the brand is, what does it reflect and how much it relates to its viewers (Wheeler, 2017). I first had some design ideas that reflect the idea of flourishing, improving and being active (figure 40). However, I noticed that everytime I introduced the initiative idea to an Arab immigrant mom, the first thing she will say is “Ya Salaam” which is an Arabic phrase that means “Great. Meanwhile, I was also thinking what name can create a strong emotional connection with my audience that also gives them a sense of belonging and ownership (Murphy, 1992). Danna (2017), states “Great brands take their customer relationships further, incorporating traditions, practices and rituals that strengthen affinity and make the brand an integral part of their customers’ lives. Later, I decided to call my brand”Ya Salaam” this will allow my audience see that their feedback helped in not only planning the session, but also they are part of naming its brand that connects with the Arabic culture in a very positive way (figure 40).

Sketches

Final design

Figure 40
Logo iterations

The typeface used for the logo is Kufam which is a bilingual typeface originally commissioned by Khatt Foundation as part of the Typographic Matchmaking project. The typeface is the result of the collaboration between Dutch type designer Artur Schmal and the Lebanese designer Wael Morcos. The Arabic is inspired by early Kufi inscriptions (7th century) and the Latin is inspired by Dutch urban lettering of the 1920's. Arabs are used to the kufi script as it is frequently used, thus being able to connect with users was the main reason for choosing this type face (googlefonts,2021).

Roboto Slab is used in the body text of the facilitator's guide since it provides readers with a natural reading rhythm based on its largely geometric structure (figure 41).

يـــا سلام
Ya Salaam

Figure 41
Typeface used

Body text

Character design

The characters in the guide were illustrated and designed based on the Arab immigrant mothers and public school teachers I spoke with. Figures 42 & 43 show some of the characters used in the facilitator's guide. The characters helped in creating a friendly tone that can relate to the guide user.

Figure 42
This character is me

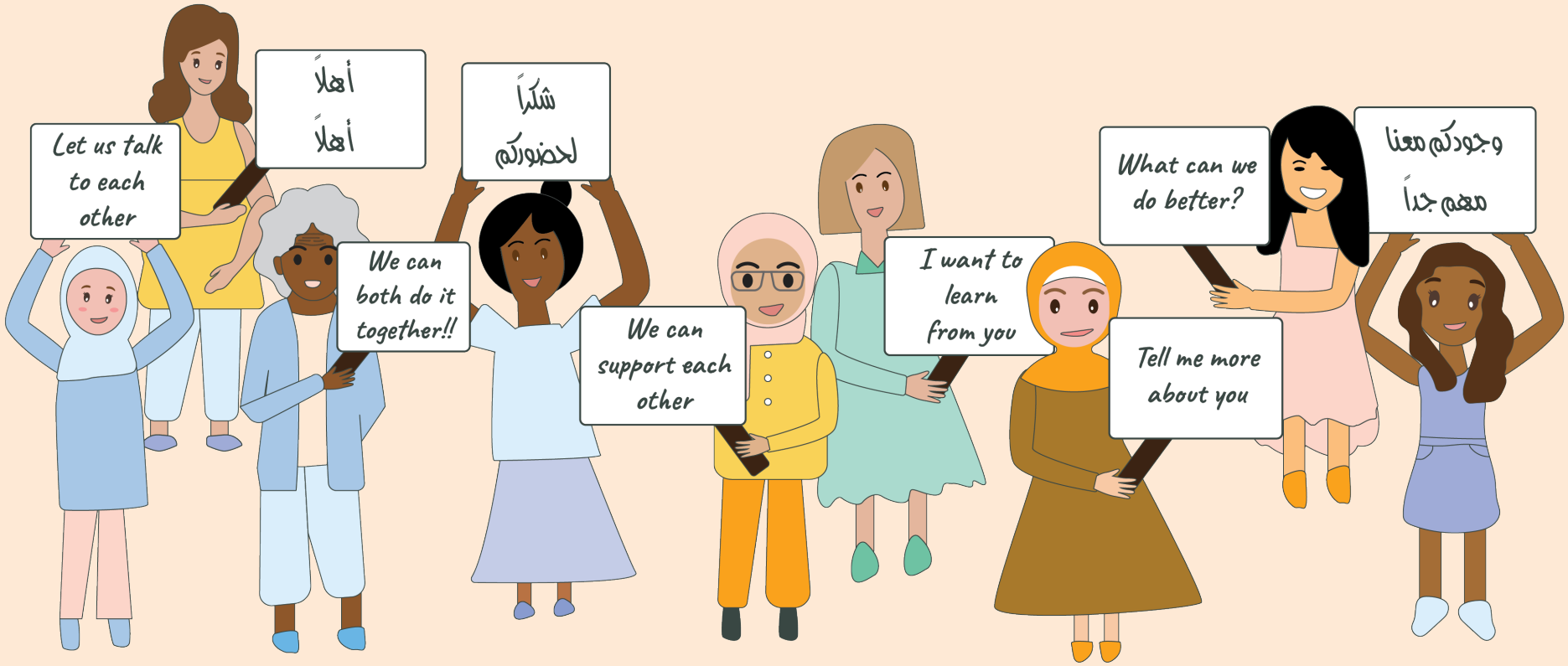


Figure 43

Characters used in the facilitator's guide who are also based on the mothers and teachers interviewed throughout the project

Outcomes

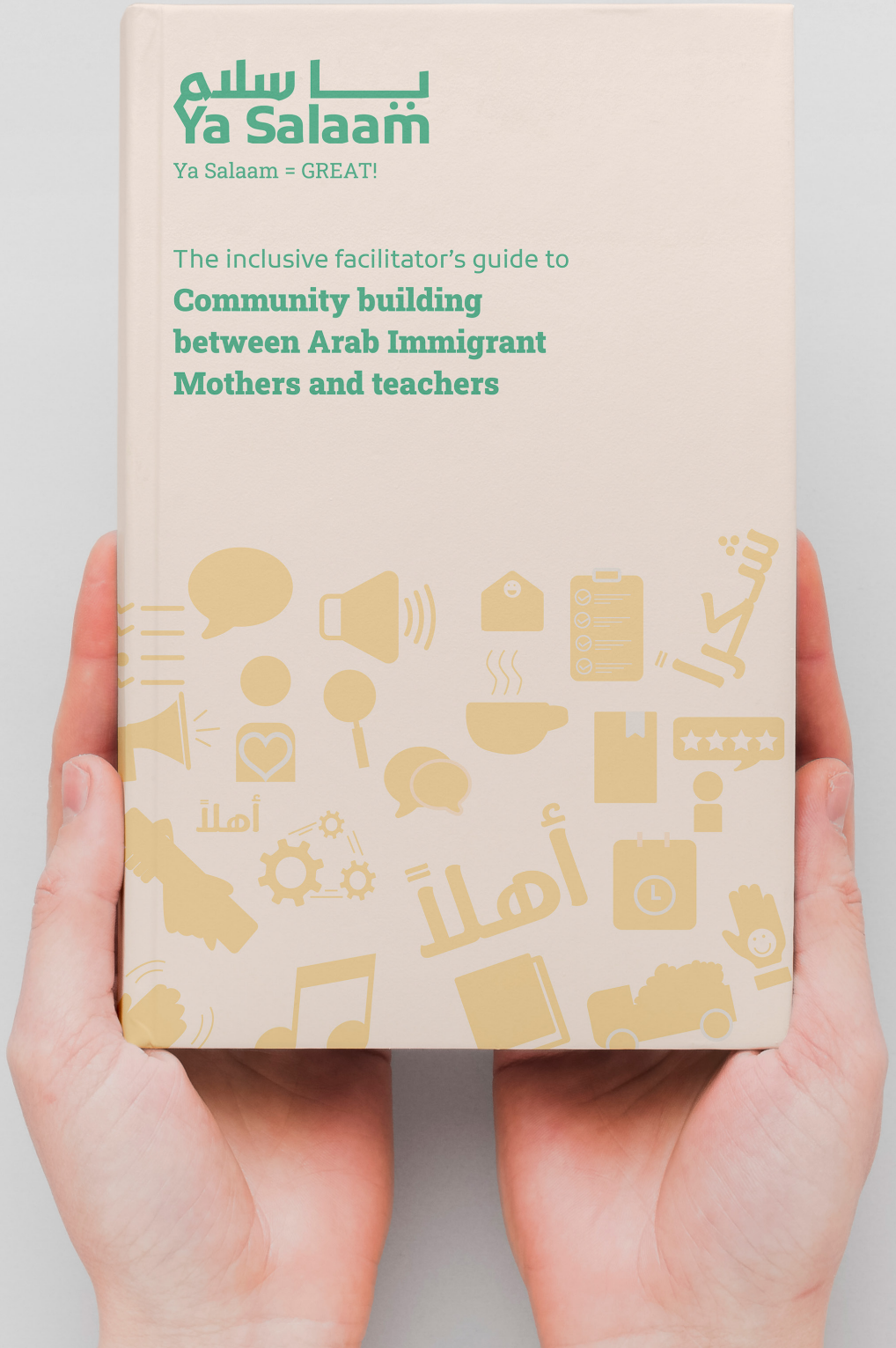


Figure 36

Facilitator's guide mockup
The guide is designed as a book used by the facilitators. It includes resources, plan, checlists, a sample schedule, an agenda and outreach material. Below are few spreads from the facilitator guide

Contents
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Introduction
Manage by participants strategy

As a major step in creating a session that addresses the needs and concerns of participants, Ya Salaam initiated **"manage by participants strategy"** with the aim of developing a discussion and conversation between public school teachers and Arab immigrant mothers in a setting that is welcoming to both parties, designed and managed by them.

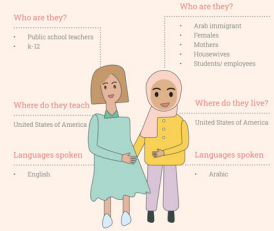
The strategy is being rolled out gradually with two key steps.

First, a facilitating teacher and a facilitating Arab immigrant mother will be delegated to manage and organize the session.

Second, facilitating teacher communicates with teachers to understand what information should be shared, what concerns should be raised, and what information would they like know. Facilitating Arab immigrant mother will also contact AIMs to know what their session goals, and aims are.

Introduction
Potential audience

My potential audience who are also session participants and partners are Arab immigrant mothers and public school teachers .



Introduction
Initiative objectives

The primary objective of the session is to:

Create a sense of familiarity between teachers and AIMs

What does a sense of familiarity mean?

This means feeling comfortable, belonging and closeness to someone or something. When AIMs establish this sense of familiarity between them and teachers by talking to each other and expressing their concerns, abilities and difficulties knowing that they will be understood, makes them feel comfortable in talking with teachers and communicating with them on the long run.

Achieving this objective will allow participants to achieve the following:

- Build a team spirit
- Strengthen relationships
- Create mutual respect and understanding
- Improve communication
- Have fun together
- Learn about each other
- Set a friendly and warm tone

Introduction
Desired outcomes

Both participants, Arab mothers and teachers will expect to have a stronger bond after the session. This can be measured by the comfort level mothers feel in reaching out to teachers, sharing information as well as having a strong communication.

Together for the better
معاً للأفضل

If participants were able to successfully reach this outcome, it can be observed by asking the following questions:

What will change?
Engagement and participation rates of Arab immigrant mothers

For whom?
Arab immigrant mothers of children who attend public school in the United States

How will it be measured
- Survey sent to parents
- Observations done by teachers
- Data collected by the school

Session structure
Planning the session

Workshop organizers and facilitators need to complete the following steps to successfully plan the workshop:

1. Discover & Define
2. Brief & Discuss
3. Inform & Consider

Planning the session is very important to learn about project deliverables, define requirements that will later help guide the session and everyone carrying out the session.

Teachers and parents work together to learn about the problem that needs to be solved, who is involved and willing to participate, and what can be done.

Session structure
Planning the session: Discover & Define
Directed by: Teachers

Teachers meet with school administrators to define their aims for the community building workshop. Teachers also note down their concerns, issues and questions to be discussed in the community building session.

To have wide set of opinions and expertise, teachers will also decide together to reach out to Arab mothers to help in facilitating the session.

The goal of this stage is to :

1. Define session goals and participants
2. Assign facilitator leader roles
3. Discuss venue logistics, date and time of session.

Session structure
Planning the session: Discover & Define
Directed by: Teachers

Define session goals and participants

Teachers will meet to highlight the main goal of the session which is to "Create a sense of familiarity between teachers and AIMs" , and teachers will work on facilitating the session to help achieve that goal. The objective should be written as a clear statement, accessible and noticed always to help provide context during all stages of the session. Teachers will define session goals that help in reaching desired objective.

Topics and issues to be addressed and discussed during the session:

Later, teachers will put a list of all Arab immigrant mothers of students across all school grades. After creating a list of all participants, teachers will select Arab immigrant mothers who have demonstrated strong engagement skills, have a strong relationship with the school and are fluent in both languages, Arabic and English to delegate as a leader facilitator.

An email will be sent to one mother to inquire about her willingness to participate as a facilitator in the session. A sample of an invitation email is included on the next page. This should be sent to the mother at least 2 months prior to the session. A reminder should be sent if there was no respond.

Session structure
Planning the session: Discover & Define

Define session goals and participants

Email sample script sent by the teacher asking an AIM about her willingness to act as a facilitator

Dear Ms. ,
We hope you are doing well.
To learn more about Arab immigrant mothers in our school, we have created "Ya Salaam" initiative to allow us to know them more, learn from them, exchange information and build strong relationships.
In order to execute the initiative, a community building session will be held. To better understand Arab Immigrant mothers we have decided to delegate one Arab immigrant mother to help us in facilitating the session.
We are delighted to ask you if you would like to be part of the initiative and help us in managing, directing and facilitating the session. Based on your extraordinary school engagement, compassion, and communication with the school and teachers we believe that you will contribute greatly to the session and help us in reaching the main objective which is " Creating a sense of familiarity between Arab immigrant mothers and public school teachers".
Based on your approval/ denial of participation we will meet to have a discussion of what duties and jobs are expected to be done by the facilitator.

Thank you for your support!
Sincerely

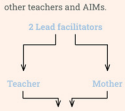
After sending the email, teachers will discuss the second stage of planning the session which is assigning Facilitating leader roles. Upon completion of this stage, teachers need to complete this checklist.

Checklist to be completed by teachers

Session structure
Planning the session: Discover & Define
Directed by: Teachers

Assign facilitator roles

The session will be directed by two leader facilitators, one is a teacher and the other is an AIM. However, both leader facilitators will need to delegate tasks to other teachers and AIMs.



Lead facilitators will work together on:
- Carrying on facilitator role
- Delegating volunteers
- Coordinating venue logistics

Teacher facilitator:

Teacher leader facilitator will be agreed on by all teachers.
The teacher leader will have the following duties:
- Create a varied, stimulating, sequential, balanced learning experience.
- Be available throughout the workshop for discussions with participants.
- Mange duties and work closely with all facilitators.
- Plan in a highly flexible manner
- Formulate initiative aims and make certain that they are understood and achieved
- Monitor the progress of the workshop

Teacher facilitator will also act as a:

- Communicator
- Analyst
- Developer

Volunteering opportunities

The teacher facilitator should recruit teachers to volunteer and help them throughout all session stages. At this point volunteers can help in:
- Taking notes and record keeping
- Taking photos and preparing them to be posted on social media
- Send picture release forms
- Managing resources and taking care of everything related to logistics

Session structure
Planning the session: Discover & Define
Directed by: Teachers

Assign facilitator roles

Teacher facilitator-communicator:

The teacher facilitator is responsible of acting as a communicator throughout the session. This means that the teacher facilitator will inform the public about the session, its goals and objectives and most importantly communicate information in a clear, understandable way.

Organize outreach material

Conduct regular checkups

Manage social media

Ensure record keeping

Take photos

The facilitator can recruit a volunteer to assist her like taking photos, record keeping and other communication based duties.

Session structure
Planning the session: Discover & Define
Directed by: Teachers

Assign facilitator roles

Teacher facilitator-analyst:

When the teacher has gathered the data and information, making use of this information and transforming into a clear way that helps shape the session is extremely critical.

The teacher facilitator will take the role of the analyst throughout the session. By doing so, the teacher will:
- Gather information provided by teachers and FAIMs
- Summarize and manage data
- Monitor data management process
- Analyze a list of required resources and materials.
- Ensure information provided by participants is included and considered

Teacher facilitator-developer:

As a developer, Teacher facilitator will use the data analyzed and processed to develop and articulate a well formulated session plan and schedule.

Session structure

Planning the session:
Discover & Define

Directed by: Teacher facilitator & FAIM

Discuss venue logistics

Both facilitators, the teacher and the AIM will meet to discuss venue logistics which include responsibilities for the FT and FAIM.

The FAIM is responsible of

- Communicate with a translator
- Communicate with a caregiver
- Record required resources and materials

NOTE: FAIM will be notified of the available budget and will act accordingly. Thus, resources may either be recruited and paid for or managed to be provided at no cost.

Communicate with a translator

The FAIM will be responsible for providing a translator who is capable of understanding and speaking English and Arabic. Based on the budget, FAIM may either recruit a professional translator, or manage to have a volunteer to assist in translation services. This can be provided by either the Islamic center or asking an Arab immigrant mother who knows both languages, but does not have children in school.

Communicate with a caregiver

Since many mothers have difficulties in attending due to having no place to keep them, the initiative offers childcare to allow as many mother as possible to attend. The FAIM will be in charge of contacting a caregiver to sit and take care of children while they are in the session. The budget determiner whether a professional caregiver can be hired or looking into what services the community has in terms of childcare and volunteers.

Record required resources and materials

FAIM will record what resources and materials should be provided to AIMs during the session.
This includes, stationaries, food, materials and resources.

Session structure

Planning the session:
Discover & Define

Directed by: Teacher facilitator & FAIM

Discuss venue logistics

The FT is responsible of

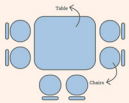
- Keeping track of the budget
- Manage furniture and space
- Define materials and resources needed

Keeping track of the budget

FT will keep in mind the budget and spend it carefully and look into ways to save money by recruiting volunteers and allowing participants to take certain roles and duties.

Manage furniture and space

FT decides with other teachers on the venue, where wold the event be and most importantly book it for the event. FT will also agree on the following seating plan. **Seating participants in a way is critical to ensuring a happy experience during the session. As described by parents, sitting in a U-shaped way promotes discussion, participation,**



Define materials and resources needed

Making sure that resources noted by teachers and parents are available is crucial. The FT will combine all resources and materials needed into a list and look closely into them.

Session structure

Planning the session:
Discover & Define

Directed by: Teacher facilitator & FAIM

Discuss venue logistics

All AIMs discussed during the interviews about the importance of feeling welcomed, safe and comfortable during the event and between teachers. " A welcoming environment" was continuously described by parents. FT and FAIM should work together on ensuring that the environment is welcoming and reflected in all areas and times of the session.

What is a welcoming environment as described by AIMs?

Welcoming environments are spaces where people feel comfortable, safe, and belonging. In a safe environment people find themselves reflected, and treated with respect and dignity. AIMs discussed different topics that can help in creating a welcoming environment.

Topics and ideas to keep in mind when creating a welcoming environment to AIMs:

Incorporate Arabic language in all materials and announcements. Teachers can agree on saying " Shukran" instead of thank you and "Ahlan" when seeing an AIM, which means welcome.

Greet AIMs and highlight the importance of their presence

Provide continuous assistance

Have a clean and neat facility

Session structure

Planning the session:
Discover & Define

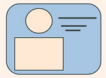
Directed by: Teacher facilitator & FAIM

Discuss venue logistics

Oriental music

Have a coffee, tea and cookie station

Create a discussion environment



Learn the names of the mothers and the correct the pronunciation

Facilitators agree on what to include in the participant's packets that will be placed on every seat. This includes:

- agenda
- copies of resources list
- List of all participants
- notepads
- sticky notes
- activity sheets
- pen/pencil
- name tag and name placard
- water bottle
- Contact numbers sheet

Volunteering opportunities

Teacher facilitator and FAIM will need to recruit volunteer to assist them with venue logistics before and after the session. Volunteer may assist in the following:

- Organizing the venue
- Greeting and welcoming participants
- Distributing resources and materials throughout the event.
- Making sure participants know where resources, restrooms and materials are.

Session structure

Planning the session:
Discover & Define

Discuss venue logistics

Upon agreeing with FAIM, teacher facilitator will share information with teachers and discuss session topics and ideas with fellow teachers.

TO DO

Date	✓	Item
	☐	Set time and date options for the session
	☐	Book venue for the session
	☐	Communicate with FAIM
	☐	Understand what a "welcoming environment" for AIMs is
	☐	Discuss venue furniture and seating plan with FAIM.
	☐	Discuss venue furniture and seating plan with FAIM.

Checklist to be completed by teacher facilitator

Session structure

Planning the session:
Discover & Define

Discuss venue logistics

FAIM at this point understands what is expected from her in terms of duties and information.

TO DO

Date	✓	Item
	☐	Share knowledge in regards of venue logistics
	☐	Understand facilitator role
	☐	Create a reach out plan to AIMs
	☐	Agree on a communication plan with teacher facilitator

Checklist to be completed by FAIM

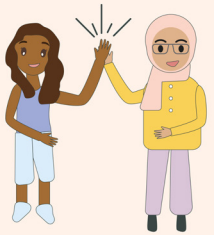
Session structure

Planning the session:
Brief & Discuss

Directed by: Teacher facilitator & FAIM

Facilitators meet to brief FAIMs about the session, aims, goals and strategies to be followed. Facilitator teacher and FAIM share their knowledge, hopes, and ideas.

This step allows FAIM understand the main goal of the initiative, what is the teacher hoping to achieve. FAIM will plan future directions based on this briefing.



- Set a communication protocol between facilitators
- Ensure that each facilitator understands the role given and is able to do the requirements
- Create a shared set of expectations and outcomes
- Review participants list
- Delegate roles to volunteers
- Review participants list
- Inform facilitators what this session is about and how important it is to them and to other parents
- Teachers inform FAIMs that they are part of planning for the workshop and a major participant that will assist in shaping the final content and logistics for the session
- Agree on where and when will the session take place
- Identify sources of funding for the session
- Identify any key issues/ weaknesses that will need to be addressed in planning
- Define what resources and materials are needed
- Agree on outreach material

Session structure

Planning the session:
Inform and consider

Directed by: AIMs & FAIM

FAIMs meet with AIMs to inform them in details about the session, and learn from them what their expectations and goals are. This step in planning is extremely critical and the FAIM must make sure to record the session. During the meeting AIMs are expected to share their thoughts around the initiative, their hopes, what is their desired outcome, get the information they need, and introduce themselves.

Volunteering tasks

- Welcoming: volunteer will welcome parents as they enter the school building
- Organizing: volunteer will help in seating parents.
- Managing: volunteer will keep track of materials and snacks area.
- Assisting: volunteer will assist FAIM and makes sure of recording and taking photos throughout the process.

Note: Based on the multiple commitments that mothers have, conducting an online meeting is the best option.

Highlight the importance of the session and their presence

Know the participants closely

Ask AIMs to fill in the form on the next page

Inform them about the session, what is the main topic of the session, and also learn from them what they plan on gaining from the session to take it into consideration

Understand what topics need to be clarified and addressed by teachers and AIMs

Learn from AIMs their hopes and aspirations for being active school partners

Inform AIMs about the possibility of volunteering and ask them about their willingness to volunteer

Session structure

Planning the session:
Inform and consider

Directed by: AIMs & FAIM

Fill in form to give AIMs.

Name: _____ Child/ children name(s): _____

Phone#: _____ _____

Email: _____ _____

Languages spoken: _____ Child/ children grade(s): _____

Need translator ○ Yes ○ No

Need caregiver ○ Yes ○ No

I would like to help with: (please check all that

Welcoming participants ☐ Assisting AIMs ☐ Organizing venue ☐
Record keeping ☐ Managing resources ☐ Taking photos of session ☐

I would like to volunteer: (please check all that apply)

During the event ☐ After the event ☐
Before the event ☐ Throughout the event ☐

☐ I hereby grant permission to use photographs and/or videos of me taken after, and during the session in social media, publications, online, and in other communications related to the mission of Ya Salaam.

Date _____ Signature _____

Session structure

Planning the session:
Discover & Define

Discuss venue logistics

FAIM now have contacted AIMs, heard them, learned about their expectations and asked them about their willingness to volunteer.

TO DO

Date	✓	Item
	☐	Contact AIMS
	☐	Share EI in form with AIMs
	☐	Record AIMs meeting
	☐	Organize and analyze data from the meeting

Checklist to be completed by FAIM

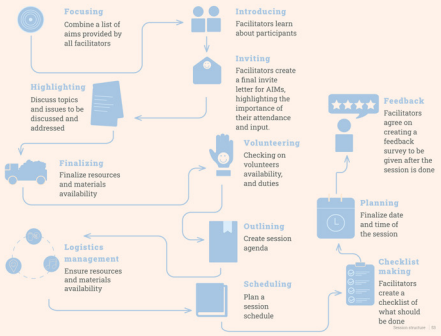
Session structure

Preparing the session:
Manage & Coordinate

Directed by: Teacher facilitator & FAIM

The second stage of the workshop structure is preparation. At this stage, all of the data and input gathered during the planning stage, will be put into action and organized to create a structure for the session. Facilitators work hand in hand to manage and coordinate the session.

Facilitators meet to share information they have with each other and discuss how the session will look like, what it will discuss and start shaping the session.



Guidance for interactions

Interaction guidelines between facilitators

Share relevant information

Facilitators are expected to always share information gathered to develop a comprehensive, cohesive information to attain desired goal.

Listen and take notes

Facilitators need to listen while reaching out to participants and talking to each other, allowing one person to talk at a time.

Avoid jargon

The usage of complex words may confuse listeners and make it hard for them to understand and/or reach the pint discussed. Make sure to use simple, and clear language.

Be nice and understanding

Make sure to respect people and each other. Understanding what is being said and appreciating information shared is very important to show people that their input is always welcomed.

Be constructive & jointly discuss next steps

Encourage ideas and create a positive context. Always highlight the goal of the initiative. Highlight that everyone is committed to moving forward together as a team.

Keep it real

Set a friendly, warm tone in a way where everyone feels welcomed and comfortable. Be kind and empathetic. Showing participants that their concerns are important is very important.

Interaction guidelines between facilitators and participants

- Respect everyone
- Show up on time to end session on time
- Attend with positive expectations
- Be ready to share ideas and listen to others
- Be engaged all the time
- Keep your phone silent and try not to be distracted
- Avoid side conversations
- Ask questions for clarification
- Take notes
- Pay attention to questions being asked
- Keep in touch with participants
- Avoid judgmental reactions to ideas
- Make sure to keep the name tag clear and noticeable
- Be curious and focus on the main initiative goal

Guidance for interactions

List of interaction guidelines between facilitators

Share relevant information

Facilitators are expected to always share information gathered to develop a comprehensive, cohesive information to attain desired goal.

Avoid jargon

The usage of complex words may confuse listeners and make it hard for them to understand and/or reach the pint discussed. Make sure to use simple, and clear language.

Be constructive & jointly discuss next steps

Encourage ideas and create a positive context. Always highlight the goal of the initiative. Highlight that everyone is committed to moving forward together as a team.

Listen and take notes

Facilitators need to listen while reaching out to participants and talking to each other, allowing one person to talk at a time.

Be nice and understanding

Make sure to respect people and each other. Understanding what is being said and appreciating information shared is very important to show people that their input is always welcomed.

Keep it real

Set a friendly, warm tone in a way where everyone feels welcomed and comfortable. Be kind and empathetic. Showing participants that their concerns are important is very important.

Note to facilitators: Try saying "SHUKRAN" instead of thank you and "AHLAN" instead of welcome

Interaction guidelines between facilitators and participants	إرشادات التفاعل بين الميسرين والمشاركين
• Respect everyone	• احترم الجميع
• Attend with positive expectations	• احضر مع توقعات إيجابية
• Be engaged all the time	• انخرط في كل وقت
• Avoid side conversations	• تجنب المحادثات الجانبية
• Take notes	• دون ملاحظات
• Keep in touch with participants	• ابق على اتصال مع المشاركين
• Make sure to keep the name tag clear and noticeable	• تأكد من إبقاء بطاقة الاسم واضحة ومحفوظة
• Show up on time to end session on time	• كن على الموعد لإنهاء الجلسة في الوقت المحدد
• Be ready to share ideas and listen to others	• كن مستعدا لمشاركة الأفكار والاستماع إلى الآخرين
• Keep your phone silent and try not to be distracted	• حافظ على هاتفك صامتا وحاول ألا تلتفت انتباهك
• Ask questions for clarification	• اطرح أسئلة للتوضيح
• Pay attention to questions being asked	• انتبه للأسئلة
• Avoid judgmental reactions to ideas	• تجنب ردود الفعل القضائية
• Be curious and focus on the main initiative goal	• كن فضوليا وركز على الهدف الرئيسي

Guidance for interactions

Interaction guidelines between facilitators

Note to facilitators: Try saying "SHUKRAN" instead of thank you and "Ahlan" instead of welcome

Remember !
A little goes a long way and you can be sure to win some hearts when saying those two nice Arabic words.

Make sure to follow the guidelines to run the session smoothly

تأكد من اتباع الإرشادات لمساعدة الجلسة

Suggested schedule for arranging the Workshop

Timeline	Task
2 months before	• Assemble the session team • Secure a venue • Invite/notify participants and send pre-session fill in form
1 month before	• Confirm list of participants • Collect pre-session participant fill in form • Analyze data and create a session schedule and plan • Confirm availability of volunteers • Assign roles and presentations among facilitators
2-3 weeks before	• Finalize and produce materials, worksheets, etc. • Confirm venue logistics, translator(s), childcare.
1 week before	• Assemble participants' packets and materials • Create participant roster with contact information
1-2 days before	• Facilitators and volunteers travel to session location, if applicable • Conduct volunteer's meeting • Prepare the session room

Session schedule

Time	Activity	Responsible and duration
8:00-8:30	Welcome & icebreaker activity	Facilitators 30 minutes
8:30-9:00	Introduce participants	Facilitators 35 minutes
9:00-9:30	Introduction	Facilitators 30 minutes
9:30-10:45	Discussion about parental engagement	Facilitators 45 minutes
10:45-11:00	Coffee break	
11:00-12:00	Teachers concerns	Teachers 1 hr
12:00-1:00	Parents concerns	Arab immigrant mothers 1hr
1:00-1:15	coffee break	
1:15-2:15	Q & A	All participants 1hr
2:15-2:45	Activity 2	Facilitators 30 minutes
2:45-3:00	Wrap up	Facilitators 15 minutes

Activities

Icebreaker activity

Directed by: Teacher facilitator & FAIM

Why is having an icebreaker activity important at the beginning of the session?

Carrying out an icebreaker activity at the beginning of the session allows participants, teachers and mothers, to know each other in a fun interactive way. In addition icebreaker activities boost the energy before the meeting. The icebreaker activity in this session is designed to allow participants know each other on a personal level and strengthen their connection.

Moreover, the activity gives teachers the opportunity of putting themselves in others shoes, allowing them to be more empathetic.

What is the activity?

Divide participants including teachers team into 4 groups. Ask them to write down five things they have in common. Make sure to divide them in a way where they will need to more around, change places and interact in several ways.

What to expect after doing the icebreaker activity?

- Create a sense of community
- Open dialogue
- Change the environment into a fun one
- Boost productivity

Don't forget! its always FUN!

Activities

Activity 2

Directed by: FAIM

Word association game

1. The FAIM will ask participants, mothers and teachers to move their chairs and sit in a circle.
2. The FAIM will ask one of the mothers say any word, out loud, in Arabic or English related to the session.
3. The other participants will say words related to the first word. Every participant will have 5 seconds to say a word.

What does this game reflect?

Shows what participants most connect with, and affiliate with the session.

After session survey

Analyzed by : Facilitating teachers and FAIM

The after session survey is given at the end of the session to AIMs as well as participating teachers to better understand what their feedback is, and what can be improved.

Facilitating teacher and FAIM will read the survey form and analyze it.

The survey forms will be sent via email and handed for mothers asking them to submit them either way.

The survey is on the following page.

Please give us feedback on your experience with this session. Your comments and suggestions will help us refine and improve the design, content and delivery of the session.

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
The session goal and learning objectives were met			
The session answered my questions and concerns			
The sessions were delivered in an interesting, engaging way			
The length of the session was appropriate			
The facilitators were helpful, knowledgeable, and caring			
The handouts and resources were helpful			
The session venue was welcoming and comfortable			

Name a discussion topic or activity that was useful and beneficial for you.

Name any topics that you feel were missing and should be included in this session.

How we can make this Workshop better?

Will you attend this session for a second time?

How did the facilitators and volunteers assist you?

Describe how your relationship is with teachers and fellow participants after the session.

Thank you.

We highly appreciate your feedback

Wrap up

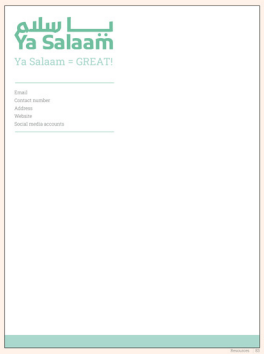
Directed by: Facilitating teacher

Facilitator teacher will thank participants for attending the session and recap the whole session, highlighting the following:

- Outlining achieving the session goal
- Asking if they have any questions?
- Assuring them they will be notified of future steps
- Reminding them to fill in the survey
- Notify them that they can contact you through email? phone? provide them with the needed contact details.

Letterhead

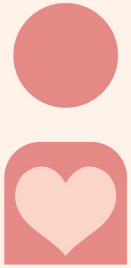
Letterhead to be used for branding any material for the session



Initiative core values

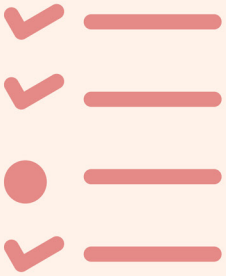
Facilitate effective conversations

Participants will have a safe environment for them to share information, raise concerns and learn from each other.



Create a culture of warmth, belonging, and mutual understanding where everyone is welcomed

The initiative will allow participants share their knowledge, abilities and background information, building bridges and relationships allowing participants to create a sense of belonging and partnership.



Share important information and address critical questions and resources

Sharing information and resources between participants is crucial. All information that needs to be addressed and explained in details making it easy for participants to understand and inquire in real time.

Empathy building

Sharing stories, experiences and expectations will allow participants to understand and relate to each other's emotions. Empathy creates trust, belonging, and intimacy that helps in strengthening relationships.

Initiative objectives

The primary objective of the session is to:

Create a sense of familiarity between teachers and AIMs

What does a sense of familiarity mean?

This means feeling comfortable, belonging and closeness to someone or something. When AIMs establish this sense of familiarity between them and teachers by talking to each other and expressing their concerns, abilities and difficulties knowing that they will be understood, makes them feel comfortable in talking with teachers and communicating with them on the long run.

Achieving this objective will allow participants to achieve the following:

- Build a team spirit
- Strengthen relationships
- Create mutual respect and understanding
- Improve communication
- Have fun together
- Learn about each other
- Set a friendly and warm tone

Introduction

Desired outcomes

Both participants, Arab mothers and teachers will expect to have a stronger bond after the session. This can be measured by the comfort level mothers feel in reaching out to teachers, sharing information as well as having a strong communication.

Together for the better

معاً للأفضل

If participants were able to successfully reach this outcome, it can be observed by asking the following questions:

What will change?

Engagement and participation rates of Arab immigrant mothers

For whom?

Arab immigrant mothers of children who attend public school in the United States

How will it be measured

- Survey sent to parents
- Observations done by teachers
- Data collected by the school

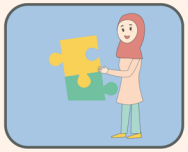
Planning the session:
Discover & Define

Directed by: Teachers

Define session goals and participants

Teachers will meet to highlight the main goal of the session which is to **"Create a sense of familiarity between teachers and AIMs"** , and teachers will work on facilitating the session to help achieve that goal. The objective should be written as a clear statement, accessible and noticed always to help provide context during all stages of the session. Teachers will define session goals that help in reaching desired objective.

Topics and issues to be addressed and discussed during the session:



Engagement/ Involvement

Language

Communication

Available resources

Culture

Later, teachers will put a list of all Arab immigrant mothers of students across all school grades. After creating a list of all participants, teachers will select Arab immigrant mothers who have demonstrated strong engagement skills, have a strong relationship with the school and are fluent in both languages, Arabic and English to delegate as a leader facilitator.

An email will be sent to one mother to inquire about her willingness to participate as a facilitator in the session. A sample of an invitation email is included on the next page. This should be sent to the mother at least 2 months prior to the session. A reminder should be sent if there was no respond.

Planning the session:
Discover & Define

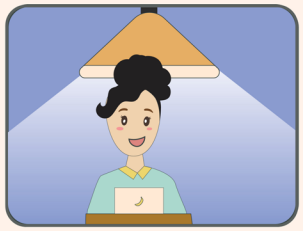
Directed by: Teachers

Assign facilitator roles

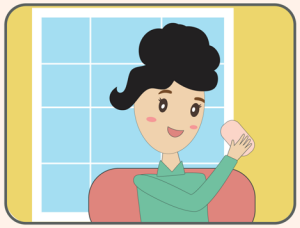
Teacher facilitator-communicator:

The teacher facilitator is responsible of acting as a communicator throughout the session. This means that the teacher facilitator will inform the public about the session, its goals and objectives and most importantly communicate information in a clear, understandable way.

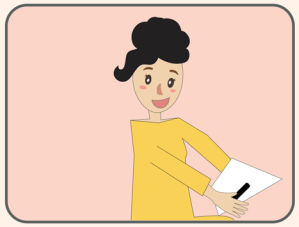
Organize outreach material



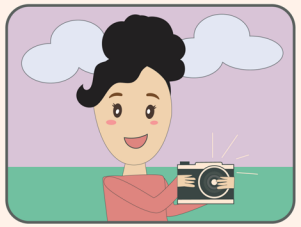
Conduct regular checkups



Manage social media



Ensure record keeping



Take photos

The facilitator can recruit a volunteer to assist her like taking photos, record keeping and other communication based duties.

Planning the session:
Discover & Define

Directed by: Teacher facilitator & FAIM

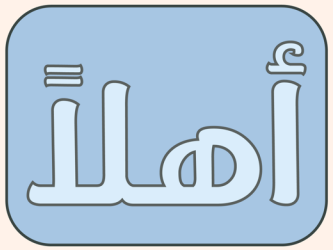
Discuss venue logistics

All AIMs discussed during the interviews about the importance of feeling welcomed, safe and comfortable during the event and between teachers. “ A welcoming environment” was continuously described by parents. FT and FAIM should work together on ensuring that the environment is welcoming and reflected in all areas and times of the session.

What is a welcoming environment as described by AIMs?

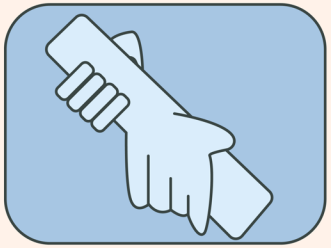
Welcoming environments are spaces where people feel comfortable, safe, and belonging. In a safe environment people find themselves reflected, and treated with respect and dignity. AIMs discussed different topics that can help in creating a welcoming environment.

Topics and ideas to keep in mind when creating a welcoming environment to AIMs:

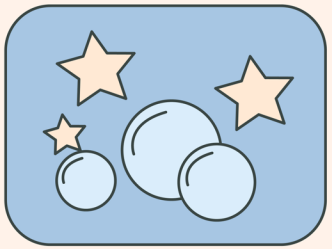


Incorporate Arabic language in all materials and announcements. Teachers can agree on saying “ Shukran” instead of thank you and “Ahlan” when seeing an AIM, which means welcome.

Greet AIMs and highlight the importance of their presence



Provide continuous assistance



Have a clean and neat facility

Session structure

Planning the session:
Discover & Define

Directed by: Teacher facilitator & FAIM

Discuss venue logistics

The FT is responsible of

- Keeping track of the budget
- Manage furniture and space
- Define materials and resources needed

Keeping track of the budget

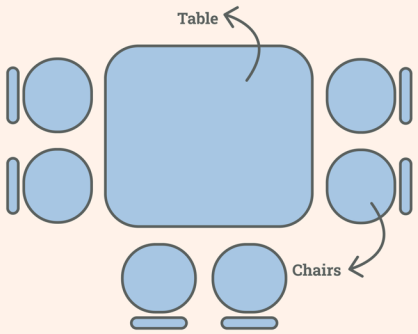
FT will keep in mind the budget and spend it carefully and look into ways to save money by recruiting volunteers and allowing participants to take certain roles and duties.

Define materials and resources needed

Making sure that resources noted by teachers and parents are available is crucial. The FT will combine all resources and materials needed into a list and look closely into them.

Manage furniture and space

FT decides with other teachers on the venue, where wold the event be and most importantly book it for the event. FT will also agree on the following seating plan. Seating participants in a way is critical to ensuring a happy experience during the session. As described by parents, sitting in a U-shaped way promotes discussion, participation,



Session structure

Planning the session: Inform and consider

Directed by: AIMs & FAIM

FAIMs meet with AIMs to inform them in details about the session, and learn from them what their expectations and goals are. This step in planning is extremely critical and the FAIM must make sure to record the session. During the meeting AIMs are expected to share their thoughts around the initiative, their hopes, what is their desired outcome, get the information they need, and introduce themselves.

Volunteering tasks

- **Welcoming: volunteer will welcome parents as they enter the school building**
- **Organizing: volunteer will help in seating parents.**
- **Managing: volunteer will keep track of materials and snacks area.**
- **Assisting: volunteer will assist FAIM and makes sure of recording and taking photos throughout the process.**

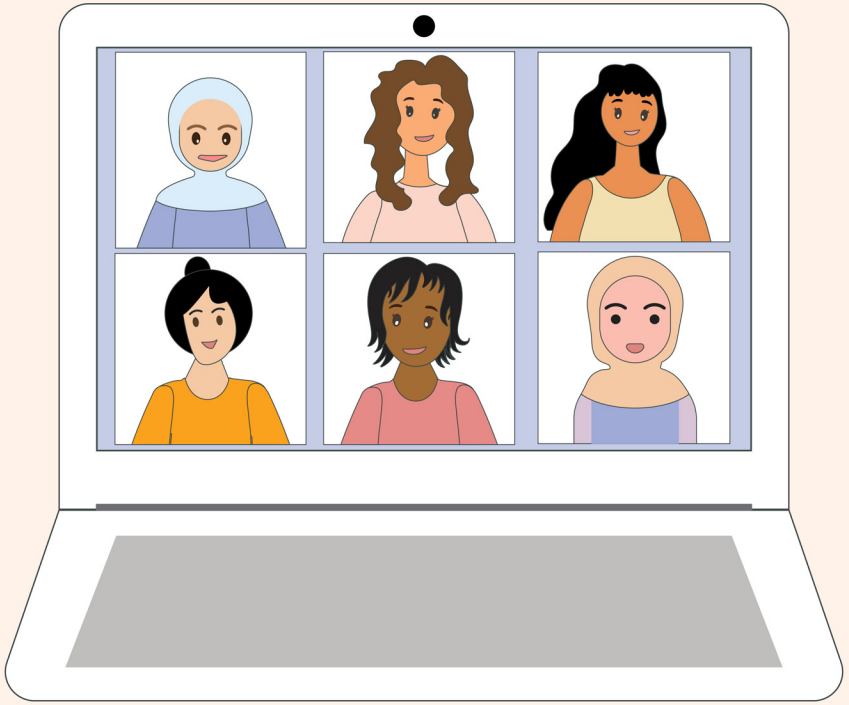
Note: Based on the multiple commitments that mothers have, conducting an online meeting is the best option.

Highlight the importance of the session and their presence

Know the participants closely

Ask AIMs to fill in the form on the next page

Inform them about the session, what is the main topic of the session, and also learn from them what they plan on gaining from the session to take it into consideration



Understand what topics need to be clarified and addressed by teachers and AIMs

Learn from AIMs their hopes and aspirations for being active school partners

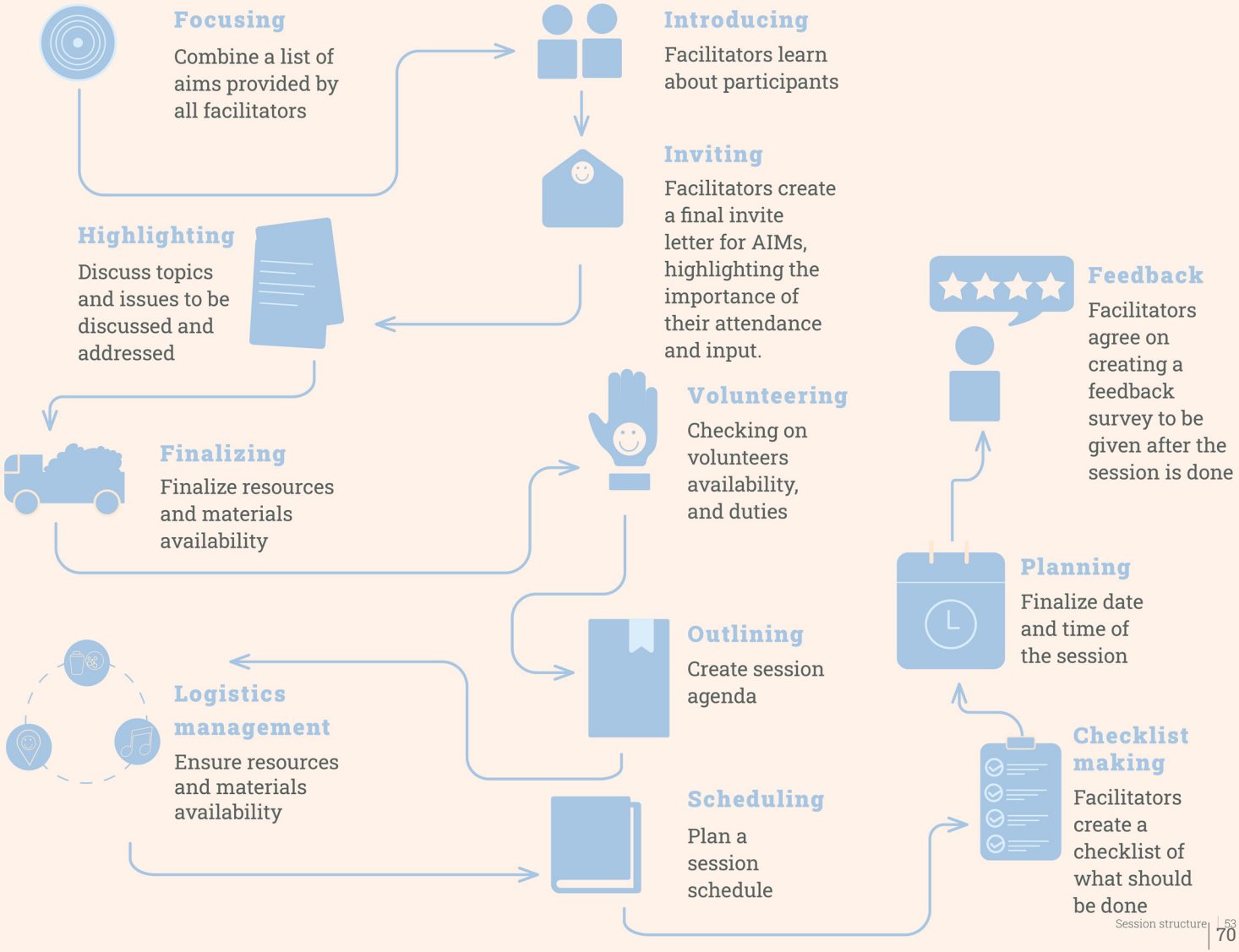
Inform AIMs about the possibility of volunteering and ask them about their willingness to volunteer

Preparing the session: Manage & Coordinate

Directed by: Teacher facilitator & FAIM

The second stage of the workshop structure is preparation. At this stage, all of the data and input gathered during the planning stage, will be put into action and organized to create a structure for the session. Facilitators work hand in hand to manage and coordinate the session.

Facilitators meet to share information they have with each other and discuss how the session will look like, what it will discuss and start shaping the session.



Guidance for interactions

List of interaction guidelines between facilitators

Share relevant information

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Avoid jargon

The usage of complex words may confuse listeners and make it hard for them to understand and/ or reach the pint discussed. Make sure to use simple, and clear language.

Be constructive & jointly discuss next steps

Encourage ideas and create a positive context. Always highlight the goal of the initiative. Highlight that everyone is committed to moving forward together as a team.

Listen and take notes

Facilitators need to listen while reaching out to participants and talking to each other, allowing one person to talk at a time.

Be nice and understanding

Make sure to respect people and each other. Understanding what is being said and appreciating information shared is very important to show people that their input is always welcomed.

Keep it real

Set a friendly, warm tone in a way where everyone feels welcomed and comfortable. Be kind and empathetic. Showing participants that their concerns are important is very important.

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• Avoid side conversations	• تجنب المحادثات الجانبية
• Take notes	• دون ملاحظات
• Keep in touch with participants	• ابق على اتصال مع المشاركين
• Make sure to keep the name tag clear and noticeable	• تأكد من إبقاء بطاقة الاسم واضحة وملحوظة
• Show up on time to end session on time	• كن على الموعد لإنهاء الجلسة في الوقت المحدد
• Be ready to share ideas and listen to others	• كن مستعدًا لمشاركة الأفكار والاستماع إلى الآخرين
• Keep your phone silent and try not to be distracted	• حافظ على هاتفك صامتًا وحاول ألا تشتت انتباهك
• Ask questions for clarification	• اطرح أسئلة للتوضيح
• Pay attention to questions being asked	• انتبه للأسئلة
• Avoid judgmental reactions to ideas	• تجنب ردود الفعل القضائية
• Be curious and focus on the main initiative goal	• كن فضوليًا وركز على الهدف الرئيسي

Activities

Activity 2

Directed by: FAIM

Word association game

1. The FAIM will ask participants, mothers and teachers to move their chairs and sit in a circle.
2. The FAIM will ask one of the mothers say any word, out loud, in Arabic or English related to the session.
3. The other participants will say words related to the first word. Every participant will have 5 seconds to say a word.

What does this game reflect?

Shows what participants most connect with, and affiliate with the session.

After session survey

Analyzed by : Facilitating teachers and FAIM

The after session survey is given at the end of the session to AIMs as well as participating teachers to better understand what their feedback is, and what can be improved.

Facilitating teacher and FAIM will read the survey form and analyze it.

The survey forms will be sent via email and handed for mothers asking them to submit them either way.

The survey is on the following page.

Figure 44

Tote bag designed to be given to participants during the Ya Salaam session

Figure 45

Buttons mockup- designed to be given to participants during the Ya Salaam session

Figure 46

Website mockup that acts like a holder for the initiative materiel to allow access by any school

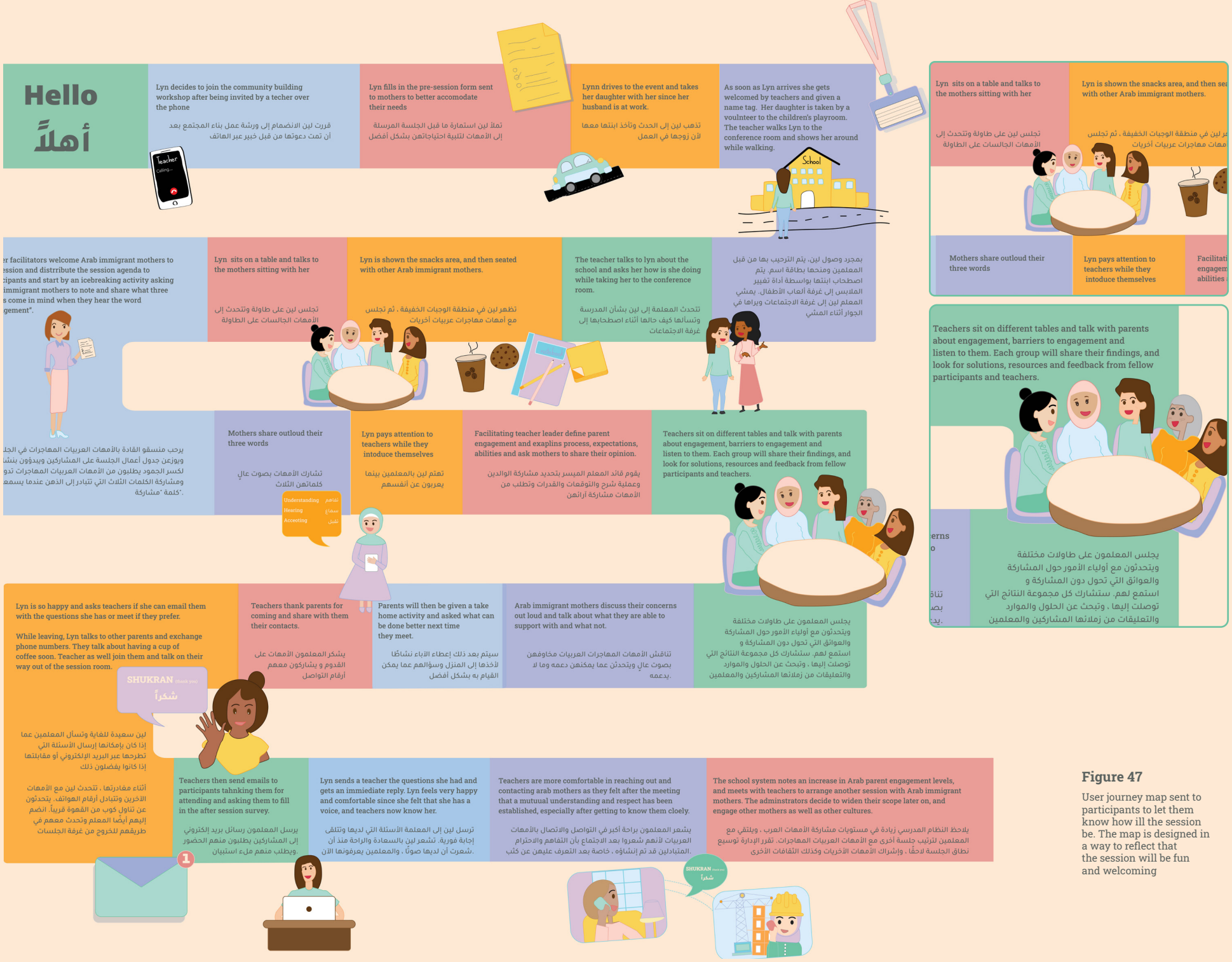


Figure 47

User journey map sent to participants to let them know how ill the session be. The map is designed in a way to reflect that the session will be fun and welcoming

Process work

Iterative design

Creating the facilitator guide required constant prototyping and testing. My initial design focused on making the facilitator guide feel fun, friendly, and easy to understand. Several iterations were done and with every iteration, I used to make my potential audience look at it and provide me with feedback. This methodology allowed me to find mistakes, understand user interface, and improve usability (Adams, 2001). Based on the feedback, I decided to work on having less text and more images and illustrations. Figures 48–53 show some of my process work.

Introduction

The purpose of the community building session, Facilitating Arab Immigrant mother's engagement in elementary public schools in America, is to provide Arab immigrant mothers with an introduction to parent engagement and allow them to reflect on their experiences, abilities and concerns. Teachers will also be present to answer any questions and build bridges between them and parents. For Parent engagement to take place at an efficient level, parents and teachers should work together to support and develop the educational journey for children. Research shows that parent engagement in schools is closely linked to better student behavior, higher academic achievement, and enhanced social skills. Parent engagement also makes it more likely that children and adolescents will avoid harmful behaviors.

Efforts to engage parents and increase their participation level in America has been ongoing, and parents' role is as important as teachers in the education journey of children. In Facilitating Arab Immigrant mother's engagement in elementary public schools in America the facilitator's guide refers to arab immigrant mothers who are willing to lead and carry on the session. The facilitator's guide provides interactive activities and opportunities for participants who are arab immigrant mothers to reflect their knowledge, abilities, expectations, and experiences related to parent engagement. The session will be tailored to meet the needs and interests of Arab immigrant mothers. This session will also be used to inform and educate teachers in public schools about Arab immigrant parents and help them better understand them closely.

The facilitator's guide will provide handout materials, activities, resources needed to implement in the community building session. Moreover, a poster and an email template to use in promoting the availability of this session to Arab immigrant parent and inviting them to attend is included.

Note: In this document and throughout the session AIM will be used to refer to Arab Immigrant mothers. Parents are responsible for every detail in their children's life, and their involvement in their children's education leads to high achievements and increase their level of confidence.

Manage by participants strategy

As a major step in creating a workshop that addresses the needs and concerns of partoicipants, SALAM initiated a manage by participants strategy with the aim of being close to both teachers and mothers so that both parties feel comfortable in reaching out and addressing the concerns to a trust worthy person. The strategy is being rolled out gradually with two key steps.

First, teachers send AIMs an email asking them if they would like to volunteer and help in executing the workshop noting that work will be expected to be done before, during, and after the workshop is over.

Second, to ensure that both participants, teachers and AIMs have the knowledge and skills required to organize, manage and attend the even, AIMS will gather information from AIMs and teachers to beter address the issues.

Target audience

Arab Immigrant mothers and teachers in Public American schools, and any caregiver involved in support and implementation of school parental engagement strategies. The audience is focused on mothers based on the findings that Arab immigrant mothers are responsible of taking care of their children's education.

Purpose of the workshop

To bring relevant people together and provide a structure and common understanding to make a good start on planning and implementing parental engagement strategies and outreach.

Desired outputs

List of information that outlines the best practices and strategies in reaching out and engaging with AIMs and American Public schools.

Election of an AIM leader to act as an intermediator between teachers and AIMs.

Introduction

The purpose of the community building session is to provide Arab immigrant mothers with an introduction to parent engagement and allow them to reflect on their experiences, abilities and concerns. Teachers will also be present to answer any questions and build bridges between them and parents. For Parent engagement to take place at an efficient level, parents and teachers should work together to support and develop the educational journey for children. Research shows that parent engagement in schools is closely linked to better student behavior, higher academic achievement, and enhanced social skills. Parent engagement also makes it more likely that children and adolescents will avoid harmful behaviors.

The session provides opportunities for participants who are Arab immigrant mothers to reflect their knowledge, abilities, expectations, and experiences related to parent engagement. The session will be tailored to meet the needs and interests of Arab immigrant mothers. This session will also be used to inform and educate teachers in public schools about Arab immigrant parents and help them better understand them closely.

Manage by participants strategy

As a major step in creating a workshop that addresses the needs and concerns of participants, ***Ya Salam*** initiated *"manage by participants strategy"* with the aim of developing a discussion and conversation setting throughout all levels in American public schools so that they could build bridges between each other. The strategy is being rolled out gradually with two key steps.

First, teachers carrying on the session contact Arab immigrant mothers know to be engaged and highly involved in the school to help in facilitating and managing the session.

Second, to ensure that both participants, teachers and Facilitating Arab immigrant mothers have the knowledge and skills required to organize, manage and attend the even, planning the workshop will be divided into several steps to ensure that information and data is being shared and implemented by both teachers and Facilitating Arab immigrant mothers. This will ensure that expectations and goals put by participants are taken into consideration.

Target audience

- Arab immigrant mothers
- Public school teachers in the USA

Purpose of the workshop

To bring relevant people together and provide a structure and common understanding to make a good start on planning and implementing parental engagement strategies and outreach for Arab immigrant mothers.

Desired outputs

- List of information that outlines the best practices and strategies in reaching out and engaging with AIMs and American Public schools.
- A strong relationship based on understanding and mutual respect between AIMs and teachers.

Workshop Objectives

After conducting the community building session, facilitators will be responsible for running future and intermediate sessions that can be conducted several times a year. The primary objective of the session is to:

Create a sense of familiarity between teachers and AIMs

The community building session for AIMs and teachers is based on the principal that in order for children to be successful in their educational journey, students must have the support and knowledge they need not only to finish their assignments, but also to develop a lifelong love of learning. The workshop is centered on AIMs. Therefore, the role of FAIMs is not only to provide input and feedback from AIMs and teachers, but also to draw and reflect the collective knowledge and ideas of all participants. This approach will allow the session's content and material be relevant to participants and thus increase the likelihood of it having a lasting impact.

Although the workshop is designed to last for 3 hours, if you have less than 3 hours to implement this program, you will have to make some choices about which activities to conduct or how to conduct them. For example, if you only have an hour or less, you might have to schedule two to three meetings to complete this programs. The session should be tailored and adjusted to local, national and regional circumstances.

Figure 48
Process work

Manage and Coordinate

Participants: Teachers & FAIMs

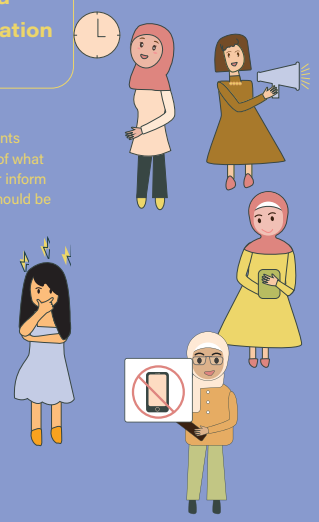
What are ground rules?
Ground rules allow participants have a clear understanding of what is expected of them to best support meeting goals.

1. **Show up on time and come with a positive attitude**
   Be prepared to contribute to achieving the meeting goals. Come to the meeting with a positive attitude.
2. **Stay mentally and physically present**
   Listen attentively to others and don't interrupt or have side conversations. Treat all meeting participants with the same respect you would want from them
3. **Contribute to meeting goals**
   Participate 100% by sharing ideas, asking questions, and contributing to discussions. Share your unique perspectives and experience, and speak honestly. If you state a problem or disagree with a proposal, try to offer a solution.
4. **Let everyone participate**
   Share time so that all can participate. Be patient when listening to others speak and do not interrupt them. Respect each other's' thinking and value everyone's contributions.
5. **Listen with an open mind**
   Value the learning from different inputs, and listen to get smarter. Stay open to new ways of doing things, and listen for the future to emerge. You can respect another person's point of view without agreeing with them.
6. **Think before speaking**
   Seek first to understand, then to be understood. It's OK to disagree, respectfully and openly, and without being disagreeable.
7. **Think before speaking**
   Respect the groups' time and keep comments brief and to the point. When a topic has been discussed fully, do not bring it back up.
   Do not waste everyone's time by repeating what others have said.
8. **Attack the problem, not the person**
   Respectfully challenge the idea, not the person. Blame or judgment will get you further from a solution, not closer. Honest and constructive discussions are necessary to get the best results.
9. **Close decisions and follow up**
   Make sure decisions are supported by the group, otherwise they won't be acted on. Note pending issues and schedule follow up meetings as needed. Identify actions based on decisions made, and follow up actions assigned to you.
10. **Record outcomes and share**
    Record issues discussed, decisions made, and tasks assigned. Share meeting reports with meeting participants. Share meeting outcomes with other stakeholders that should be kept in the loop.

20 21

Ground rules for a better communication session

What are ground rules?
Ground rules allow participants have a clear understanding of what is expected of them to better inform participants of what limits should be considered and respected.



"LET'S WORK WELL TOGETHER"

1. Show up on time and come with a positive attitude.
2. Listen with an open mind and think before speaking.
3. Listen with an open mind and think before speaking.
4. Respect all questions and ideas.
5. Take notes and make sure to stay on point.
6. Do not get distracted by your phone and keep it silent.
7. Be inclusive. Encourage others to participate.

Figure 49
Process work

Logistics coordinator

The logistics coordinators will be required for both participants. One Logistics Coordinator will work with Teachers and the second one will work with FAIMs. However, both logistics coordinators will work together to ensure that all needs and accommodations are available .

AIM logistics coordinator

- Communicate with a translator
- Ensure the availability of a caregiver
- Put a list of materials and resources

Based on the budget, AIM logistics coordinator will determine what can be afforded and what can be provided by the community. Some resources like a translator and the caregiver can be provided by the community if contacted and informed at an early stage.

Teacher logistics coordinator

- Manage furniture and space design
- Explore and implement strategies to create a welcoming environment
- Supply materials and resources required

The teacher logistics coordinator will be responsible of ensuring the supply and availability of all participants needs. In order to make mothers feel comfortable and happy, teacher logistics coordinator will create a welcoming environment that allows Arab mothers feel worm, belonging and respected.

What is a welcoming environment as described by AIMs?

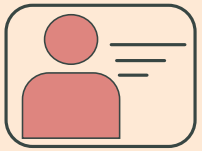
Oriental music

Incorporate Arabic language in all materials and announcements

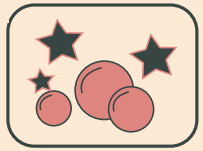
Greet AIMs and highlight the importance of their presence

Have a coffee, tea and cookie station

Provide continuous assistance



Learn the names of the mothers and the correct the pronunciation

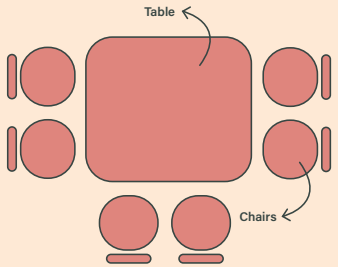


Have a clean and neat facility

Create a discussion environment

Seating plan

Seating participants in a way is critical to ensuring a happy experience during the session. As described by parents, sitting in a U-shaped way promotes discussion, participation, and interaction.



Participant packets

Before the session, logistics coordinators will agree on what to include in participants packets that will be placed on their seats. This usually includes:

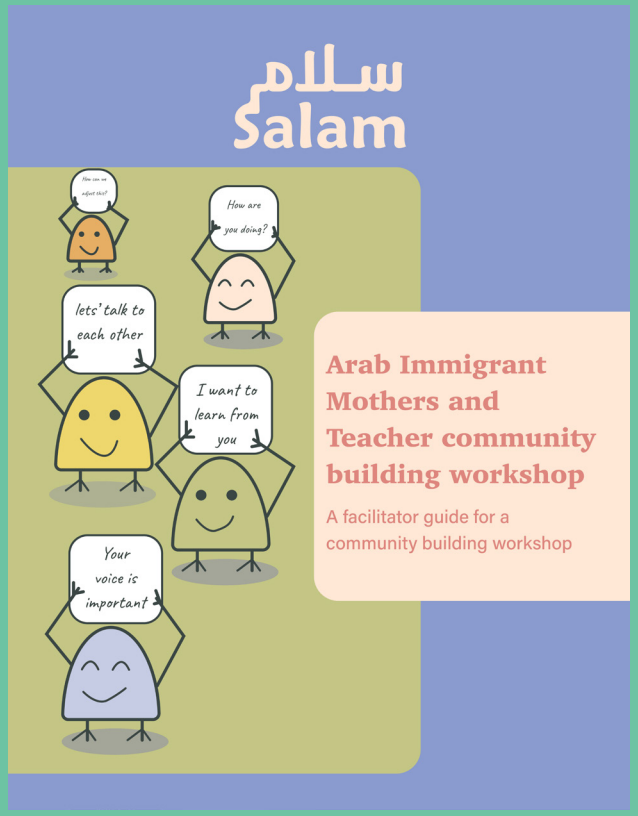
- agenda
- copies of resources list
- List of all participating teachers
- notepads
- sticky notes
- Activity sheets
- pen/pencil
- name tag and name placard
- water bottle
- candy piece

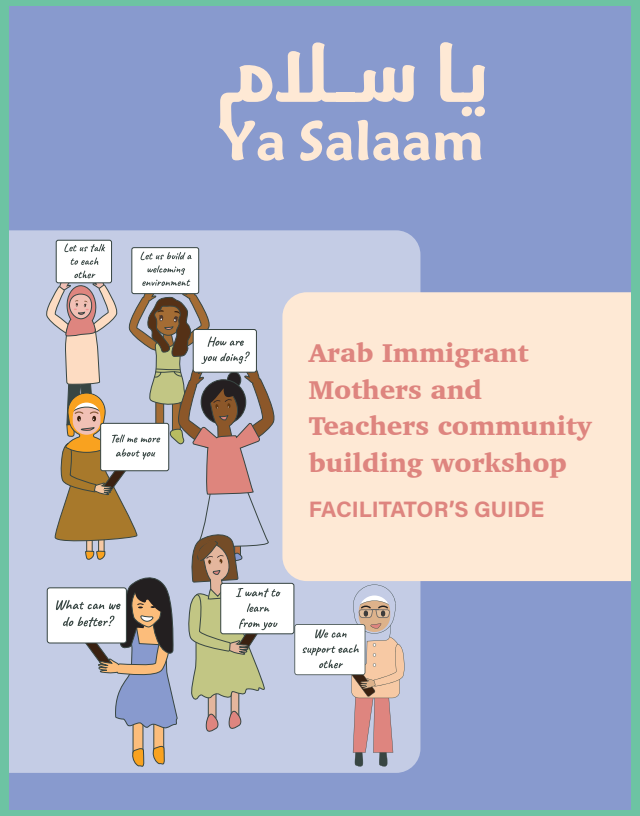
The day before the session, both logistics coordinators conduct a “walk through” of the meeting venue to ensure it is properly arranged and equipped, including:

- adequate tables, chairs, and snacks
- optimal table arrangement
- welcoming environment factors are properly implemented
- lighting and temperature control
- microphones (if needed)
- audiovisuals, electrical cords, screens
- flip charts, markers, pens, sticky notes
- resources needed by participants

Figure 50

This is a spread from one of the many iterations of the facilitator guide





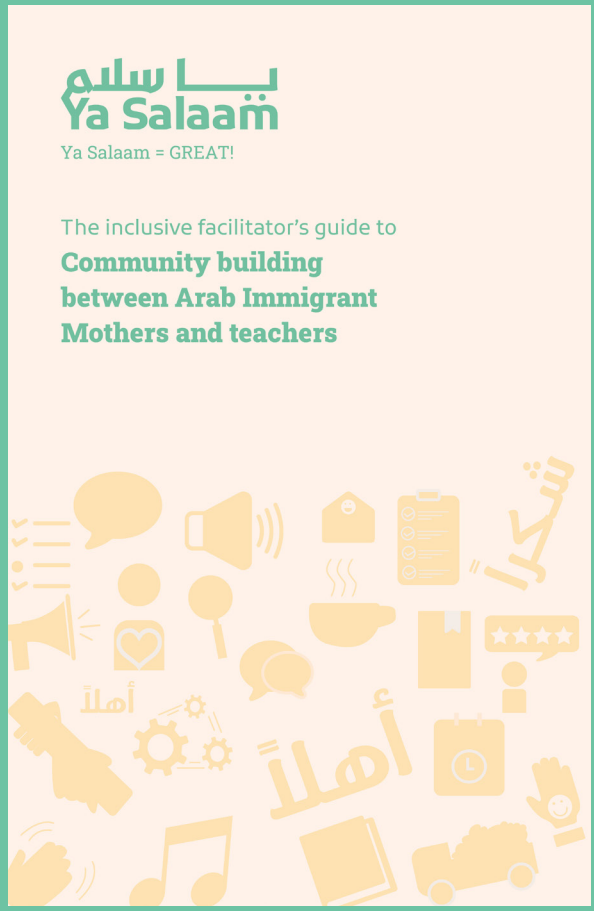


Figure 50
Guide cover process work

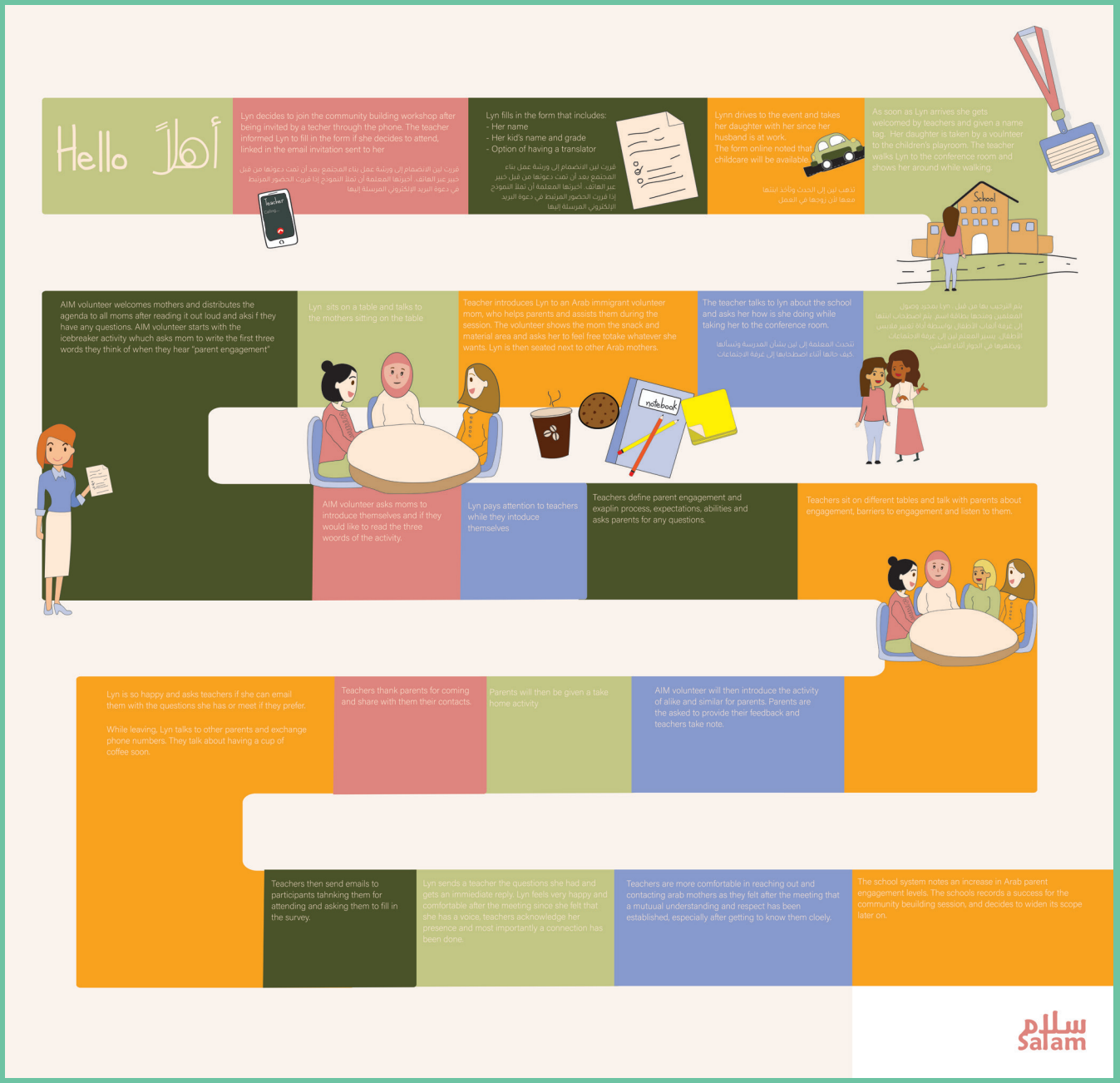


Figure 51

User journey map
initial idea

Figure 52

Initial style idea was to include a geometric pattern

Figure 53

Character design and poster sketches

Conclusion

Informed by academic research, storytelling, interviews, and other findings, I explored the possible options to facilitate conversations between Arab immigrant mothers and public school teachers in the United States.

This project allowed me to explore different design strategies. Co-designing with my potential audience and using the human-centered design, I was able to address issues faced by people with the people themselves. Designing with people was followed in every step of the project. Being able to get feedback constantly allowed me as a designer to better serve the needs of my potential audience and address their concerns.

I had planned for the project in a different way, however due to the pandemic I had to remove important steps from the process. In addition, my plan was to plan as many teachers and mothers as I can, unfortunately it was very hard to schedule interviews with many participants due to their limited time and several commitments including home schooling and moving the school to be online.

Future directions

I plan to implement the initiative in a real life setting at a public school in the United States. I also want to create a website for the initiative that includes all needed material and resources to be used by any school in the United States.

I also plan to explore how the initiative would be carried out with different cultures. I want to collaborate with non-Arab mothers. I believe that working on a strong social media presence is critical in letting people know of the problem and get in touch with any teacher or school that has Arab immigrant students and is facing communication issues with them.

The project acts as a pilot project that can be a startup to many community building ideas between Arab immigrant mothers and public school teachers that may also be applied to different cultures. I wish that my project encourages Arab mothers and teachers to collaborate together to facilitate communication between them and build bridges to act as partners in the children's education.

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Biographical sketch

Shaza Jendi was born and raised in the United Arab Emirates. She received a Bachelor of Design Management from the American University of Sharjah. She continued her graduate studies in Graphic Design at the University of Florida and received the Master of Fine Arts degree and a certificate Early childhood education in May 2021.

From 2015 to 2017 Shaza interned and was later employed in Bidaya media created the Arabic version of Sesame street in the Gulf region. There, Shaza's interest in children's education grew.

During her graduate studies, Shaza's research focused on designing for equity. Most of her inspiration comes from living in a multicultural country surrounded by various cultures. She is interested in human-centered design, and loves to design for children and minority communities.

As a visual communicator, she believes design can help send important messages in an interactive way, build bridges between cultures and most importantly help represent and reflect minorities. Furthermore, Shaza always follows an inclusive design process by recognizing diversity and uniqueness.