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Forms of Family Capital Quick Reference for Educators and Practitioners

Family engagement goes beyond school-based participation. Families bring diverse forms of *capital*—knowledge, resources, and strengths—that enrich planning and support for their children.

Social Capital

Definition: Networks of relationships and connections that provide support and opportunities.
Examples:

- A parent's connections with local employers who can offer job shadowing.
- Church or community groups that provide mentorship or after-school opportunities.
- Neighbors or friends who help with transportation or care.

Cultural Capital

Definition: Values, traditions, and practices that shape how families view education and success.
Examples:

- Family traditions of storytelling to pass down resilience and history.
- Celebrating cultural holidays that affirm identity.
- Emphasizing community responsibility over individual achievement.

Linguistic Capital

Definition: Language skills and communication practices that reflect family identity and strengths.
Examples:

- Bilingual or multilingual families who foster cross-cultural communication.
- Use of proverbs, songs, or storytelling as teaching tools.
- Children interpreting or translating for family members, showing leadership.

Aspirational Capital

Definition: Hopes and dreams families hold for their child's future, even in the face of challenges.
Examples:

- Parents envisioning their child graduating from high school or college.
- Setting long-term goals for meaningful employment.
- Holding onto faith and optimism that opportunities will open.

Navigational Capital

***Definition*:** The ability to maneuver systems and institutions that are often complex or inequitable.
Examples:

- Families learning how to advocate in Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings.
- Using community liaisons or family advocates to access services.
- Knowing where to seek scholarships, Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) supports, or job programs.

Familial Capital

***Definition*:** Knowledge, support, and caregiving shared within families and kinship networks.
***Examples*:**

- Grandparents teaching life skills or family history.
- Older siblings modeling independence and work habits.
- Extended family members or family friends providing stability and belonging.

Key Takeaway

All families hold valuable forms of capital. Recognizing and honoring these resources builds stronger partnerships and ensures transition planning reflects the full strengths of the student and family.

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