

## PURSUIT OF COMMITMENT

# Reflecting on the American Dream

Use these reflection questions as starting points for discussions with your team as you work together to transform your school. You may start by organizing staff members into small groups and then share out to the whole group.

1. What does the American Dream mean to you? In examining your own history, are you living it, have you lived it, or have you never experienced it?
2. What role did literacy play for you in realizing or not realizing the American Dream?
3. What do you believe the American Dream means to your students? What do you think it mean to refugees, immigrants, and students of color?
4. What are the obstacles that keep your students from realizing the American Dream? What could you do to help remove those obstacles?
5. How do you respond to students and families who don't believe the American Dream is possible for them?

Parents can also play an important role in shaping a vision of the American Dream. In *Powerful Partnerships: A Teacher's Guide to Engaging Families for Student Success* (2017), Dr. Karen Mapp, Ilene Carver, and Jessica Lander recommend that at the beginning of the year, schools invite parents to write a "Hopes and Dreams" letter addressed to their children, in any language, including their home language. For parents who prefer to share their thoughts verbally, teachers transcribe them.

The letters, along with family photos, are displayed on the classroom walls for the remainder of the year. Co-author and first-grade teacher Ilene Carver states, "Our children need to know that our goals and expectations for them this year are deeply rooted in the hopes, dreams, and expectations of their families; that home and school are not two separate worlds." Not only do these letters serve as powerful reminders to students of their families' hopes and dreams for them, but they also provide educators with powerful insights into what the American Dream means to the families they serve.

