FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

FAMILY-SCHOOLS PARTNERSHIP

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WARM-UP EXERCISE

• What areas can you “glow” about when it comes to partnerships with families?

• What areas would you like to “grow” when it comes to partnership with families?

• What would you like to take away from this session?
WHAT IS FAMILY ENGAGEMENT?

Family Engagement is any way that a child’s adult caretaker (biological parents, foster parents, siblings, grandparents, etc.) effectively supports learning and healthy development.

Center for Strategic Community Innovation
MY DEFINITION OF FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Family Engagement is an empowerment process in which parents are able to understand the importance of their role and contribution to the learning and development of their children.

Process is different for each parent.
WHY FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

• The most consistent predictors of children’s academic achievement and social adjustment are parent expectations of the child.

• The earlier in a child’s educational process family involvement begins, the more powerful the effects.

• The most powerful form of parent engagement are those in which engage parents in working directly with their children on learning activities at home.

• Family participation in education was twice as predictive of students’ academic success as family socioeconomic status.
MYTHS ABOUT FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

• Parents don’t care enough to participate
• Parent volunteers mean more work and create problems for teachers
• Parents that don’t come to the school are not engaged.
• Parent engagement can’t be measured.
• Parent engagement doesn’t have anything to do with learning.
WHAT IS YOUR SCHOOL TYPE?

**Fortress School (Below Basic)**- Parents belong at home. If the students don’t do well, is because families don’t give them enough support. We are already doing all what we can. Our school is an oasis in a trouble community. We want to keep it that way.

**Come If We Call School (Basic)**- Parents are welcome when we call them, but there only so much they can offer. The most important thing they can do is to help their kids at home. We know where to get help in the community if we need.
WHAT IS YOUR TYPE OF SCHOOL?

- **Open door school (Proficient)** - Parents can be involved in our school in many ways- we are working hard to get an even bigger turnout for activities. When we ask the community to help, they often respond.

- **Partnership School (Advance)** - All families and communities have something great to offer- we do whatever it takes to work closely together to make sure every single student succeeds.
ELEMENTS OF FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

• Building Relationships

• Linking to Learning

• Addressing Differences

• Supporting Advocacy

• Sharing Power
HOW TO KNOW IF FAMILIES ARE TRULY ENGAGED

• Both Parents and teachers understand their role in their children’s education.
• Parents are actively involved in decision making.
• Parents have the tools necessary to positively impact their child’s academic success.
HOW TO KNOW IF FAMILIES ARE TRULY ENGAGED

• Parents feel comfortable asking questions, sharing concern and providing input.

• Parents are consistently aware of the progress of their children and work together with the school to ensure success.
FAMILY ENGAGEMENT CORE BELIEFS

1. All parents have dreams for their children and want the best for them.

2. Partnerships with families are essential to the academic achievement of children.

3. All parents can support their children’s learning.

4. The responsibility for building partnerships between school and home rests primarily on the school staff, especially school leaders.

Adopted from “High Expectations”
DUAL CAPACITY BUILDING FRAMEWORK FOR FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

The Challenge
• What are the problems or obstacles faced to engage families?

Opportunity Conditions
• What conditions are necessary to engage families?
• What conditions must be in place to sustain relationships formed between families and schools?

Policy and Program Goals
• What do staff and families need to form positive relationships?

Family and Staff Capacity Outcomes
• What kind of outcomes are expected from the partnerships formed with families, communities, and schools?
“The Framework builds on existing research suggesting that partnerships between home and school can only develop and thrive if both families and staff have the requisite collective capacity to engage in partnership.”

THE CHALLENGE

- Current policies (underutilized) and programs (lack consistency)
- ♣ Flawed assumptions
- ♣ Collective capacity to succeed (lacks passion and commitment from all stakeholders)
OPPORTUNITY CONDITIONS

Opportunities must be tailored based on need.
Must be:
- Systemic
- Integrated
- Sustainable

Process Conditions:
- Linked to Learning
- Relational
- Development vs service orientation
- Collaborations
- Interactive

Organizational Conditions:
- Systemic: across the organization
- Integrated: embedded in all programs
- Sustained: with resources and infrastructure
FOCUS: Building Capacity

All 4 needed and necessary:

| Capabilities |
| Connections |
| Cognition |
| Confidence |
EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP OUTCOME:

Staff Outcomes:
- Create Welcoming, Inviting Cultures
- Honor & Value Families Contributions
- Connect Engagement to Student Learning

Family Outcomes:
Families’ who engage in multiple roles:
- Supporters
- Encouragers
- Monitors
- Advocates
- Decision Makers
- Collaborators
STRATEGIES FOR FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

• Conform a Family Engagement Team and Family Engagement Plan at school.

• Find ways to reach out to parents such as: Thank you Cards, “Tell Me About Your Child”, “Tell Me About You”, “Something About Me”, pot lucks, coffee Time, phone calls, the teacher-parent monthly hour. Make sure that they are in the family appropriate language for the family.

• Make an effort to learn something about the family culture and use it in your next parent interaction.
STRATEGIES FOR FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

• Celebrate any small and big contributions
• Use media as a tool.
• Use class projects to bring parents to school.
• Approach parents eye-to eye.
• Home visits.
• Holidays Celebrations organized by parents
• Get an allied parent to reach out to other parents.

What other ideas do you have?
HOW TO MEASURE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

There are different ways parent engagement could be measured. Since this is a process, it is important to have goals and indicators embedded into the Family Engagement Plan, to measure the progress, and have data recorded at the beginning of the school year (reference point), and at the end, after strategies have been put in place such as:

• Number of parents that attend meetings and activities.

• Number of parents working on class and school projects - volunteers. What role do they play? (supporters, encouragers, monitors, advocates, decision makers, collaborators)
HOW TO MEASURE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

• Number of parents reaching out to the teacher, asking questions, or sharing information.

• Number of parents organizing school-wide activities.

• Student performance and behavior (indicator).

• Parents attendance to the school-wide events.

• PTA membership and participation.
WHAT IS NEXT

You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step.
RESOURCES

Disclosure - Some information for this presentation was taken from Terri Stafford-Texas Education Agency presentation, Parenting Partners, Engaged for Student Achievement, http://www.familyleadership.org/parenting-partners/, Dr. Karen Mapp, Harvard Family Research