



# Bringing the Framework to Life in Your School

## Why is Engagement Important?

- Research shows:
  - » A home environment that encourages learning is more important to student achievement than income, education level, or cultural background.
  - » When children and parents talk regularly about school, children perform better academically.
  - » The earlier parent involvement begins in a child's educational process, the more powerful the effect.
- 40 years of research show that when families are engaged in their children's education in meaningful ways children
  - » have improved test scores;
  - » learn to read faster;
  - » have better behavior;
  - » attend school more regularly.

Henderson, A., & Mapp, K. (2002). A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family, and community connections on student achievement. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

## Family Engagement Defined

- A shared responsibility – schools are committed to engaging families in meaningful and culturally respectful ways, and families are committed to actively supporting their children's learning and development.
- Carried out everywhere children learn – at home, in school, in after-school programs, in community programs and activities, in faith-based institutions, etc.
- Continuous across a child's life – spanning from early learning programs to college preparation.

The National Family, School, and Community Engagement Working Group – June 2009

## Reflection

- Are school-family-community ties given as much weight in your school as the other ties?
- Why has it been difficult to cultivate and sustain effective family-school partnerships that support student achievement and school improvement?

## Challenges

- In the last 20 years, there have been 2 challenges in building effective home-school partnerships:
  1. Families lack the capacity (knowledge and skills) to engage in children's education in meaningful ways.
  2. School staff at all levels lack the capacity (knowledge and skills) to effectively support family engagement.
- Educational systems must understand the need to build the capacity of both families and educators to work together. In a reciprocal relationship, everyone needs the skills and competencies to make that relationship work.
- This challenge is why we need a dual-capacity framework for family engagement.

## Understanding the Challenge

- It takes skill and knowledge to understand how to work together.
  - » Families must have more opportunities to build and enhance their support for their children's education.

- » Educators must have opportunities to build and enhance their knowledge of how to work with families.
- In order to work together, we must create opportunities for families, school staff, and community partners all to learn how to work together in partnership.

**Challenges–Practice**

Jot down your school’s family engagement celebrations and challenges.

| Family Engagement Celebration | Family Engagement Challenge |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
|                               |                             |
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**Process Conditions–Linked to Learning**

- The first process condition for effective partnership programs is that they are actually focused on learning.
- Best practice strategies around school-family-community partnerships for workshops, conversations, and trainings are ensuring that everything you do is always linked to learning.

**Linked to Learning–Practice**

- Write down 5 activities you did within the last year.
- Is there alignment between these activities and your school goals?
  - » If yes, what goal or goals does it align with?
  - » If no, how could you change the activity to align better with school goals and student learning?

**Process Conditions – Relational**

- The second process condition is that the different types of strategies are relational.
- There is a purposeful and intentional effort to build trust, where teachers, families, and others are given the opportunity to learn about each other and build respect.

### **Process Conditions – Developmental vs. Service Orientation**

- The third process condition is that the interventions must be developmental rather than having a service-based orientation.
  - » Often communities and parents are looked at through a deficit-based lens, not recognizing their strengths.
  - » Programs have often looked at families and the community as having things that need to be “fixed.”
- Developmental relationships recognize that everyone has strengths and the relationship is reciprocal and focuses on enhancing the strengths of all parties. Everyone is viewed through an asset-based lens.

### **Process Conditions – Collaborative**

Programs should be collaborative, with real interaction.

- The focus should be on doing things with families and not to families.
- Every event should offer opportunities for real interaction between families and staff.
- Provide families and staff with frequent opportunities to build trusting, respectful relationships so that everyone feels connected and understands they are a partner in the educational process.

### **Collaborative Check Up – Practice**

How often do you:

- Plan and co-facilitate events with families?
- Conduct home visits?
- Schedule meetings/events in the community?
- Solicit input and feedback from families?
- Utilize the World Café model to engage families in conversation and dialogue?
- Others?

### **Organizational Conditions – Systemic**

- The policies and practices put in place must say that family and community engagement has to be a part of what we do every day!
- Everyone must understand this work is a part of a systemic strategy that crosses all boundaries throughout the school or school district.

### **Organizational Conditions – Integrated**

- Family and community engagement must be integrated into everything that is done in the school or school district.
- The work should not be seen as separate from teaching and learning.

### **Organizational Conditions – Sustained**

- Family and community engagement must be sustained with resources and infrastructure. Districts must have personnel at the district level who coordinate family and community engagement. Without staff, the work is not systemic or sustainable and lacks fidelity of implementation across the district.

### **Policy and Program Goals**

Program and policy goals should all be directed toward building capacity. What is building capacity? The four “Cs” for building capacity:

- Capabilities (skills and knowledge)
- Connections (social networks)
- Confidence (self-efficacy)
- Cognition (beliefs, norms, and values)

## Capabilities

Capabilities are skills and knowledge.

- What do educators know about working together with families and what are our skills in that area?
- What do families know about how school systems are run?

## Connections

Connections are social networks.

- How robust are your social networks?
- How many people do you know?
- Are there parent-to-parent networks, parent-teacher networks, networks with community members, etc.?
- Relationships must be built on mutual trust and respect.

## Confidence

Confidence is self-efficacy.

- How confident do we feel in our ability to perform a task?
- The more we are given opportunities to practice, the greater our confidence in our abilities.

## Cognition

Cognition is our beliefs, norms and values.

- When adults are able to work together and solve problems together it often changes how we think about the people sitting across the table.
- These types of activities provide an opportunity to build trusting respectful relationships.

## Outcomes for Educators

The result of capacity-building programs for educators:

- Staff recognize and honor family and community funds of knowledge.
- Make everything linked to learning. Always connect the work of family engagement to what students are learning.
- Know how to create welcoming environments. Connect with families in a way that meet families where they are, and recognize the assets in the community, doing their work through an asset-based lens.

## Outcomes for Families

The result of capacity-building programs for families:

- Able to negotiate multiple roles to be engaged in their children's education.
- Supporters of children's learning at home and in the community.
- Know how to be advocates for their children's education.
- Know how to collaborate with teachers, principals, community members and other parents to move this work in a way that supports better educational outcomes for all children.

For more information on how to operationalize the Framework in your school or district, contact the Center for Active Family Engagement at [caferesources.org](http://caferesources.org).

## Learn More!

For more information, please email [Info@JustTake20.org](mailto:Info@JustTake20.org) or visit [JustTake20.org](http://JustTake20.org)

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