Engaging All Families: Strategies for Building Parent-Teacher Partnerships

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Welcome!

★ Tools and support for districts and schools aligned with the 274 grant priorities

★ Focus on what works!
  ★ Evidence-based best practice
  ★ Highlight great practice in Massachusetts

★ Opportunity to:
  ★ Foster relationships/sharing between districts and schools with similar initiatives and challenges
  ★ Network with peers in similar roles
  ★ Introduce and connect with SEPP/ESE staff

ESE is dedicated to helping educators improve their practice through participation in High Quality Professional Development (HQPD).
Engaging All Families: Strategies for Building Parent-Teacher Partnerships
Training Objectives

Participants will...

• Recognize and acknowledge own cultures
• Identity the diversity of families in their school communities
• Explore motivators in family engagement
• Review the use of *Massachusetts Family, School and Community Partnership Fundamentals*
• Expand the *Fundamentals* to engage every families in the school
**system**

/ˈsɪstəm/

Noun

1. A set of connected things or parts forming a complex whole, in particular.
2. A set of things working together as parts of a mechanism or an interconnecting network.
Assumptions about Family Systems

• All parts of a system are interconnected.
• The family is understood as a whole rather than just individual members.
• The family system both affects and is affected by its environment.
• The family as a system is not necessarily a reality but rather a way of knowing or being.
• Relationships among family members link them to larger social networks.
• Each family is unique.
Engaging Every Family

Working with

Diverse Families
What is Culture?

Culture is...
...a combination of feelings, attitudes, beliefs, values and behavior patterns...
...that is shared by a racial, ethnic, religious or social group.
Cultural Elements Can Include...

- Race
- Nationality
- Language
- Family
- Age
- Music
- Food
- Housing
- More...

- Religion
- Political ideology
- Child raising
- Disability
- Sexual orientation
- Gender roles and Identity
- More...
Cultural Iceberg

Surface Culture
Above the Surface
Emotional Load: Relatively Low

Deep Culture
Unspoken Rules
Just Below the Surface
Behavior-Based
Emotional Load: High

Unconscious Rules
Far Below Surface
Value-Based
Emotional Load: INTENSE

Weaver, 1986
Let’s Hear from YOU

What are some specific cultural elements that have affected your sense of identity and your behavior?

1. What is your birth order?
2. What is your ethnicity?
3. What family tradition is important to you?
REMEMBER:

• Recognizing and acknowledging your own culture is the first step on effectively working with other cultures.

• Understanding a family’s cultural identity and values is vital to gaining their trust.

• Individuals and families belong to multiple cultural groups and cannot fully be defined by any one cultural identity.

• Each individual is made up of a unique combination of cultural identities and personal values.
Let’s Look at Your School Community

- Age of parents
- Languages spoken
- Access to community resources
- Urban, suburban or rural
- Ethnicity
- Social economic status
- Bussed to school
- Active PTA
A Closer Look at Family Engagement
50 Years of Research Show...

When families are involved in their children’s learning at home and at school, children do better in school...

AND

...schools do better educating children.

Henderson and Mapp, 2002
Engaged Families Help Students

No matter what their family income or background, students with families engaged in their education are more likely to:

• Attend school regularly
• Have better social skills
• Pass their classes
• Earn higher grades and test scores
• Graduate and go on to postsecondary education

(Henderson & Mapp, 2002)
Engaged Families Help Schools

Five Essential Supports for School Reform

• Strong School Leadership
• Student Centered Learning Climate
• High Quality Faculty
• Effective Instructional Support
• Parent and Community Ties

(Bryk, Sebring & Allensworth, 2009)
What motivates families to become involved in their children’s education?
Personal Motivators

• Parental role:
  “Do I believe I’m supposed to be involved?”

• Sense of efficacy for helping the child to learn:
  “Do I believe my involvement will make a difference for my child?”

(Hoover-Dempsey, 1997)
Contextual Motivators

• School climate:
  “Is the school welcoming? Do people at school tell me they want me involved?”

• Invitation from teachers:
  “Does the teacher ask me to be involved? Does she offer specific requests for my involvement?”

• Invitations from the student:
  “Does my child want or need my involvement?”
Life Context Variables

• Parents’ knowledge and skills:
  “What can I do to help? What do I like to do?”

• Parents’ time and energy:
  “What can I reasonably choose to do considering all the demands upon my time and energy?”

• Parents’ culture:
  “What are appropriate roles for my involvement? What do I think would be useful for me to do?”
Massachusetts Family, School and Community Partnership Fundamentals

A Guidance Tool to Help Families, Educators and Community Partners Explore Engagement Activities
Why Are the Fundamentals Needed?

• Provide a framework for positive effective family and community engagement
• Offer guidance for families, schools and community to examine current strategies
• Explore new possibilities and expansion of practice
• Correlate with other family and community engagement initiatives
Key Features of the Fundamentals

• Focus on student learning outcomes
• Provide a welcoming space for families
• Outreach to all families
• Share information with families in multiple ways and in multiple languages
• Reciprocal communication with families
• Offer multiple opportunities for engagement
Overview Six Fundamentals

• Welcoming All Stakeholders
• Communicating Effectively
• Supporting the Success of Children and Youth
• Advocating for Each Child and Youth
• Sharing Power and Responsibility
• Partnering with the Community
### Fundamental 1: Welcoming All Stakeholders

_Schools create and ensure a welcoming culture and environment for all families, children and youth, school staff, and community members. Stakeholders are valued and connected to each other in support of high academic expectations, achievement, and healthy development._

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Level 1: Initiating Basic level of development and implementation</th>
<th>Level 2: Progressing Functioning level of development and implementation</th>
<th>Level 3: Mastering Highly functioning level of development and implementation embedded throughout school practice</th>
<th>Current Status</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Creating a respectful atmosphere for stakeholders</td>
<td>The school maintains clear signage that is welcoming to parents and visitors in the main languages used by families in the district.</td>
<td>The school is a welcoming place with a designated space such as a family center where families can connect with each other and staff to address issues, share information, and plan family engagement activities.</td>
<td>The school and district share responsibility with stakeholders from all neighborhoods and backgrounds to identify and break down barriers to family engagement related to race, ethnicity, family structure, religion, physical and mental abilities, educational background, and socioeconomic status of families.</td>
<td>Level 3: Mastering Level 2: Progressing Level 1: Initiating Not here yet</td>
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<td>B. Developing personal relationships</td>
<td>The school offers opportunities for families to connect with school staff and visit classrooms.</td>
<td>Parents and community members volunteer to work in the school office to welcome visitors and provide information and support to families and students.</td>
<td>Family volunteers from diverse neighborhoods and backgrounds are trained to serve as mentors to help other families become more engaged in the school. Families are greeted in their home language by friendly front office staff.</td>
<td>Level 3: Mastering Level 2: Progressing Level 1: Initiating Not here yet</td>
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<td>C. Providing opportunities for volunteering</td>
<td>The school invites families to volunteer in field trips, fundraising activities, and varied learning opportunities.</td>
<td>The school has a family engagement action team that organizes a formal volunteer program. Parent group members, other parents, and community members are welcome to volunteer their services in the school or individual classrooms.</td>
<td>The school volunteer program reaches out to families and community members across all neighborhoods and backgrounds, acknowledging unique experiences and skills, and offering varied volunteer opportunities at home, at school, and in the community.</td>
<td>Level 3: Mastering Level 2: Progressing Level 1: Initiating Not here yet</td>
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<td>D. Ensuring accessible programming by removing economic obstacles to participation</td>
<td>The school identifies external resources and after-school/enrichment programs that are free or low cost, and refers families to them.</td>
<td>Family and student activities and events are free. All stakeholders collaborate to cover the costs through the school budget, parent group fundraising, and contributions from community businesses and organizations.</td>
<td>The school and district share responsibility with stakeholders to plan and implement high quality family programs to be held at the school and in community locations such as libraries, community centers, faith-based centers, homes in different neighborhoods, and/or work sites.</td>
<td>Level 3: Mastering Level 2: Progressing Level 1: Initiating Not here yet</td>
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</tbody>
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**Current Status**

**Date _______________**
Taking a Closer Look at the Fundamentals

• Fundamental 1, Indicator B: Developing Personal Relationships
  – Level 1: School offers families opportunities to visit
  – Level 2: Parents volunteer to welcome others
  – Level 3: Family mentors help other families

• Fundamental 3, Indicator A: Linking Student Work to Learning Standards
  – Level 1: Displaying student work
  – Level 2: Explaining to families about learning standards and proficient student work
  – Level 3: Aligning all events and resources to standards
Concurrent Sessions: Expanding the Fundamentals to Engage ALL Families

• Divide into 6 groups, one for each Fundamental
• Facilitators to start and support conversations
• Goal to determine how to support ALL families to be engaged in this Fundamental
• All families mean families of children with special needs, families of English Language Learners, families new to this country, families living in poverty, families who are homeless
Six Fundamentals

# 1  Welcoming All Stakeholders
#2  Communicating Effectively
#3  Supporting Success of Children and Youth
#4  Advocating for Each Child and Youth
#5  Sharing Power and Responsibility
#6  Partnering with the Community
First Activity: Core Beliefs about Family Engagement

• Underlying beliefs that are based upon the work of Dr. Karen Mapp
• First three same in each group
• Fourth customized to the specific Fundamental
• Promote discussion and networking with others
Second Activity: Focusing on Specifics for Engaging ALL Families

• Review group’s Fundamental
• Identify specific examples of effective practices related to the Fundamental
• Identify challenges encountered
• Devise ways to engage families in related activities and practices
• Summarize recommendations and highlights
Closing Activity:
Putting It All Together: Key Strategies for Engaging Every Family

- Return to large group gathering
- Share reactions to small group sessions
- Share TWO most effective strategies discussed
- Complete training evaluations
- Saying good byes
Thank You for Coming!

• You will receive an email
  – Evaluation
  – Request for your suggestions
    – our improvement cycle!
  – Link to presentations posted to the web

We value your participation in today’s professional development and look forward to hearing from you.