

SUSTAINABILITY PLANNING GRANT

Family and Community Engagement - Toolkit

Overview:

What is effective practice of family-school-community partnerships?

The National Family, School, and Community Engagement Working Group (2009) has developed a description based on current best practice and research. SEDL has adapted the following definition from that description:

“Effective family engagement has the following characteristics:

- Effective family engagement is a **shared responsibility** – this means that schools and other community organizations are committed to engaging families in meaningful ways and families are committed to actively supporting their children’s learning and development.
- Family engagement is **continuous throughout a child’s life** and entails enduring commitment yet changing parental roles as children mature into young adulthood.
- Effective family engagement spans across and reinforces learning in the **multiple settings** where children learn – at home, in school, in afterschool and summer programs, in faith-based institutions, and in the community.”

Research:

What is systemic family engagement?

According to Harvard researcher Karen Mapp, family engagement policy and practice must be aligned and coherent with the overall vision and change identified to improve student learning and to revitalize schools. It must be a part of the formula for school improvement, and family engagement strategies should be directly connected to the identified school goals.

[*Family-School-Community Partnerships 2.0: Collaborative Strategies to Advance Student Learning*](#)

- The following report provides a comprehensive look at a systemic approach to family engagement. Pages 14-22 discuss family engagement research, including the link to student learning and student outcomes.

[*Working Systemically in Action: Engaging Family & Community*](#)

- The report below discusses family and community engagement in turnaround efforts (page 13) and includes many best practices beginning on page 6.

[*Beyond Random Acts: Family, School, & Community Engagement as an Integral Part of Education Reform*](#)

- This is a compiled report of best practices in family and community engagement. The Table of Contents on page 7 provides all of the examples by category of engagement. [*Handbook on Family and Community Engagement*](#)

Schools can support effective teacher-family engagement by providing staff with:

1. A clear **vision** of family engagement for educators,
 2. **Planning time** and time management tools,
 3. **Professional development** to enhance specific skills and knowledge, and
 4. **Opportunities to analyze and improve** teachers' skills in working with families, including teacher action research.
- The following includes a guide for how staff can engage families and topics to provide professional development
[*Successful Family Engagement in the Classroom*](#)
 - Schools can support effective family and community engagement by providing shared decision making opportunities to parents and community members. The following describes parent leadership and shared decision making
[*Parent Leadership*](#)
 - Below is a model of a shared decision making team that includes school staff, parents, and members of the community. This model is based off of the research of Joyce Epstein
[*National Network of Partnership Schools: School Model*](#)
 - DPI also has information based on this model: [*The Partnership Action Team Toolkit*](#)
 - Below is an example of involving family and community in decision making by hosting focus groups
 [*Holding community conversations with Hispanic families*](#)

Data-driven decision making can support schools and districts to facilitate more informed decision making, enhance overall school performance, and improve student achievement. Furthermore, it can help to engage family and community in the process of addressing achievement gaps, improving teaching and learning, and motivating students. When effectively shared with families and community members, these data may influence the ways that families support their individual child's progress and impact communities' efforts to support education.

- [*Improving Family and Community Engagement through Sharing Data*](#)
- The following describes how family engagement is currently changing through data driven reform and data sharing with families. Examples of ways to share data with families begin on page 6.
[*Breaking New Ground: Data Systems Transform Family Engagement in Education*](#)

- The following is a best practice for sharing data with families
[*Academic Parent Teacher Teams*](#)

Harvard researcher Karen Mapp has identified specific ways that schools can engage parents in student and school success, which she calls “The Joining Process.” Schools should **welcome, honor, and connect** with families if they are to be fully engaged in supporting children’s learning and the school.

- The below includes a toolkit for parent-friendly schools and best examples. Page 4 discusses welcoming, honoring, and connecting with families.
[*Parent-Friendly Schools: Starting the Conversation*](#)
- The following is a resource from DPI on welcoming families into the school by having a space and resources for families
[*Organizing a Successful Family Center in Your School*](#)
- The article below discusses communication that supports student learning
[*Effective Home-School Communication*](#)