

Family Engagement: Involving All Families

Est. Time: 1 Hour

Objective

Reflect on your school's current family engagement practices and develop a plan to increase the involvement of all families.

Overview

Family engagement is a best practice in education that has been shown to have a significantly positive influence on students' success (e.g., increased student achievement, improved attendance, increased graduation rates). Sometimes, this practice is referred to as parent engagement, parent involvement, or family-school partnership. It occurs when families and school personnel collaborate to support and improve the learning and development of children. This requires a mutually beneficial relationship, one in which educators are committed to listening and collaborating with families and families are committed to prioritizing their children's education.

School leaders are responsible for ensuring that all families have the opportunity to participate in their child's education in meaningful ways. To do so effectively, school leaders and other educators must:

- Get to know them—This includes their family composition, challenges, and experiences.
- Build positive relationships—This entails establishing trust and mutual respect.
- Meaningfully involve families—This means actively creating opportunities for parents to collaborate with educators.

Family engagement is especially important for students with disabilities, inasmuch as their families can help facilitate their children's overall development and promote the continuity of services, interventions, and practices between home and school. However, at times they may be less engaged than the parents of other students for various reasons. For example, they may face significant barriers related to daily life (e.g., accessibility issues, healthcare concerns). In addition, some families of children with disabilities often experience barriers related to racial, socioeconomic, and cultural diversity. These barriers, however, can be addressed by school leaders through honest reflection, dialogue, and intentional planning.



Activity [For College Courses]

1. Use the attached survey to interview a current school leader (principal or assistant principal).

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2. Based on the survey results, briefly describe how well the school is engaging:
 - a. Families of students with disabilities
 - b. English Learners
 - c. Students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds
3. In regard to family engagement:
 - a. Describe what the school is doing well.
 - b. Discuss any areas in which the school could make improvements.
4. Using the table below, create an action plan to address these areas of concern.

Activity [For College Courses]

1. Complete the attached survey and reflect on the family engagement practices currently implemented at your school.
2. Based on the survey results, how well do your school's current practices ensure the engagement of:
 - a. Families of students with disabilities are engaged
 - b. English Learners
 - c. Students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds
3. Are there areas in which the school could make improvements? If so, describe.
4. Using the table below, create an action plan to address these areas of concern.
 - a. Include at least three strategies that you will use to implement family engagement activities that are meaningful and aligned with student academic achievement, attendance, or behavior.
 - b. List the action steps that will be taken for each strategy.
 - c. List the resources (i.e., funding, people, materials) needed to successfully implement each strategy.
 - d. Describe how you will determine whether the strategy was effective.

Area of Concern	Improvement Strategies	Action Steps	Resources Needed	Success Criteria

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Survey

School Demographics	
Grades Served	
Number of Students	
% Students with Disabilities	
% English Learners	
% Economically Disadvantaged Students	
Race/Ethnicity	
% Asian	
% Black/African American	
% Hispanic or Latino	
% American Indian or Alaska Native	
% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	
% White	

1. List and describe family engagement activities that occurred during the prior school year.
2. Which, if any, of those activities were specifically designed to engage the families of students with disabilities? Families of English learners?
3. What if any considerations were taken to support families that are economically disadvantaged?
4. How did those activities impact student outcomes (e.g., attendance, behavior, academic achievement)?
5. What procedures/practices are educators expected to follow to contact families regarding their child's school performance? How are educators supported and held accountable for these practices?
6. How can parents initiate conversations with educators regarding their child's education?
7. What procedures/practices are in place to inform parents about the performance of the school?
8. How do the school's policies reflect respect and value the diversity of the families?
9. How are families involved in making school decisions?