



# BE REFLECTIVE: Engagement Mindset & Impact

## I. Does our school have engaged parents?

*How can we assess our school's beliefs about parent engagement?*

*What are the key elements of effective parent engagement?*

## ASSESSING OUR CURRENT MINDSET ON THE ROLE OF PARENTS IN SCHOOLS

*How can we assess our school's mindset as it relates to parent engagement?*

“Both parent involvement and parent engagement are good, but parent engagement is better, and offers opportunities for transformational beneficial change—for the school, for the community, for the family and for the student.”

~ Larry Ferlazzo, 2009

## ACTION: ASSESS YOUR MINDSET

Just as schools assess where students are at the start of a school year, the first step in developing a plan for parent engagement is to assess your school's current beliefs and practices as they relate to parents. This will enable you to determine whether you have the necessary foundation (i.e. mindset) for your parent engagement plan.

**FIRST**, discuss the following with your school staff:

- What is the role of families at our school?
- How do they currently participate in our community?

**SECOND**, conduct the MINDSET diagnostic in Table 9 with your school staff.

**THIRD**, tabulate the results from your staff's diagnostic. Discuss the following:

- Which questions have a majority of “Yes” responses?
- Which questions have a majority of “No”?

**FOURTH**, discuss the different definitions of engagement and involvement that were presented in Section 1 of this toolkit. Think about how you currently define engagement at your school by reflecting on the following questions:

- Based on the two definitions, are our families currently engaged or involved?
- Based on the assessment, do we believe that families should be engaged or involved?


**TABLE 9: Mindset Diagnostic**

AT OUR SCHOOL, WE BELIEVE...	Yes	No
All of our parents have the capacity to support their students in learning.		
Leveraging parent knowledge and skills is key to supporting student achievement.		
Parents should be involved in making decisions regarding learning and instruction at school.		
We are responsible for empowering parents to know that their expertise is valuable to school performance.		
We value building trusting relationships with parents.		
Students will achieve more if we work closely with families and communities.		
Parents should have access to student and school performance results.		
There should be clear processes and platforms for parents to voice concerns.		
Our school should have space for parents to work and come together.		
Parents have the ability to set goals, create plans, and initiate change at our schools.		
We should offer opportunities for parents to develop their knowledge and skills based on their needs.		
We can find solutions to barriers to parent engagement in schools.		
Parents know and understand their potential as part of the leadership of our school.		
<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF ANSWERS IN EACH COLUMN:</b>		

**MINDSET.** If your school wants an engaged parent community, then mindset is the most important factor in engagement success. First and foremost, educators must believe that parents want to support their student. They must also believe that school-parent partnerships can have a significant impact on students' educational outcomes and that the school can make engagement happen. Additionally, it is critical that the School Leader 1) BELIEVES in the impact of parent engagement and 2) is invested in making it a PRIORITY at the school for it to be effective.

## QUICK TIP

### CHANGING MINDSETS

It is the School Leader's role to support and hold teachers accountable to the new vision for parent engagement and utilize those staff members that are already "believers" to encourage and develop the mindset of those who might not share the same beliefs. Use staff development opportunities to explore the role of the school on impacting student achievement, and particularly the potential of parents to contribute to key improvement efforts. A couple resources that are valuable to read include [Carol Dweck's book Mindset<sup>60</sup>: The New Psychology of Success](#) and the book *Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard* by Chip and Dan Heath. There is also a helpful activity that is described in *Beyond the Bake Sale* called "[Looking in the Mirror and Looking out the Window<sup>61</sup>](#)" by Rick Dufour.



## KEY ELEMENTS OF PARENT ENGAGEMENT

### *What are the key elements of effective parent engagement?*

Before we talk about how to implement parent engagement, we need to review the **ELEMENTS** necessary for engagement to be successful. Refer to the first section of this toolkit, where we offer a model for engagement and explain the elements of the engagement framework. Also, be sure to review the section on how parent engagement can impact student achievement.

## **SUMMARY:** ENGAGEMENT MINDSET AND OPPORTUNITY

1. Engagement redefines home-school relationships by encouraging **PARTNERSHIP**.
2. Conduct a diagnostic to reflect on your school team's **BELIEFS** about parents' roles at school.
3. Review the **ELEMENTS** of the Parent Engagement framework and understand the **IMPACT** of parent engagement on student achievement.
4. Parent partnerships and strong engagement efforts equals a stronger impact on student **ACHIEVEMENT**.

## LEARN MORE ADDITIONAL ENGAGEMENT RESOURCES

Read more about the categories of engagement to see the difference between compliance-driven and student-driven engagement [HERE<sup>62</sup>](#). Additionally, Karen Mapp and Anne Henderson present a "continuum of family involvement" that you can access [HERE<sup>63</sup>](#).



# BE PREPARED: Create the Context

## II. How do we create the conditions for parent engagement?

*How do we assess our current practices as they relate to parent engagement?*

*How do we identify our engagement strengths and weaknesses?*

In the previous part of this section, you explored your school staff's beliefs about parent engagement. In this section, you will conduct a baseline diagnostic of your greater school community's perspectives on parent engagement.

“Before we can build strong and effective partnerships with families, we have to believe not only that it’s important but also that it can be done – and that we can do it. That means it’s necessary for school staff to hold a set of positive beliefs about family engagement.”

~ Henderson, Mapp, Johnson & Davies, 2007

## QUICK TIP YOUR PARENT ENGAGEMENT TEAM

### What will be the responsibilities of this team?

- Team will develop current school year mission and vision for parent engagement and associated goals.
- Team will create/adopt/establish outcome measurements to track and assess progress of goals.
- Team will develop and oversee the implementation of the parent engagement action plan.

### Who should be on your Action Committee?

- The School Leader should take ownership of forming this team or designate a staff member who they feel is the best candidate for bringing people together and building relationships.
- Team should include parents, students, teachers, and community members.
- Team should begin as a small, dedicated group and grow over time.

### How do you go about pulling the team together?

- Consider soliciting staff members who took place in the exercises above and were particularly excited about this work.
- Recruit parents that are currently active at school and/or recognized as parent leaders in the community and/or staff admire their commitment to student achievement by their home-school connection.
- If possible, consider someone from a community-based organization who is connected to the school and would be a strong leader for creating channels for improved student achievement.
- Recruit two students as age-appropriate that are representative of the student body and are considered leaders among their peers.



## GETTING STARTED: BUILDING THE ENGAGEMENT TEAM

*How can we assess our school's mindset as it relates to parent engagement?*

### ACTION: ORGANIZING PARENT ENGAGEMENT TEAM

**FIRST**, create your Parent Engagement Team.

The school leader is the driving force behind engagement and the creation of this team. As stated previously, parents offer a crucial voice and should be included in co-creating goals and strategies for your engagement action plan. See the Quick Tip for more details on creating your Parent Engagement Team.

**SECOND**, conduct a diagnostic.

#### 1. Complete the **MINDSET** diagnostic with your Parent Engagement Team.

- Previously, the school leader conducted the mindset diagnostic with the school staff because school leader and teacher beliefs about parents as partners are essential to engagement.
- Now you need to ensure that everyone on your Parent Engagement Team is bought in to the mindset that will lay the foundation for successful engagement.

#### 2. Have each member of your team complete the **ELEMENTS** diagnostic in **Table 10**.

It is essential to investigate current engagement practices before developing goals and plans for parent engagement. You will want to leverage the areas where your school has existing strengths in addition to addressing areas of need.

**THIRD**, use the diagnostic to gain external perspectives.

It is important to understand how your school is currently interacting with parents so that you can address any gaps in parent engagement before you tackle any larger school reform. Using the same diagnostic in **Table 10**, make a plan to:

1. **DISTRIBUTE** the diagnostic, including the **MINDSET** diagnostic, to your school community including students (as age appropriate), teachers and families.
2. **COMMUNICATE** information about the Parent Engagement Team and its work.

We recognize it will take some time to distribute and collect the diagnostic. As such, we will discuss how to reflect on the information from the diagnostic in the next section. In the meantime, your Engagement Team can do the following two things: 1) review the Engagement Team's responses to the diagnostic and 2) review the key elements of the Parent Engagement model.

## QUICK TIP SUPPORTING A PARTNERSHIP MENTALITY

- Continually reflect on "WHY are we here?" Keep students and their needs at the forefront of every conversation.
- Remember that everyone is a partner with a shared responsibility for students and their achievement. Decisions should be made collectively.
- Ensure that all voices are heard and respected – from student to community members. Every one brings strengths and value to the team.
- Define and communicate expectations and roles for each person.
- Consider developing a "Code of Conduct" that the group observes as their norms.

## QUICK TIP DISTRIBUTING AND COLLECTING DIAGNOSTIC

When you distribute a diagnostic, it is important that the process is highly organized in order to collect your data in an accurate and timely manner. Here are some tips:

1. You should aim to collect a completed diagnostic from at least 10% of your school population.
2. Make sure that you get a random sample of stakeholders who represent the diversity of your school community.
3. Designate a deadline for the diagnostic so that everyone who is asked to complete it knows when it is due. Be sure to send a reminder to people a few days before the deadline.
4. Think about how you can make it easiest for people to complete it. Can you use a tool like [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com) so that people can fill it out on-line? Can you designate one computer in the school where people can take the diagnostic? Can you make paper copies available as well? Do you need to provide it in more than one language?
5. Consider creating an incentive for people to participate. You could give a raffle ticket to everyone who completes the survey.



**TABLE 10: School Element Diagnostic**

		YES		NO	
		Ok	Could Improve	Could Do It	Not Possible Now
<b>COMMUNICATION</b>	An early conference prior to the start of school or during the first few weeks enables parents to share information about their child’s characteristics and goals.				
	Contracts between the school and each parent clarify expectations for how everyone will support student progress.				
	Parents know how to reach teachers directly.				
	Teachers encourage parents to let them know how events in the home may impact school performance.				
	Principal and teachers communicate frequently with parents using any means possible (i.e. letters, email, telephone, in-person, newsletters, etc.)				
	Principals and teachers have established systems and schedules for communication with parents re. homework, student successes, etc.				
	Report cards and regular progress reports are sent, or given, to parents.				
	Communication process is modified for non-English-speaking or low-literacy parents.				
	Conferences with every parent are held at least twice a year with follow-ups as needed at times when parents can attend.				
	Principals and teachers schedule a home visit to all children during the year, giving priority to those families that are new or where there is an immediate concern.				
	The school provides parents with clear information on class level achievement expectations, school activities and policies, discipline procedures, assessment tools and school goals.				
	The school promotes informal activities that facilitate the interaction of parents and staff.				
	The school conducts an annual person-to-person survey of families on students’ needs and families’ suggestions and reactions to school programs.				
	The school staff make a special effort to connect with families that are not normally involved.				
The school provides staff development on effective communication.					
<b>ENVIRONMENT</b>	Locked entries have a clear way for parents to gain access.				
	Staff is welcoming to parents in that security is courteous to parents, the main office greets parents in a friendly way and staff, in general, acknowledge the presence of parents and other visitors.				
	Teachers invite parents to visit their classrooms.				
	Teachers know and use parents’ names.				
	Staff view parents as partners.				
	A school welcoming committee involving parents and school staff visits parents at the beginning of the year.				
	Special efforts are made to welcome new parents and children to the school.				
Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled at times that are convenient for parents to attend and translators and childcare are provided as needed.					



**TABLE 10: School Element Diagnostic**

		YES		NO	
		Ok	Could Improve	Could Do It	Not Possible Now
<b>ENVIRONMENT</b>	Parents are invited to join their child at school for specific activities such as breakfast, lunch or other community events.				
	The school environment is clean, easy to navigate with directional signs, and engaging for parents (i.e. displays children’s work in the hallways).				
	Parents feel comfortable coming to the school or asking for help.				
	The school building is open to families at times outside of the traditional school hours.				
<b>PARTNERSHIP</b>	Parents are given information and training on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• required skills in all subjects at each grade, homework policies</li> <li>• how to support students at home</li> <li>• key ingredients for success (i.e. sufficient sleep, nutritious food, quiet study space, etc.)</li> </ul>				
	Parents participate with teachers in helping children to set academic goals each year.				
	Teachers have a regular schedule of interactive homework that requires children to demonstrate to and discuss with parents what they are learning in school.				
<b>INVOLVEMENT</b>	The school encourages participation by providing clear instructions such as a volunteers packet and creates ways to express appreciation.				
	Parents accompany classes on field trips.				
	Parents volunteer to extend the capacities of staff by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• tutoring or serving as an aide in the classroom</li> <li>• bringing their talents, skills, knowledge as a special guest in the classroom</li> <li>• monitoring the lunch area or playground</li> </ul>				
	Parents volunteer to improve the school environment.				
	Parent teams welcome new families throughout the year.				
	Parent volunteers are involved in supporting communication with all families (through phone trees, newsletters, etc.) with school-related information.				
	Parents have the use of a room or space at the school.				
<b>LEADERSHIP</b>	Parents participate in review of proposed school policies and curriculum as part of parent organization committees or principal-appointed advisory committees.				
	Parents participate on all decision-making and advisory committees.				
	The school provides parents with a clear process for influencing decisions, raising issues or concerns, appealing decisions and resolving problems.				
	The school provides training to staff and parents on shared decisions making.				
<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF ANSWERS IN EACH COLUMN:</b>					



*How do we identify our engagement strengths and weaknesses?*

## ACTION: INTERNAL DIAGNOSTIC REFLECTION

- 1. Review your team’s responses to the diagnostic.** Use **Table 11** below to identify any elements that are **STRENGTHS** or **AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT** for your school. We will discuss the data in more depth later in this section.
- 2. Review the ELEMENTS in the Parent Engagement framework in Section 1 of the toolkit.** Make sure that all members of the Parent Engagement team understand the various components of the framework.
- 3. Create a parent engagement MISSION and VISION for your school.** Remember to emphasize how parent engagement will support a focus on students. Here is a sample vision statement from [Michigan’s Engagement Toolkit](#) on page 45.
- 4. Decide on CORE VALUES related to your actions around parent engagement.** It is important to think about including values and/or principles that guide your teams decisions and actions.

**TABLE 11:** Internal Diagnostic Summary of School Elements

ELEMENT	YES		NO	
	Ok	Could Improve	Could Do It	Not Possible Now
<b>MINDSET</b>				
<b>Communication</b>				
<b>Environment</b>				
<b>Partnership</b>				
<b>Involvement</b>				
<b>Leadership</b>				
<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF ANSWERS IN EACH COLUMN:</b>				

## BEST PRACTICE STRATEGIC PLAN AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Connect your Parent Engagement mission and vision to your school’s strategic plan. This will help you to align your goals and engagement efforts with your student performance needs, goals, and strategies. Additionally, core values, or guiding principles, should act as your norms for all meetings, plans, and actions. These may, in part, be adapted based on your self-assessment needs and the key components of engagement discussed previously. Some examples you could look at: [Boston Public Schools Core Values<sup>65</sup>](#) and [Beyond the Bake Sale Core Value Suggestions<sup>66</sup>](#).

## SUMMARY: ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK ELEMENTS

1. Assemble a Parent Engagement **TEAM** that will spearhead the work at your school.
2. **ASSESS** your Parent Engagement Team’s mindset and the current status of engagement using the Parent Engagement framework. Gain external stakeholder **PERSPECTIVES** about engagement from the larger community.
3. Ensure that your Parent Engagement team understands the various elements of the Parent Engagement **MODEL**.
4. Develop a **MISSION** and **VISION** for parent engagement at your school.

## BEST PRACTICE TRANSFORMING LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOLS

Parent engagement has been shown to be particularly important in the process of transforming low-performing schools. Read more about the details on page 13 of this [REPORT<sup>68</sup>](#).



# BE INTENTIONAL: Focus on Students

## III. How do we develop engagement plans?

*How do we establish parent engagement goals?*

### REFLECT ON ASSESSMENT DATA

After you collect all of the diagnostic results from your school community, your Parent Engagement Team can begin developing engagement plans by first reviewing the data.

*How do we establish parent engagement goals?*

### ACTION: EXTERNAL DIAGNOSTIC REFLECTION

1. **Reflect on your school's strengths** and areas of improvement as they relate to parent engagement. Using the table below, summarize the results from the external diagnostics.

“A school striving for family involvement often leads with its mouth—identifying projects, needs, and goals and then telling parents how they can contribute. A school striving for parent engagement, on the other hand, tends to lead with its ears—listening to what parents think, dream, and worry about. The goal of family engagement is not to serve clients but to gain partners”

~ Larry Ferlazzo, ASCD, 2011

**TABLE 11:** Internal Diagnostic Summary of School Elements

ELEMENT	YES		NO	
	Ok	Could Improve	Could Do It	Not Possible Now
<b>MINDSET</b>				
Communication				
Environment				
Partnership				
Involvement				
Leadership				
<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF ANSWERS IN EACH COLUMN:</b>				



**2. Reflect on the implications of the data.** Using both Diagnostic Summary Tables (Table 11), consider the questions below.

**Strengths:**

- In what engagement elements are we the strongest?
- What evidence do we have?
- Why do we think we have strengths in these particular areas?

**Weaknesses:**

- What engagement elements have the largest gaps?
- Why do we think there are gaps in these particular areas?

**Compare and Contrast:**

- How are the perspectives of the Parent Engagement Team and the larger community similar and different?

**Priorities:**

- Do we still need to address our community's **MINDSET** regarding parent engagement?
- Which **ELEMENTS** of the Parent Engagement framework need the most urgent attention at our school?

## IDENTIFY YOUR GOALS

**FOCUS ON STUDENTS.** In this part of the section, you will connect your work on parent engagement to support your ultimate goal, student achievement.

### ACTION: NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND GOAL SETTING

You can use the basic “Strategic Action Plan” template (**Table 12**) to record this information after you complete the steps below. We recommend using one template for each goal that you identify. We have included a sample goal below with question prompts to guide your thinking.

**1. Review or create your MEASURABLE GOALS.**

- What are our priorities for student achievement?
- What specific goals do we hope to support through our engagement initiatives?

**2. Determine your corresponding PARENT ENGAGEMENT goals.** Specifically, how will elements from the Parent Engagement model support your student achievement goals?

**3. Decide how you will measure your OUTCOMES.** Create, adopt, and/or choose metrics that look at the progress toward both your student achievement and supporting parent engagement goals.

Here is an additional **RESOURCE** to support or guide your team if needed such as district-level **EXAMPLES**<sup>67</sup> of needs assessments and action plans.

### SUMMARY: ASSESSING YOUR SCHOOL

1. Reflect on the results of your **DIAGNOSTIC** to identify strengths and areas of improvement at your school.
2. Review or create your goals for **STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT** and school performance.
3. Think about how your goals for **PARENT ENGAGEMENT** will be linked to your academic goals for your students and school.

## QUICK TIP SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

In order to link your parent engagement initiatives to student achievement, it is important to understand who sets the student achievement goals and what school leadership looks like at your school. Consider the following questions:

- Are goals for student achievement set at the school level?
- Who is involved in setting school-level student achievement goals?
- Does the school leader have an advisory body such as a Governance Council? If so, are there parent members?
- If your school has a Governance Council, how will the Parent Leadership Team interact with this group? If there is not a Governance Council, can the Parent Engagement Team serve as the larger body that is advising the school leader?



**STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GOAL:**

Improve the academic performance of English Language Learners at our school.

**ENGAGEMENT GOAL:**

Sample goals will answer questions related to the elements of the Parent Engagement model such as:

- How will we PARTNER with parents to achieve this goal?
- How will we COMMUNICATE with parents to achieve this goal?

**OUTCOME MEASUREMENTS**

Sample goal for student achievement: 80% of English Language Learners improve one or more performance levels on CELDT (California English Language Development Test).

Sample goal for related parent engagement: 100% of parents with ELL students receive training on supporting literacy skills at home.

**TABLE 12: Strategic Action Plan Template**

<b>Vision</b>			
<b>Mission</b>			
<b>STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GOAL</b>			
<b>ENGAGEMENT GOAL</b>			
<b>OUTCOME MEASUREMENTS</b>			
<b>STRATEGIES</b>			
<b>SCHOOL ACTION STEPS</b>			



# BE IMPACTFUL: Identifying Solutions and Action Steps

## IV. How will we support and sustain engagement efforts?

*How do we develop strategies to support parent engagement?*

*How do we execute our engagement plans?*

*How do we assess parent engagement practices' impact on student achievement?*

“Engaging families should not be seen as something extra that school staff engage in “when they have time.” Just as you have particular curricular strategies, such as instructional coaching and professional development, linking family engagement to learning focuses this work on improving and enhancing the instructional core.”

~ Karen Mapp, HFRP, 2013

## LEARN MORE ACTION COMMITTEES

One committee, for example, could focus on ENVIRONMENT and making the school more welcoming to parents. Another committee might focus on COMMUNICATION and strengthening the school's practices in this area. You can see other examples of Governing and Leadership Committees by going to the “Get Involved” section of [Open Magnet Charter School's website](#)<sup>71</sup> to learn more about their governing council and committees. Boston Public Schools, in partnership with Parent University, describes their various school councils [HERE](#)<sup>72</sup>.

## QUICK TIP ALL INCLUSIVE PARENT GROUPS

One of the foundational structures that your school may want to put into place is a School Parent Council (SPC). A SPC should include all parents in your school community. Some examples of responsibilities and opportunities for a parent council could include: working with the Parent Engagement Team or School Site Council (SSC) to raise funds for programs/resources that will improve student achievement, co-sponsoring events, recommending new programs, providing feedback on current programs, and collaborating with the Parent Engagement Team or SSC to make important decisions about program.



## SUPPORTING THE MODEL

*How do we develop strategies to support parent engagement?*

### ACTION: IMPLEMENTING FOUNDATIONAL STRUCTURES

There is no prescriptive combination of practices that must be used to support parent engagement; they will vary based on your students and school, community, the people involved, and so forth. However, below are examples of key structures that you can use to support the **ELEMENTS** of parent engagement at your school.

- 1. Parent Engagement Team.** You have already created this team, but remember that this should be a standing group that leads the planning, implementation, and evaluation of engagement efforts that support student achievement.
- 2. Partnership Policy.** Adopt an engagement policy or statement that aligns to your school's mission and vision for parent engagement and clearly communicates your school's commitment to family-school partnerships.  
See "Tips for Developing a School Policy" in Chapter 10 of [Beyond the Bake Sale](#)<sup>69</sup> and "Steps to Develop a Policy". Check out this [RESOURCE](#)<sup>70</sup> from the Michigan Department of Education on page 62 to see a sample Title 1 policy or see 46 to 54 to see district policies that you could adopt to fit your school's needs.
- 3. School Advisory or Action Committees.** Consider forming additional action committees that bring staff and parents together to determine and execute solutions to school needs. **These committees can:**
  - Each focus on a specific aspect of the school such as instruction, communications, funding, staffing, performance data, etc.
  - Create structures for parents to play a leadership role in improving school performance.
  - Reinforce the commitment to partnerships in the school community.
- 4. Family Resource Center.** Provide a designated space for families on your school campus. The resource center could:

- **Enable parents** to oversee it and act as a resource to support other parents. For Example: Offer parent mentoring and parent advocacy groups that provide peer help and direction.
- **Provide learning** and instructional resources and activities for parents to guide them in helping their student with reading, etc. For Example: [Charlotte County Schools Title 1 Family Resource Centers](#)<sup>78</sup>
- **Offer student and parent learning opportunities.** For Example: [Student Mentoring](#)<sup>79</sup>
- **Offer structured opportunities for parents** to build new, supportive social connections. For Example: [Parent Cafes](#)<sup>80</sup> and [Community Conversations](#)<sup>81</sup>
- **Offers unstructured opportunities for parents** to engage with one another and for families and students to engagement with the school community. For Example: [Community Conversations](#)<sup>82</sup> and Parent-Teacher-Community groups.

## QUICK TIP

### IDENTIFYING PARENT LEADERSHIP

Below are some steps to help you identify parent leaders at your school.

- First**, work with the PTA/PTO at your school (if one exists).
- Collaborate with PTA/PTO leaders to connect with participating parents.
  - Consider having representatives from the PTA become parent leaders in engagement efforts.
  - Consider asking a Parent Engagement team member to be the point person for the PTA/PTO to stay connected to their parent involvement efforts.
  - Consider working with your PTA to transform it into a School Parent Council, as discussed previously, where parents are thought partners and engaged in tasks linked to student achievement.

**Second**, ask teachers to refer parents based on their knowledge of their students' families.

**Third**, connect with any organizations in your community that support parent engagement, advocacy, school involvement, etc. Share your school's new parent engagement plan. You can work with these community groups to help identify parents who are engaged with their work and may be part of your school community.

## BEST PRACTICES SUCCESS STORIES

[READ](#)<sup>83</sup> about the various strategies that successful schools and parents took to develop partnerships and drive student achievement. There are several [EXAMPLES](#)<sup>84</sup> of school-parent partnership initiatives here, including the results of successful programs.



**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.** In order to achieve the collective goals that you have for parent engagement, it is critical to develop the capacity of staff and parents. Here are some suggestions for specific topics below:

**1. SCHOOL STAFF.** Professional development is essential to helping school staff share their expertise with parents. Initially, training could focus on building relationships, strengthening partnerships and effective two-way communication. It could also include specific training related to engagement strategies and its connection to student achievement.

Here are some additional ideas for professional development topics:

- Share data with parents and how to support parents in using data
- Build trusting and authentic relationships
- Develop partnerships with diverse families
- Share the impact of school, family, and community connections
- Learn about the various cultures of your families
- Develop effective communication and outreach (i.e. conduct home visits)
- Implement classroom practices that encourage involvement at home

**2. PARENTS.** Leadership training is an essential component to building capacity and effective and sustainable engagement. Offer parent education programs and/or activities based that will help parents to support your collective priorities and goals.

These opportunities should:

- Support families in developing skills and confidence
- Address a variety of topics based on student and parent needs
- Be led or co-led by parent leaders from Committees and/or teachers
- Be offered during times that are most convenient for your families
- Help you to identify parent leaders

See the **EXAMPLES** in **BEST PRACTICES: SUCCESS STORIES** to help you either 1) Design your own, 2) Adopt similar strategies at your school, and/or 3) Connect with an organization to partner with to conduct leadership trainings.

**INVOLVEMENT.** There is still a role for parent involvement within the engagement model as not all parents are going to be engaged in leadership or decision-making roles at the school. Action committees, for example, provide an opportunity for parents who may not want to take leadership roles to still be influential partners through involvement on committees that are working to support student achievement.

## BEST PRACTICES BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

How can we build relationships with parents? How can we build trust? Below are some ideas to help guide you. However, you know your families better than anyone. If you don't know them as well as you would like, here is your chance to get to know them and start developing a real partnership.

1. Welcome parents into your school and classrooms so that they can understand more about your school.
2. Open your school to parents by hosting evening classes based on parent needs.
3. Communicate clearly to parents that they belong at the school and the school belongs to them. For instance, have parents lead New Family Orientation.
4. Invest parents in your work by identifying their individual strengths and finding ways to apply them at school.
5. Always honor parent participation and acknowledge contributions—no matter how big or small.
6. Emphasize positive interactions among all stakeholders

## QUICK TIP FOSTER COMMUNITY

Engage with other organizations working with parents and community members on education and/or other community issues. Identify local grassroots organizations that can help foster discourse among parents and between parents and your school.

**Questions we should be asking to get parents in the door:**

- Why do parents become involved in children's education?
- What do they do when they're involved (i.e., what mechanisms of influence do they engage when they are involved)?
- How does their involvement, once engaged, influence student outcomes?
- What are our strengths in dealing with parents?
- Where are our major gaps?
- How do we get ALL parents to see their potential? Increase their self-efficacy? Get them to see their role in the school differently? Shape their school job description?

[Beyond the Bake Sale<sup>85</sup>](#), Chapter 11 has an example Family Welcome Questionnaire



## DETERMINE STRATEGIC SOLUTIONS AND ACTION STEPS

### ACTION: CHOOSING STRATEGIES TO CARRY OUT OUR GOALS

Work with your Parent Engagement Team to complete your action plans by following the steps below:

#### First, review potential engagement-related strategies.

Table 13 shows potential engagement strategies that align with the School Elements. Resources for various programs and examples are included in **Table 13** to support you in determining which strategies to use and how they will look in action.

#### Second, choose and document the appropriate strategies and actions steps in Table 12.

Each of your goals is focused on student achievement and has aligned PARENT ENGAGEMENT goals to support it.

- Choose and take note of strategies that will lead you to accomplishing your parent engagement goals.
- Indicate action steps needed to apply each strategy.

## QUICK TIP POTENTIAL BARRIERS AND OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

Have your Parent Engagement Team brainstorm potential barriers to their Strategic Action Plans. Be sure to come up with possible solutions to those barriers. Barriers could include be related to meeting times, transportation, childcare, and language.

- What barriers might we face at our school? Why?
- How can we prevent or accommodate them?

**READ**<sup>86</sup> Michigan's documents on breaking down barriers on page 66.

## BEST PRACTICE ESTABLISH A SUPPORT NETWORK

Establishing an external support network provides additional resources, support, and informal accountability for your efforts. Most importantly, building and strengthening a support network:

- 1) Invests the community more deeply in education and can build financial and human capital support for meeting current and future needs
- 2) Increases racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity of sources of information and resources offered to your families and the school
- 3) Expands the network of individuals to learn from and with whom you can share best practices and generate new ideas and strategies
- 4) Helps support schools in implementing and growing the most effective engagement strategies

SEE Growing and Sustaining Parent Engagement's Strategy #3: [Support Network](#)<sup>92</sup> for more information.



Earlier, you discussed the goals and outcome measurements below:

<b>STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GOAL:</b>
Improve the academic performance of English Language Learners at our school.
<b>ENGAGEMENT GOAL:</b>
Sample goals will answer questions related to the elements of the Parent Engagement model such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will we <b>PARTNER</b> with parents to achieve this goal?</li> <li>• How will we <b>COMMUNICATE</b> with parents to achieve this goal?</li> </ul>
<b>OUTCOME MEASUREMENTS</b>
<b>Sample goal for student achievement:</b> 80% of English Language Learners improve one or more performance levels on CELDT (California English Language Development Test).
<b>Sample goal for related parent engagement:</b> 100% of parents with ELL students receive training on supporting literacy skills at home.

Now you should answer the questions in the table below:

<b>STRATEGIES:</b>			
What strategies will support us in accomplishing our goals and outcomes above?			
<b>SCHOOL ACTION STEPS</b>			
What does successful implementation of the strategy look like?	What specific steps will the school take to implement the strategy?	Who will be responsible?	What is the timeline/deadline for execution?

Here are some **RESOURCES** to learn more about action steps that schools can take to implement engagement efforts:

- Seattle Public Schools, starting on page 6 are [School Actions](#)<sup>87</sup>.
- North Carolina Public Schools, starting on page 13 are [STRATEGIES](#)<sup>88</sup> divided into similar essential engagement elements.
- Boston Public Schools offers standards and goals to its schools, which includes [ACTION STEPS](#)<sup>89</sup>. You can see more [HERE](#)<sup>90</sup>, or contact BPS to get a copy.
- Alaska State Board of Education Framework includes [School Actions](#)<sup>91</sup> on page 14.



## ENGAGEMENT PLAN EXECUTION

*How do we execute our plans?*

### ACTION: ORGANIZING RESOURCES

#### 1. DECIDE HOW YOU WILL USE HUMAN CAPITAL TO SUPPORT INITIATIVES.

- Your Strategic Action Plan specifies who will be responsible for specific action steps and what the timeline will be. Make sure that the Parent Engagement Team is holding all involved individuals and groups accountable for their commitments.
- While we recommended that the school leader initially spearhead parent engagement, it may be time to designate someone else as the point person at the school. If your school has the funds, the school leader may decide to hire a part-time or full-time staff member whose role is parent and community engagement. See sample job descriptions in *Beyond the Bake Sale*.

#### 2. DISTRIBUTE RESOURCES TO ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS THAT DRIVE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT.

If your school has the ability to designate funds towards parent engagement initiatives, remember to verify that they are focused on supporting student achievement. If your school does not have this financial flexibility and funds are needed, consider working with a School Action Committee or other group to spearhead fundraising efforts for the work.

## QUICK TIP COMMUNICATION PLANS

Two-way communication is an important element of engagement and as discussed, it is important to be intentional in incorporating communication strategies in your action plans. At some point in time, you may decide to adjust or create a communication plan. [BPS<sup>93</sup>](#) has a district-level example, but elements of this plan could be incorporated into your school-level communication plan. The Appendix includes a sample communication policy, timeline, and an example of a communication strategy. [Learningfirst.org<sup>94</sup>](#) also has a communication toolkit that includes sample language for written materials and a vision for 21st century communication.



## MEASURING PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

*How do we assess parent engagement practices' impact on student achievement?*

### ACTION: TRACKING AND MEASURING OUTCOMES

There are four potential levels of tracking and measuring progress and outcomes.

**FIRST**, assess the status of the action steps that were defined for each goal in your Strategic Action Plan documents. Were these completed successfully?

**SECOND**, assess whether your school was successful in meeting the targets for parent engagement outcome measurements. If yes, proceed to the next step. If not and the action steps were completed successfully, you may need to revisit whether you need new or additional strategies and action steps to support your goals.

**THIRD**, assess whether your school was successful in meeting the targets for student achievement outcome measurements. If yes, does there appear to be a relationship between increased parent engagement and student achievement outcomes? If no, were all the action steps completed? What other strategies might be needed?

**FOURTH**, apart from assessing your specific goals for student achievement, monitor the overall strength of your parent engagement practices by conducting the diagnostic at the beginning and end of each year. How is parent engagement changing at your school over time?

### SUMMARY: ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM PROGRESS

1. Establish **FOUNDATIONAL STRUCTURES** to support parent engagement at your school.
2. Identify **STRATEGIES** that align with your goals and clear action steps to execute them.
3. Organize **RESOURCES** to support your Strategic Action Plans.
4. Track and measure **OUTCOMES** to monitor progress toward your goals.

## QUICK TIP SHARE SUCCESSES

Create a platform for sharing your successes with your school community and brainstorming opportunities for sharing best practices with other schools. This could include working with your district to include a resource dedicated to best parent engagement practices. Harvard Family Research Project has a free e-newsletter to help keep you up-to-date on new information, research, and tools on family involvement. [The Family Involvement Network of Educators \(FINE\)](#)<sup>95</sup> highlights new resources and provides the opportunity to share ideas with a diverse group of individuals from researchers to school staff.



**TABLE 13: School Element Strategies**

SCHOOL ELEMENT	STRATEGIES	PROGRAM EXAMPLES & RESOURCES
<b>COMMUNICATION</b>	An early conference prior to the start of school or during the first few weeks enables parents to share information about their child’s characteristics and goals.	<a href="#">Infinite Campus Parent Portal</a> <sup>96</sup>
	Contracts between the school and each parent clarify expectations for how everyone will support student progress.	<a href="#">Compadres in Education</a> <sup>97</sup>
	Parents know how to reach teachers directly.	<a href="#">Parents In Touch Programs</a> <sup>98</sup>
	Teachers encourage parents to let them know how events in the home may impact school performance.	<a href="#">Family Literacy and Math Toolkits</a> <sup>99</sup>
	Principal and teachers communicate frequently with parents using any means possible (i.e. letters, email, telephone, in-person, newsletters, etc.)	<a href="#">Community Bulletin Board</a> <sup>100</sup>
	Principals and teachers have established systems and schedules for communication with parents re. homework, student successes, etc.	Translating written and oral communication via translator, etc.
	Report cards and regular progress reports are sent, or given, to parents.	Connect parents to <a href="#">community</a> <sup>101</sup> resources.
	Communication process is modified for non-English-speaking or low-literacy parents.	<a href="#">Neighborhood/Community Meetings</a> <sup>102</sup>
	Conferences with every parent are held at least twice a year with follow-ups as needed at times when parents can attend.	<a href="#">TV Network</a> <sup>103</sup>
	Principals and teachers schedule a home visit to all children during the year, giving priority to those families that are new or where there is an immediate concern.	<a href="#">Parent Cafes</a> <sup>104</sup>
	The school provides parents with clear information on class level achievement expectations, school activities and policies, discipline procedures, assessment tools and school goals.	Family and Student Engagement Surveys (HFRP)
	The school promotes informal activities that facilitate the interaction of parents and staff.	Transitional programs that includes parents to help support students with transition between elementary, middle and/or high school
	The school conducts an annual person-to-person survey of families on students’ needs and families’ suggestions and reactions to school programs.	<a href="#">Academic Parent-Teacher Teams (APPT)</a> <sup>105</sup>
	The school staff make a special effort to connect with families that are not normally involved.	
The school provides staff development on effective communication.		
<b>ENVIRONMENT</b>	Locked entries have a clear way for parents to gain access.	<a href="#">Home Visit Project</a> <sup>106</sup>
	Staff is welcoming to parents in that security is courteous to parents, the main office greets parents in a friendly way and staff, in general, acknowledge the presence of parents and other visitors.	Informal meeting and parent-teacher groups to discuss education topics and address parent needs
	Teachers invite parents to visit their classrooms.	Open-door policy where parents are welcome to observe classrooms and visit the school
	Teachers know and use parents’ names.	Greet families at morning drop-off and pick up
	Staff view parents as partners.	Celebrate family and student accomplishments. For example: Graduation from Leadership Institutes or parent programs, certificates for workshop retreats, recognition dinners for Council and Action Team members
	A school welcoming committee involving parents and school staff visits parents at the beginning of the year.	Parent Resource Centers: <a href="#">DC Workshops</a> <sup>107</sup> , GED classes, etc
	Special efforts are made to welcome new parents and children to the school.	<a href="#">Family-friendly walk-throughs</a> <sup>108</sup> .
	Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled at times that are convenient for parents to attend and translators and childcare are provided as needed.	See Section 3 in this toolkit about how teachers’ specific strategies can support this element
	Parents are invited to join their child at school for specific activities such as breakfast, lunch or other community events.	
	The school environment is clean, easy to navigate with directional signs, and engaging for parents (i.e. displays children’s work in the hallways).	
	Parents feel comfortable coming to the school or asking for help.	
	The school building is open to families at times outside of the traditional school hours.	



<b>PARTNERSHIP</b>	Parents are given information and training on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• required skills in all subjects at each grade, homework policies-how to support students at home</li> <li>• key ingredients for success (i.e. sufficient sleep, nutritious food, quiet study space, etc.)</li> </ul>	Home-School Compacts  Parent-Teacher Workshops on Learning and Instruction, Data, Goal Setting. For example: Parenting Journey is a 12 week workshop guide designed by the Family Center in Boston; allows participating parents to start developing a relationship with the school build on trust and understanding, and allows school insight into the family environment
	Parents participate with teachers in helping children to set academic goals each year.	Holding interactive workshops for parents to learn new skills and knowledge and use those things to support students
	Teachers have a regular schedule of interactive homework that requires children to demonstrate to and discuss with parents what they are learning in school.	
<b>INVOLVEMENT</b>	The school encourages participation by providing clear instructions such as a volunteers packet and creates ways to express appreciation.	Providing parents opportunities to assist in the classroom class room assistance
	Parents accompany classes on field trips.	Parents help conduct home visits
	Parents volunteer to extend the capacities of staff by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• tutoring or serving as an aide in the classroom</li> <li>• bringing their talents, skills, knowledge as a special guest in the classroom</li> </ul>	Involving parents in fundraising to increase learning opportunities for students
	monitoring the lunch area or playground	Parent Expertise Groups: tutor students in areas of need after school, at night or during the school day.
	Parents volunteer to improve the school environment.	Parents recruited to lead or volunteer in collaboration with PTO/PTA efforts
	Parent teams welcome new families throughout the year.	Parent Liaisons for parent/family resource centers
	Parent volunteers are involved in supporting communication with all families (through phone trees, newsletters, etc.) with school-related information.	
	Parents have the use of a room or space at the school.	
<b>LEADERSHIP</b>	Parents participate in review of proposed school policies and curriculum as part of parent organization committees or principal-appointed advisory committees.	<a href="#">Parent Leadership Institute</a> <sup>109</sup>  Parents leading new parent/student orientation  <a href="#">School Site Councils/Advisory</a> <sup>110</sup> / <a href="#">Committees</a> <sup>111</sup>
	Parents participate on all decision-making and advisory committees.	<a href="#">Hispanics Parent Council</a> <sup>112</sup>  Supporting parents in leading trainings in areas that will help them support their students
	The school provides parents with a clear process for influencing decisions, raising issues or concerns, appealing decisions and resolving problems.	Parent Leaders. For example: the freshman class is divided into cohorts with teacher/advisor, student leaders, and parent leaders. Parent leaders are responsible for contacting all cohort parents to keep them abreast of school-wide events, important dates, parent workshops, and cohort data. PLs are also tasked with supporting each other in overcoming barriers toward the success of students in their cohort. Student leader helps guide his or her peers toward greater academic achievement using shared and individualized data. The teacher/advisor meets with the cohort of students once a week to focus students on their attendance and academic achievement through variety of activities based in part in part on the curriculum Roads to Success (college-readiness program by New Visions). BASE (Brooklyn Academy of Science and Environment) school program in NY.
	The school provides training to staff and parents on shared decisions making.	



# PARENT ENGAGEMENT:

## How can I facilitate parent engagement to support student achievement?

**PURPOSE:** In this section, we are going to focus on how teachers can coordinate their instructional plans with strategies that will encourage parents to be engaged at home and in the classroom. We will address the following two key questions:

**How can I support parent engagement at home and at school?**

**How do I partner with parents to improve student performance?**

### WHY IS THIS SECTION IMPORTANT?

While School Leaders are the key drivers of the engagement model at the school level, teachers foster the needed relationships and systems at the classroom level that enable school-wide engagement mechanisms. Teachers are a parent's primary school contact, and teachers can leverage this relationship to increase classroom support and parent participation at home.

"Schools in which teachers reported having high levels of outreach with parents—meeting face-to-face with parents, sending parents materials on ways to help their child at home, and telephoning routinely—had student test scores that grew at a 40% higher rate than in schools where teachers reported low levels of outreach."

~ Westat Study, 2001





# BE INTROSPECTIVE: Reflecting on Parent Participation

## I. How can I support parent engagement at home and at school?

*How can I assess my beliefs about parent engagement?*

*How can parents support student success in my classroom?*

*What are the key elements of effective parent engagement?*

*What is my role in engagement?*

### TEACHER REFLECTION

*How can I assess my beliefs about parent engagement?*

### ACTION: CONSIDER YOUR MINDSET

**FIRST**, reflect on the following questions:

- What is the role of families in my classroom?
- How do they currently participate in their students' learning?

**SECOND**, if you haven't already, complete the **MINDSET** diagnostic below.

**TABLE 14: Mindset Diagnostic**

IN MY CLASSROOM, I BELIEVE THAT...		Yes	No
MINDSET	All of my parents have the capacity to support their students in learning.		
	Leveraging parent knowledge and skills is key to supporting student achievement.		
	Parents should be involved in making decisions regarding learning and instruction at school.		
	I am partly responsible for empowering parents to know that their expertise is valuable to school performance.		
	I value building trusting relationships with parents.		
	Students will achieve more if I work closely with families and communities.		
	Parents should have access to student and school performance results.		
	There should be clear processes and platforms for parents to voice concerns.		
	Our school should have space for parents to work and come together.		
	Parents have the ability to set goals, create plans, and initiate change at our schools.		
	We should offer opportunities for parents to develop their knowledge and skills based on their needs.		
	I can find solutions to barriers to parent engagement at home and in the classroom.		
	Parents know and understand their potential as part of the leadership of our school.		
<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF ANSWERS IN EACH COLUMN:</b>			

“Parental encouragement, activities, and interest at home and participation in schools and classrooms affect children’s achievement, attitudes, and aspirations, even after student ability and family socioeconomic status are taken into account.

~ Joyce Epstein, Parent and Home Involvement in School for 2007



**THIRD, review your responses to the diagnostic and consider these questions:**

- Which questions have “Yes” responses?
- Which questions have “No” responses?
- Based on the diagnostic and our definition of engagement, are parents engaged at your school? In your classroom?
- How do your current teacher actions correspond with the results of your assessment above?

**MINDSET.** Mindset is the foundation for successful engagement. Your perspectives as well as those of your parents are what inspire and sustain all elements of parent engagement. Educators and parents must believe that school-parent partnerships can have a significant impact on students’ educational outcomes and that there is value in having parents act as leaders and decision-makers at the school.

## PARENTS AS PARTNERS

### *How can parents support student success in my classroom?*

**PARTNERSHIP.** Approach parents with teamwork in mind. Remember that you are the expert on the curriculum, but your parents are the experts on their students. It is important for you to share information about student progress, concerns, and successes so that you can be partners in your students’ success.

**IMPACT.** Studies show that the family is the most important factor in a student’s success and what a parent does is TWICE as important to their success than income or the school a student attends (MDOE, 2001). However, you can help parents to realize their greatest impact by enabling parents to participate as a partner in improving student learning and success. Effective partnerships will benefit all stakeholders in the following ways:

<b>STUDENTS</b>	Higher self-esteem and personal expectations
	Higher graduation rates
	Increase number of student enrolling in higher education
	Better grades and test scores
	Better behavior
	Increase social skills
	Better attitudes towards school and learning
<b>FAMILIES</b>	Positive set of beliefs about their ability to impact student achievement
	High expectations for student
	Increased focus on learning and achievement
	Greater respect and trust of teachers and staff
<b>SCHOOLS</b>	Teacher-Parent conversations centered on student learning
	Increased perception of advantages of partnerships
	Increased attention to building relationships to support student learning
	Greater respect and trust of parents and students
	Increased community support for school success
	Increased social capital focused on student all around success

*Sources: New Wave of Evidence, Henderson & Mapp (2007), Academic Development Lab (2004), San Diego County Office of Education (1997), Flamboyan Foundation (2011)*

To see more about the impact of engagement on schools, go to these [RESOURCES](#)<sup>113</sup> by [Harvard Family Research Project](#)<sup>114</sup> and [MDOE](#)<sup>115</sup> and [Academic Development Institute’s](#)<sup>116</sup> “Effects of Comprehensive Engagement on Student Learning.”



## ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

*What are the key elements of effective parent engagement?*

### ACTION: CONSIDER THE OPPORTUNITY

1. Review the first section of this toolkit, where we offer a model for engagement and reflect on the elements of the engagement framework.
2. Determine which elements of the engagement framework pertain to you in your role as a classroom teacher.
3. Think about what the impact of engaged parents would be on your students' achievements.

## THE OPPORTUNITY

*What is my role in engagement?*

**TEACHER PRACTICES.** The core of engagement is student achievement, and you are the key driver of student learning in your classroom. Integrating and utilizing parent engagement will enrich those teacher actions by creating support mechanisms that facilitate student learning across all environments (i.e. home, school, etc).

### REFLECT: YOUR CLASSROOM PRACTICES

**1. Complete the diagnostic on the following page.**

The diagnostic is similar to the diagnostic that was used at the school level except that **ONLY** the items, which are specific to classroom practices, have been included. While teachers can support parent engagement beyond the classroom at the school-level, we want to focus on those aspects that are primarily within the teacher's control in the classroom.



**TABLE 15: Classroom Engagement Diagnostic**

ELEMENT	QUESTIONS TO INVESTIGATE	YES		NO	
		Ok	Could Improve	Could Do It	Not Possible Now
COMMUNICATION	An early conference prior to the start of school or during the first few weeks enables parents to share information about their child’s characteristics and goals.				
	Parents know how to reach teachers directly.				
	Teachers encourage parents to let them know how events in the home may impact school performance.				
	Principal and teachers communicate frequently with parents using any means possible (i.e. letters, email, telephone, in-person, newsletters, etc.)				
	Principals and teachers have established systems and schedules for communication with parents re. homework, student successes, etc.				
	Report cards and regular progress reports are sent, or given, to parents.				
	Communication process is modified for non-English-speaking or low-literacy parents.				
	Conferences with every parent are held at least twice a year with follow-ups as needed at times when parents can attend.				
	Principals and teachers schedule a home visit to all children during the year, giving priority to those families that are new or where there is an immediate concern.				
ENVIRONMENT	An early conference prior to the start of school or during the first few weeks enables parents to share information about their child’s characteristics and goals.				
	Teachers invite parents to visit their classrooms.				
	Teachers know and use parents’ names.				
	Staff view parents as partners.				
	Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled at times that are convenient for parents to attend and translators and childcare are provided as needed.				
	Parents are invited to join their child at school for specific activities such as breakfast, lunch or other community events.				
	Parents feel comfortable coming to the school or asking for help.				
	The school building is open to families at times outside of the traditional school hours.				
PARTNERSHIP	Parents are given information and training on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• required skills in all subjects at each grade, homework policies</li> <li>• how to support students at home</li> <li>• key ingredients for success (i.e. sufficient sleep, nutritious food, quiet study space, etc.)</li> </ul>				
	Parents participate with teachers in helping children to set academic goals each year.				
	Teachers have a regular schedule of interactive homework that requires children to demonstrate to and discuss with parents what they are learning in school.				
INVOLVEMENT	Parents volunteer to extend the capacities of staff by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• tutoring or serving as an aide in the classroom</li> <li>• bringing their talents, skills, knowledge as a special guest in the classroom</li> <li>• monitoring the lunch area or playground</li> </ul>				
	<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF ANSWERS IN EACH COLUMN:</b>				



## REFLECTING ON DATA

2. Total your scores from your individual diagnostic.

**TABLE 11:** Internal Diagnostic Summary of School Elements

ELEMENT	YES		NO	
	Ok	Could Improve	Could Do It	Not Possible Now
<b>MINDSET</b>				
<b>Communication</b>				
<b>Environment</b>				
<b>Partnership</b>				
<b>Involvement</b>				
<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF ANSWERS IN EACH COLUMN:</b>				

3. Reflect on the data from your diagnostic:

- In what engagement elements is your classroom the strongest?
- What engagement elements do you see the largest gaps?
- Why do we think there are gaps in these particular areas?
- How can they be addressed?

## SUMMARY: ENGAGEMENT ASSESSMENT AND OPPORTUNITY

1. Assess your **MINDSET** as it relates to the role of parents in your classroom.
2. Understand how parent engagement can **STRENGTHEN** teacher actions and accelerate student achievement.
3. Evaluate the **ELEMENTS** of parent engagement in your classroom to identify areas of strength and improvement.



# BE INTENTIONAL: Integrate Engagement Strategies into Your Action Plan

## II. How do I partner with parents to improve student performance?

*How do I incorporate strategies into my classroom practices?*

*How do I evaluate the success of my parent engagement efforts?*

## INTEGRATING ENGAGEMENT INTO CLASSROOM PRACTICES

Before we create your classroom engagement plan, we will review your classroom goals for student performance and parent engagement. You can begin to put this information into **Table 17**.

### ACTION: IDENTIFYING GOALS

**FIRST**, review school performance goals.

- What are your school's performance goals?
- How do these translate into your classroom goals?

**SECOND**, identify your goals for parent engagement.

- What are your goals for parent engagement in your classroom?
- How will you measure your success with these goals?
- How will these goals support your overall classroom and school performance goals?

Now that you have identified your goals and how you will measure them, we will identify appropriate strategies for your plan.

“The academic achievement scores for children whose parents were highly involved in their education was substantially HIGHER than that of their counterparts whose parents were less involved.”

~ Parental Involvement and Student Achievement:  
A Meta-Analysis, by William Jeynes, 2005



**TABLE 17: Classroom Action Plan**

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GOAL:
Ex. 100% of students will be proficient in Reading.
ENGAGEMENT GOAL:
Ex. 100% of parents participate in school working on supporting reading in the home.
OUTCOME MEASUREMENTS
Standardized tests Teacher assessments Attendance at workshops
STRATEGIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create reading log for parents to track reading in the home.</li> <li>• Assign homework that requires parents to read with their children.</li> <li>• Create a classroom library for students to check out books and take them home.</li> </ul>

## ENGAGING PARENTS AT HOME AND IN THE CLASS

*“How do I incorporate strategies into my classroom practices?”*

### ACTION: WORK PLAN

In **Table 18**, we have provided a work plan with strategies that can be implemented throughout the year to support student achievement. All of the strategies are linked to the engagement elements from the parent engagement model, and many of the strategies address more than one element in the model. Remember to leverage the systems that already exist in your classroom and integrate parent engagement whenever possible. A recommended timeline has been included; however, these timelines are flexible and you can always adjust them to meet your current needs.

**FIRST**, review the work plan below. Reflect on the following questions:

- What strategies are feasible for you to implement at this point in time?
- What strategies align with your goals in **Table 17**?

**TABLE 18: Engagement Strategy Work Plan**

TIMELINE	ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY
ESTABLISHING A CONNECTION	
July – August (before school starts)	1. Conduct <a href="#">Home Visits</a> <sup>117</sup> . (See the Quick Tip for more information.)
	2. Establish a Parent-Teacher-Student <a href="#">Compact</a> <sup>118</sup> .
	3. Create/adopt progress tracking sheets/documentation system for <a href="#">academic</a> <sup>119</sup> and behavioral information that you will share with families. Include <a href="#">College Readiness</a> <sup>120</sup> , especially if you teach High School students. <a href="#">READ</a> <sup>121</sup> about engaging parents using data. Example: <a href="#">Academic Parent Teacher Teams</a> <sup>122</sup> .
	4. Create a Family Engagement Binder for all documentation as it relates to families. Create student data sharing folders that include weekly progress trackers, reflections, and other notes for families.
	5. Create a communication system and schedule for keeping parents in the loop about 1) individual student progress, 2) classroom volunteering opportunities, and 3) school events and opportunities to join their student at school (Examples: Create a website/blog/parent portal).
	6. Schedule interactive <a href="#">homework</a> <sup>123</sup> that requires children to demonstrate and discuss with parents what they are learning in school.



**TABLE 18: Engagement Strategy Work Plan**

<b>BUILDING THE PARTNERSHIP</b>	
August – October	1. Give a student survey and homework assignments focused on family discussion about long-term goals.
	2. Send a parent survey home on a topic related to what the students are learning in class to engage parents in what their students are learning.
	3. Have a Parent-Teacher-Student Conference (during the first month of school) to develop student goals. It is important to discuss actions that each party will assume to support the student in achieving those goals. See Best Practices for more information.
	4. Invite parents to a class, grade-level, or school-wide workshop: Suggested topics are: 1) Sharing and Using Data and 2) Goal-setting and planning for college.
	5. Connect with parents prior to progress reports and consider having student-led conferences as age-appropriate.
	6. Plan for parent participation based on student diagnostics, other assessed needs, and family interests – including planning for parents/community members as guests to bring their knowledge, skills, and expertise to life in the classroom.
	7. Send out a newsletter and personal invitation to visit/observe the classroom and include school procedures for doing so. Co-create these plans with students and/or parents when possible.
	8. Have opportunities for parents to be at school after traditional schools hours. Examples include: trainings, workshops, parent focus groups concerning: required skills in all subjects at each grade, homework policies, how to support students at home, key ingredients for success (i.e. sufficient sleep, nutritious food, quiet study space, etc.).
	9. Create interactive homework that requires children to demonstrate and discuss what they are learning in school with their parents.
<b>STRENGTHENING THE PARTNERSHIP</b>	
November – February	1. Parent Academic Nights Hold another class, grade-level, or school-wide workshop: (ask other teachers to get involved). Suggested content includes: a. Establishing home conditions that support at-home learning b. Literacy and reading comprehension
	2. Have follow-up meetings with parents related to progress toward goals.
	3. Have one-on-one meetings with students about accomplishments, progress, growth areas and student, parent, and teacher actions to support those.
	4. If possible, connect with parents prior to progress reports: Student-Led Conferences and/or via phone or other form of determined communication.
	5. Create an opportunity for having “College Talks” (For example: college night, sharing college info, college project that incorporates families.)
	6. Present families with the next semester’s opportunities for participation via newsletter, class website, etc.
	7. Provide students and families resources for things to do during the winter break.
	8. Plan and reach out to parents to involve them in the classroom or after-school: tutoring, in-class support, role model/ sharing expertise, etc.
	9. Send out personal invitations to visit/observe the classroom. Include school procedures for doing so if applicable.


**TABLE 18: Engagement Strategy Work Plan**

REFLECTING ON THE PARTNERSHIP	
March – June	1. Host a small group parent meeting (not intended for discussing private, individual student information but related to supporting students overall, getting their input, feedback, and suggestions).
	2. Final meeting with parents and students. Hand out and collect end of year surveys for parents and students.
	3. Provide students and families with resources for things to do during the summer break (including resources in the home and the community).
	4. Meet with your grade-level team. Encourage team members to implement engagement strategies and/or reflect, evaluate, and brainstorm better strategies for the following year.

These **RESOURCES** provide examples for the ideas listed in the work plan above:

- Flamboyant Foundation has several resources, including **TOOLS**<sup>124</sup> for building relationships and parent-teacher conferences, parent surveys and exit slips, and tools for communicating academic progress.
- **California**<sup>125</sup> Department of Education Framework
- **New Wave of Evidence**<sup>126</sup>: Recommendations for putting research findings into actions
- Family-Schools Partnership **Framework**<sup>127</sup> from Australia’s Department of Education
- **Beyond the Bake Sale**<sup>128</sup> by Karen Mapp and Anne Henderson includes homework surveys, conferences checklists, and other tools for teachers and schools.

## REFLECT: INTEGRATION

All of the strategies that were presented are focused on creating systems, structures, and classroom procedures that will have a positive impact on student achievement. These strategies will support the engagement elements discussed in this section, and they should be integrated in a purposeful manner in order to leverage and increase the impact of the systems that you already have in place. Some of these may take time to implement or refine; however, these methods will save you time later as they will increase the number of individuals who are supporting student learning.

**INTEGRATE** your engagement plans into the core of how your classroom works. Here are some examples:

- Adopt student folders that include space for parent feedback on assignments as a classroom **PROCEDURE**.
- Calendar weekly calls home to a sub-set of families and rotate each week as part of building a **PARTNERSHIP** with families.
- Establish clear **GOALS** for parent participation in the classroom and home.
- Monitor **PROGRESS** of parent engagement through student and parent surveys and conferences.
- Build parent volunteers into lesson **PLANNING** and **EXECUTION** to create learning opportunities, to foster a welcoming environment and to connect parent expertise and student learning needs.

## BEST PRACTICE HOME VISITS

Home visits have been shown to be extremely beneficial to engaging parents and supporting academic progress in part due to the face-to-face contact with parents and centering conversations around a partnership philosophy from the start. Learn more about what a Home Visit entails and its impact [HERE](#) from the Parent Teacher Home Visit Project.

- Discuss your desire to work as partners in supporting their student.
- Explain what you are going to do for the student, what your hopes and expectations are for the year, and how important the parent’s role is in the partnership.
- Set up a parent-teacher-student conference for the first month of school. Explain that you hope to establish goals for their student together during that time.
- Ask about their student’s strengths, weakness, and interests. Ask about parent concerns and hopes for their student.
- Discuss the best form of communication for each of you and exchange two forms of contact information as well as preferred days and times for communication.



## QUICK TIP

### PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

Consider the following when having your parent-teacher conferences:

- Support student-led conferences. Check out Conway Middle School in Jefferson County's toolkit on conducting Student-Led conferences.
- Be flexible—move follow-up conferences to other locations if needed (library, closer to families home or work, etc), and choose times that work for parents.
- Communicate the importance of family participation.
- Help families feel comfortable by letting them know ahead of time what you hope to discuss and share.
- At the first meeting, share class goals, classroom procedures/systems, expectations, etc.
- Share benchmark data, student progress, strengths, areas of need. Share how you are supporting areas of need and co-plan how the family can support them as well.
- Determine the best way to reach one another (when, how, etc.).
- Share regular progress reports and report cards and discuss them with parents.
- Encourage parents to share the following:
  - Their perspective of child's strengths and challenge areas, etc.
  - Information about child's characteristics, interests, and goals
  - Home events and situations that might impact school work and student performance
- Here is an additional **RESOURCE** for things to consider for conferences with your Bilingual Families

## BEST PRACTICE

### ACADEMIC PARENT-TEACHER TEAMS

Aim to establish Academic Parent-Teacher Teams to foster partnerships with parents. APTT is an Intentional model to increase student academic learning and performance by enhancing the quality and quantity of parent-teacher communication and interaction. Creighton Elementary School District originally established these as alternatives to parent-teacher conferences, and several studies include them as best practice. Consider including students in your follow-up meetings with parents as well. Read more about APTT at HRFP.org.

## QUICK TIP

### TIME CONSTRAINTS AND BEING STRATEGIC

You may be at a stage in the year when it makes the most sense to focus on one or two strategies or engagement elements that will be the most beneficial for that point in time. What teacher actions will most impact that element in the short and long-term? See this **RESOURCE** as a rubric for categories of teacher actions that will help you to identify specific focus areas for integrating parent engagement into traditional classroom practices.

## BEST PRACTICE

### TEACHERS INVOLVING PARENTS IN SCHOOL WORK

You can learn more about the TIPS (Teachers Involving Parents in School Work) program from the National Network of Partnership Schools. However, you can also find ways to create your own assignments that engage parents at home and in the classroom. Here are additional ideas for involving parent in schoolwork:

- Develop homework, study guides, and assignments that include parent help sections and family summarization sections.
- Include notes and quick tips in newsletters and other communications to parents that coincide with what is being taught in class. Ask for and include parent ideas in the tips.
- Have resource lists for parents in areas where students might need extra support with content and foundational skills.
- Connect projects to real-world experiences and career and higher education discussions between parents and students.
- Assign interactive homework that requires students to discuss and interact with their parents about what they are learning in class.



## ASSESSING YOUR STRATEGIES

### *How do I evaluate the success of my parent engagement efforts?*

At the end of the school year, it is important to evaluate the effectiveness of the engagement strategies that you incorporated so that you can make adjustments and capitalize on strong practices for the following year. Also, it is a great opportunity to share and engage other teachers in this work.

## ACTION: EVALUATING AND SUSTAINING ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES

**1. Assess the effectiveness of the engagement** elements on creating home-school partnerships, and supporting student achievement.

**FIRST**, assess the status of the strategies that you decided to incorporate into your classroom. Were these completed successfully?

- Conduct mid and end-of-year family feedback surveys.
- Conduct a small group meeting at the end of the year to get feedback on parent engagement.
- Ask students if age-appropriate to take a brief survey to get their perspectives in relation to the classroom environment, curriculum, and student investment.

**SECOND**, assess whether your classroom was successful in meeting the goals for student achievement. If yes, does there appear to be a relationship between increased parent engagement and student achievement outcomes? If no, were all the strategies for parent engagement executed? What other strategies might be needed?

**THIRD**, apart from assessing your specific goals for student achievement, monitor the overall strength of your parent engagement practices by conducting the diagnostic at the beginning and end of each year. How is parent engagement changing in your classroom (and at your school) over time?

[HERE<sup>122</sup>](#) is a classroom family engagement rubric that could also be used to gauge the development of your engagement practices.

**2. Reflect and make adjustments for the following year.** Consider meeting, reflecting, and sharing ideas with other teachers at your school.

**3. Consider speaking with your School Leader** about a wider and deeper engagement model at your school. Consider discussing:

- The strategies that you put into place
- Data that you have collected throughout the year from students and families
- The impact of those strategies on parent engagement
- The impact of those strategies on student performance in your classroom

## SUMMARY: INTEGRATING ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

1. Review your **GOALS** for student performance.

2. Identify parent engagement **STRATEGIES** that will support success for your goals for parent engagement and student achievement.

3. Remember to **ASSESS** the impact of your parent engagement strategies and consider opportunities to improve this work and share it more widely at your school.

**REFLECTION.** Congratulations on your commitment and efforts to strengthen parent engagement. As you focus on this work, remember to reflect on your progress over time using the dashboard in Table 19. If parent engagement, as we define it, is not being implemented throughout your organization, use this data to examine its effectiveness—especially as it relates to driving student achievement. Hopefully, positive results will encourage buy-in from more stakeholders and support widespread implementation.



**TABLE 19: Organizational Dashboard**

DISTRICT	YEAR							
	BASELINE				YEAR 1			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	Ok	Could Improve	Could Do It	Not Possible Now	Ok	Could Improve	Could Do It	Not Possible Now
<b>MINDSET</b>								
Accessibility								
Capacity Building								
Resources/Support								
Monitoring								
<b>TOTAL</b>								
SCHOOL	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	Ok	Could Improve	Could Do It	Not Possible Now	Ok	Could Improve	Could Do It	Not Possible Now
<b>MINDSET</b>								
Communication								
Environment								
Partnership								
Involvement								
Leadership								
<b>TOTAL</b>								
CLASSROOM	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	Ok	Could Improve	Could Do It	Not Possible Now	Ok	Could Improve	Could Do It	Not Possible Now
<b>MINDSET</b>								
Communication								
Environment								
Partnership								
Involvement								
<b>TOTAL</b>								

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