

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES



THE CHALLENGE:

Research shows that there is a disconnect between how families think their child is doing in school and how they are actually doing. Most families indicate that they would appreciate tools to improve their understanding of their child's progress so they can help monitor and support shared educational and wellness goals in partnership with schools. Family engagement occurs when school staff develop mutually informative, supportive relationships with families to improve school-family partnership for student success. Family engagement is a tool for equity in education because students do better in school and in life when schools and families partner to support their education.

STRATEGIES FOR SCHOOLS:



- ✓ **Raise Awareness of Engagement Opportunities:** Ensure that events, ways to contact the school and individual staff members, and new policies are widely publicized and that families are aware of multiple opportunities to get involved.
- ✓ **Put Parents in Charge:** Encourage participation in Parent Councils, and provide parent groups with the resources they need to take the lead on school and community initiatives. Invite parents to lead professional development on family engagement and to mentor school staff to improve school culture and climate.
- ✓ **Involve all Staff in Family Engagement:** Lead professional development about how to best partner with families throughout the school year for all staff, not just community liaisons or family engagement staff. Allot time and resources for teachers to use specifically for family engagement.
- ✓ **Provide Multiple Ways to Engage:** Meet the needs of families as diverse learners by delivering information and seeking input in multiple ways, such as providing a Q&A session with written resources, or pairing a policy-setting conference with an online survey available in multiple languages.
- ✓ **Keep Students at the Center:** Promote student achievement, growth, and performance as a cause for community-wide celebration by encouraging families to attend student performances, award ceremonies, and other events. Include youth, as well as their families, in making decisions about school discipline, scheduling, and other school operations.
- ✓ **Partner with Families:** Engage parents early when designing new school initiatives instead of asking them to react to a plan that has already been created without them. Explain why the school is requesting their input and how it will be used.
- ✓ **Begin the Year with Introductions:** Call and/or text at the beginning of the year to introduce staff and ask families about their children, their needs, their values and their strengths. Make contact early and often to build a strong foundation for future communication.
- ✓ **Greet and Celebrate Families when they Visit:** Make the school a welcoming place by greeting families and caregivers warmly and creating a culturally responsive environment that meets their communication, scheduling, and other needs.
- ✓ **Partner with the community:** Host events in collaboration with local businesses and organizations that support young people, such as doctor's offices, specialty shops, or nutrition programs. Ask these partners to help spread school messaging and to attend school-hosted events.
- ✓ **Listen to Understand:** Be proactive about welcoming families and ensuring they are heard during interactions. Be aware of both the intent behind communication and the impact it has on families, and be open to feedback if the two do not align.
- ✓ **Facilitate Parent Relationship-building:** Provide families with opportunities to meet other families and network with their peers to create a more comfortable environment and to learn new effective strategies for sharing information.



Part 1: Identify Your Family Engagement Challenge.



Culturally responsive family engagement helps schools move beyond traditional methods of involvement by honoring the diverse resources that families bring to the table through the development of partnerships that improve families' ability to navigate the educational system and teachers' ability to navigate the communities in which their students live and learn.



Part 2: Craft a Culturally Responsive Solution.

How can you engage families as partners throughout the process?

How can you engage community partners and stakeholders?

How can you build on existing school programming?



How will you include and amplify youth voices?