

Maryland's PreK-12 Family Engagement Framework

Family Engagement Principles

I. *Welcoming All Families*

- Including all students and families
- Engaging families is expected and well received
- Being culturally responsive
- Identifying and removing barriers
- Cultivating a positive climate

Creating an environment where all stakeholders – parents, students, and school staff – feel valued and connected is key to welcoming all families. School leadership, teachers, and staff are instrumental in fostering positive relationships between the school and families to build and sustain a welcoming school environment. Welcoming all families involves a mindset that values cultural proficiency, the importance of diversity, and individual abilities. Understanding and respecting diverse family dynamics and cultures represented in the school community helps to identify and remove barriers and provides opportunities for meaningful engagement.

Examples:

- ❖ Offer training for front office staff.
- ❖ Conduct neighborhood walk-throughs.
- ❖ Post signs welcoming families in multiple languages.

II. *Encouraging Partnerships Among Schools, Families, and Community*

- Creating opportunities for engaging families and community
- Sharing awareness of child/adolescent development and transition
- Ensuring pathways to educational excellence

Families, schools, and communities are partners in education. Together they make educational decisions for children; are represented on state, district, and school-level committees regarding academic policies and programs; create and share an understanding of child/adolescent development; and advocate for the success of all children. Schools and community members work collaboratively, connecting students, families and staff to expand learning opportunities and community services. Through shared decision making, advocacy, and community engagement, schools, families, and communities share the responsibility to strengthen schools and positively support student success.

Examples:

- ❖ Host outreach activities in community, i.e., library, fire hall, community center, etc.
- ❖ Invite local family support services and community organizations to share resources at school events.

- ❖ Consider “asset mapping” to better understand and embrace the strengths, talents, and resources that family and community members bring to support the school.

III. ***Supporting Student Learning and Student Success***

- Enabling shared decision-making
- Ensuring all families have opportunities to advocate for their own and other children
- Supporting transitions throughout the student’s educational career
- Using data to inform decisions
- Engaging community support

Family, school, and community engagement in education is a key lever for student learning and student success. Schools must be intentional and culturally responsive in their efforts to engage all families. Clearly defined, well-communicated goals and strategies help families and teachers work together to ensure that all students succeed. This includes preparing families as students transition throughout their school age years, to support students' academic, social, emotional, and physical needs. When families are equal partners, there is increased student academic performance, better attendance, and a more successful pathway to college- and career-readiness.

Examples:

- ❖ Conduct student-led parent/teacher conferences.
- ❖ Analyze school culture and climate data, parent surveys, etc., to target outreach for parents and/or staff.
- ❖ Ensure parents are represented on school decision making teams.

IV. ***Building Capacity Among School Stakeholders***

- Developing policies and practices that support family engagement
- Providing training and resources to school staff and families to ensure instructional equity

Engaging families as partners in education creates essential relationships that can produce success for students. Ongoing professional development is critical at the state, district, and school levels to provide strategies to assist educators to effectively engage families as well as to build capacity of families to become full partners in education.

Examples:

- ❖ Develop a parent involvement plan of how the school will engage families to support student success and achievement
- ❖ Host a book club for staff on a book related to family engagement
- ❖ Enlist parents and parent organizations to recruit other parents to be involved in their children’s education.
- ❖ Invite parents to school to discuss strategies around engagement

V. *Promoting Effective School-Family Communication*

- Ensuring targeted outreach
- Encouraging regular and meaningful two-way communication

Clear, on-going, two-way communication is essential for successful school-home partnerships. Schools must take into consideration multiple ways of communication. Communication should be in formats with parent-friendly terminologies and in multiple languages that best meet the needs of all families. When parents and educators communicate effectively, positive relationships develop, problems are more easily solved, and students make greater progress. Building respectful and trusting relationships among school staff, families, and community members is more likely to be effective in creating sustained connections that support student learning.

Examples:

- ❖ Make positive phone calls or send emails/texts to parents.
- ❖ Survey parents for the best way to connect and communicate with them.
- ❖ Take 2 – take two minutes to send a personal note to a parent thanking them for their support, input, etc.