

Family engagement: How can districts support success for all students?

Studies have shown that actively engaging families can lead to student success from early childhood all the way through college and career. Family engagement aligns with the Texas Education Agency's strategic priorities to improve education for all students, as indicated by research findings on the potential impacts of engaging families:

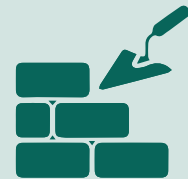
Strategic priority 1: Recruit, support, and retain teachers and principals.

- ▶ A survey conducted in Texas indicates that teachers and administrators need more professional development support to strengthen two-way communication between families and schools, coach families to support learning at home, provide necessary family supports, and build educator cultural and community awareness.¹



Strategic priority 2: Build a foundation of reading and math.

- ▶ Research shows that the reading and math scores of elementary students in high-poverty schools improved when standard teaching practices were combined with family outreach practices including regular family-teacher meetings, materials for families to use at home, and regular two-way communication between scheduled meetings.²



Strategic priority 3: Connect high school to career and college.

- ▶ When schools and families work together as partners in education, students attend school more regularly, earn better grades, enroll in higher level programs, and are more likely to enroll in postsecondary education.³



Strategic priority 4: Improve low-performing schools.

- ▶ To successfully improve, research indicates that low-performing schools need a family base that makes meaningful contributions to the school's practices and environment.^{4,5}



Strategies to Engage With Families in Your District



Family engagement liaisons, superintendents, and other district staff can engage families and support student success using several strategies. Education Service Centers (ESCs) can also support family engagement by providing training and resources around these strategies:



Create a welcoming environment by meeting your students' family members and inviting them to take part in district activities. Talk with as many families as possible about their cultural backgrounds, everyday lives, interests, and experiences.

Host professional development opportunities for teachers, principals, and other school staff to learn about understanding the community context, being culturally responsive, and practicing meaningful, two-way family engagement.



Establish regular two-way communication with families through your district's website, town hall meetings, printed newsletters, emails, mobile apps, and/or social media updates.

Include families as part of the hiring process for school and district staff. Families can provide a much-needed focus on engagement as members of interview and hiring committees.



Remember that engagement isn't just limited to parents—grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings, cousins, guardians, family friends, and community members are all crucial members of a student's support system, so be sure to engage all of your students' supporters.

References

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- ² Henderson, A. (n.d.) *High-impact family engagement: A core strategy for school improvement.* Retrieved from <https://www.ecs.org/wp-content/uploads/High-Impact-Family-Engagement-A-Core-Strategy-for-School-Improvement.pdf>
- ³ Henderson, A., & Mapp, K. (2002). *A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family, and community connections on student achievement.* Austin, TX: Southwest Education Development Laboratory. Retrieved from <http://sedl.org/connections/resources/evidence.pdf>
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- ⁵ Anderson-Butcher, D., Lawson, H., Bean, J., Boone, B., Kwiatkowski, A., et al. (2004). *Implementation guide: The Ohio community collaboration model for school improvement.* Chapter 7, Family Engagement and Support. Columbus, OH: Ohio Department of Education. Retrieved from <http://cayci.osu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/12-30-05-Family-Eng-Support-with-overview.pdf>

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