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Research and Best Practices for Engaging Families to Increase Student Success

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New Hampshire Family, School, and Community
Engagement Task Force Organizational Meeting

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Presentation overview:

- Research-based definition of effective family and community engagement
- Linkages between effective family engagement and student outcomes
- Developmental considerations in creating family engagement strategies
- Examples of best practices from districts
- Role of a statewide task force in helping to promote systemic family, school, and community engagement
- Q & A



New research shows that meaningful family and community engagement is one of five **essential ingredients** for effective school reform:

- (Principal) leadership as the driver for change
- **Parent-school-community ties**
- Professional capacity
- Student-centered learning climate
- Instructional guidance

Bryk, A.S., Sebring, P.B., Allensworth, E., Luppescu, S., & Easton, J.Q. (2010). *Organizing schools for improvement: Lessons from Chicago*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.



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Research-based definition

Three components of effective,
sustained, and systemic family
and community engagement:

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- Family engagement is a ***shared responsibility*** in which
 - Schools and other community agencies and organizations are committed to reaching out to engage families in meaningful ways
 - and
 - Families are committed to actively supporting their children’s learning and development.



- Family engagement is ***continuous across a child's life***—from birth to high school and beyond—and entails enduring commitment but changing roles as children mature into young adulthood.



- Effective family engagement cuts across and reinforces learning in the ***multiple settings where children learn***—at home, in prekindergarten programs, in school, in after school programs, and in the community.



Family engagement and student outcomes:

- Earn higher grades and test scores
- Enroll in higher-level programs/classes
- Be promoted and earn credits
- Adapt well to school and attend regularly
- Have better social skills and behavior
- Graduate and go on to higher education

Henderson, A., & Mapp, K. (2002). *A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family, and community connections on student achievement*. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.



Developmental considerations:

- Early childhood:
 - Fostering nurturing parent–child relationship
 - Participating in child-centered activities
 - Communicating with early childhood program staff and care providers
 - Creating literacy-rich home environment (frequent book reading, using varied vocabulary, etc.)
 - Engaging in parent–child conversations that show interest in child’s play and activities and expose child to various forms of language use



Developmental considerations:

- Elementary grades:
 - Nurturing parent–child relationship
 - Creating linkages with other offerings and people in the community
 - Participating in school events and formal family involvement programs
 - Supporting literacy
 - Helping with homework
 - Maintaining high expectations

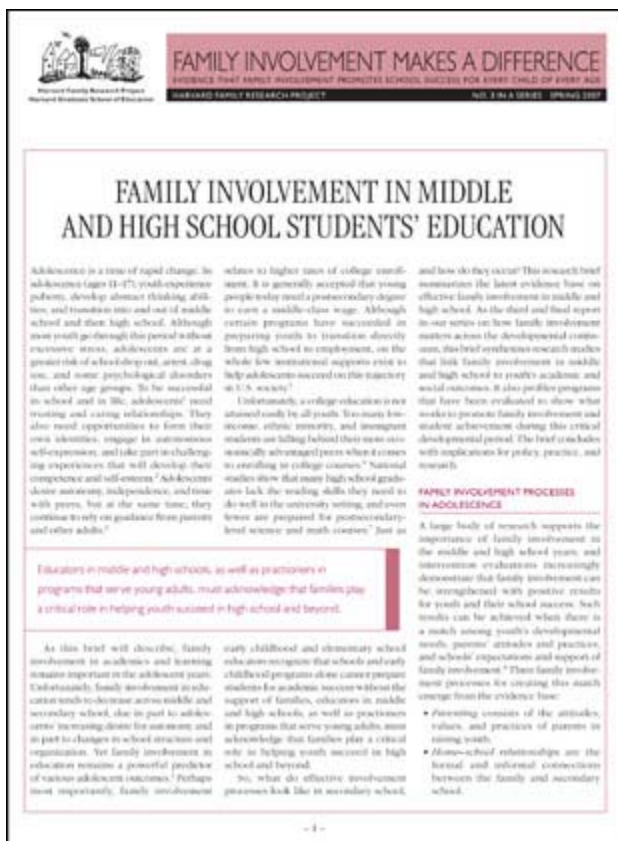


Developmental considerations:

- Adolescence – middle/high school:
 - Effective family engagement during adolescence needs to reflect the changing developmental needs of adolescents.
 - Family engagement during adolescence looks different from effective activities during early childhood and elementary school years—what worked before can become counterproductive during this time.



Family Involvement in Middle and High School Students' Education (2007)



This research brief synthesizes the latest research that demonstrates how family involvement contributes to adolescents' learning and development.

Download at:

www.hfrp.org/FI_MiddleAndHighSchool



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Findings from *Family Involvement in Middle and High School Students' Education*

Three dimensions of family engagement connected with youth competencies for successful high school completion and college/workplace readiness:

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Parenting of adolescents: Parenting consists of parents' attitudes, values, and practices in raising youth.

- Warm and emotionally responsive parent–adolescent relationships
- Praise and communicate a sense of pride for students' good work
- Parental monitoring of social activities
- Healthy eating and sleeping habits



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Home–school relationships: The formal and informal connections between family and school have a consistent positive influence on adolescent development and academic achievement.

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Home–school relationships (*continued*)

- What schools can do:
 - Commit to a culture of partnership
 - Encourage communication between teachers and parents
 - Share information about school policies, curriculum standards and assessments, and student and school performance
 - Link outreach efforts to specific academic issues, such as graduation and postsecondary planning
 - Impart skills that parents need to successfully advocate for their children



Home–school relationships *(continued)*

- What families can do:
 - Establish proactive communication with teachers—
not just when problems arise
 - Monitor progress and use grades and test data to
communicate with teachers
 - Advocate for children when they need help
 - Attend academically-oriented school events



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Responsibility for learning: An aspect of parenting that focuses on supporting children to do well in school and prepare for college and career.

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Responsibility for learning (*continued*)

- Belief that supporting, monitoring, and advocating for their children's school success is an important parental role
- A sense of efficacy or the belief that parents' actions can make a difference in their children's learning
- Encouragement and help in *managing* homework (e.g., space, TV limits, access to tutoring)
- High parental expectations for achievement
- Parental discussions with children regarding school activities, educational goals, and college/workforce planning



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Academic socialization: much more effective than traditional home- or school-based parental involvement during adolescence

Hill, N.E. & Tyson, D.F. (2009). Parental involvement in middle school: A meta-analytic assessment of the strategies that promote achievement. *Developmental Psychology* 45(3), 740-763.

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What is academic socialization?

- Communicating parental expectations for education and its value or utility
- Linking schoolwork to current events
- Fostering educational and occupational aspirations
- Discussing learning strategies with children
- Making preparations and plans for the future

(Hill & Tyson, 2009)



Academic socialization outcomes:

- Internalized value of education
- Motivation for learning
- Work ethic
- Academic engagement
- Self regulation
- Self efficacy for help seeking
- Academic self concept

(Hill & Tyson, 2009)



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What kinds of capacity building and staff development are necessary to enable families, schools, and communities to carry out this systemic engagement?

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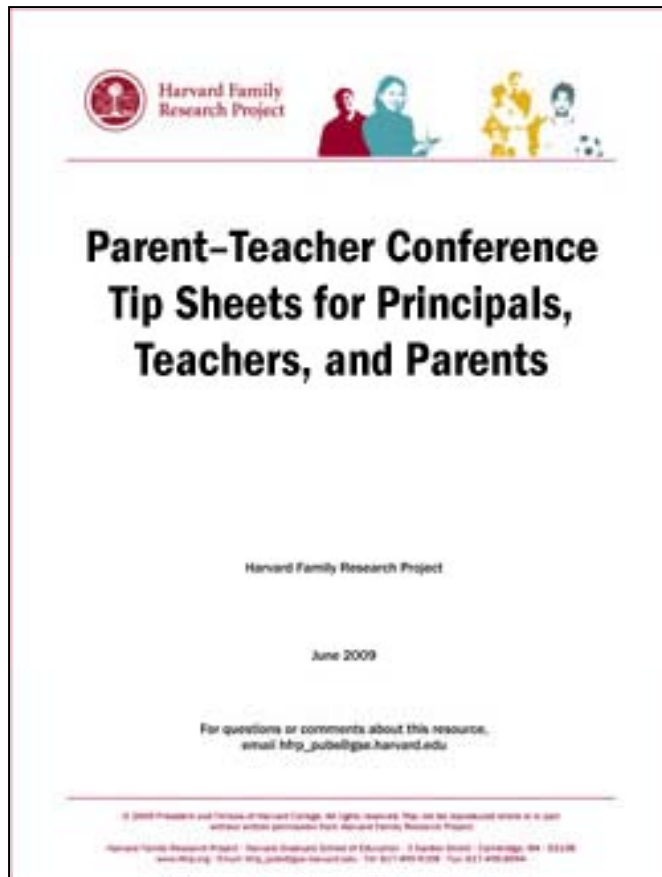
- Strong leadership to create school culture in which family engagement is valued and parents are considered full partners in fostering student achievement
- Development of positive home–school relationships characterized by respect, trust, and meaningful two-way communication between families and school staff



- Infrastructure development:
 - Staff members whose primary responsibility is family engagement (e.g., parent liaisons, family engagement coordinators, parent outreach facilitators)
 - Ongoing professional development for *all* staff members to help them understand how to partner with families and recognize linkages between family engagement and student learning
 - Development of parent leaders to conduct outreach to other parents and provide input on school policies



Parent–Teacher Conference Tip Sheets



Designed to be used as a set, these three tip sheets—for principals, teachers, and parents—combine consistent information with targeted suggestions, so that parents and educators enter conferences with shared expectations and increased ability to work together to improve children’s educational outcomes.

Download at:

www.hfrp.org/ConferenceTipSheets



Data-driven communication:

- Parents benefit from having information about key indicators—such as student attendance, growth in learning, and achievement—on which they can have an impact.
- Effective data pathways provide families with measurable benchmarks for children’s learning from early childhood through young adulthood.



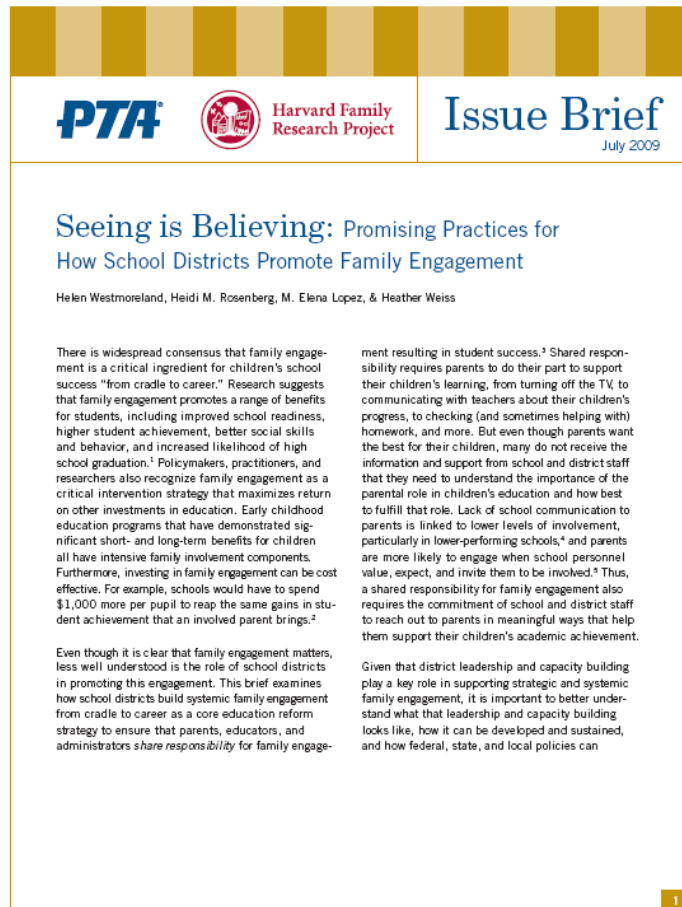
Effective data are:

- **Accessible** – Data must be shared in a format and “language” that families can understand. Technology used to convey data must also be accessible to families.
- **Understandable:** Families need to understand what the data say about their child’s progress and know what to do with the information.
- **Actionable:** Tools and other supports must be available to help families make use of data and take the necessary steps to help their child succeed.

Weiss, H.B., Lopez, M.E., & Stark, D.R. (2011) *Breaking new ground: Data systems transform family engagement in education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project.



Seeing is Believing: Promising Practices for How School Districts Promote Family Engagement (2009)



This issue brief spotlights how six school districts across the country have used innovative strategies to create and sustain family engagement “systems at work.”

Download at:

www.hfrp.org/SeeingIsBelieving



District example: Boston, Massachusetts

- **Leadership:** Assistant Superintendent for Family and Student Engagement
- **Infrastructure:**
 - District level: Office of Family and Student Engagement (OFSE)
 - School level: Family and Community Outreach Coordinators
- **Professional development:** OFSE helps develop training for principals and other school staff, using National PTA standards



District example: Federal Way, Washington

- **Leadership:** Family Partnership Advocate meets weekly with assistant superintendents and curriculum director
- **Infrastructure:** District-level Family Partnership Office, run by Family Partnership Advocate
- **Capacity building:**
 - For families: Parent leadership institute and parent advocate workshops
 - For school staff: Professional development across all levels of school personnel to promote idea of parents as valued partners in children's learning



Role of statewide task force in fostering family, school, and community engagement:

- Elevate importance of family, school, and community engagement as critical component of education reform
- Increase visibility of best practices and innovative approaches to family, school, and community engagement
- Leverage state and local resources to create systemic network of expertise, technical assistance, and support services to assist districts/schools in carrying out family and community engagement strategies
- Provide central “base” for information-sharing and learning opportunities for districts/schools across the state



Guiding questions for task force work:

- What role can a statewide task force play in building schools' and districts' capacity to do this work?
- What is the role of a statewide task force in promoting specific, practical strategies for family, school, and community engagement? Will it promote a particular model, or focus on the principles of effective family engagement and leave the specifics to those on the ground?
- What kind of technical assistance or information dissemination services is the task force prepared to offer local schools/districts and other organizations who will carry out this work?
- What are some of the leading indicators the task force can use to know if schools and districts are effectively engaging families?