Louisiana Believes

Family Engagement Policies and Best Practices
PARENT ENGAGEMENT:

What is good practice?

What is required?

What tools and resources are available?
What is a school that families *love*?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMITTED</th>
<th>COLLABORATIVE</th>
<th>RESPONSIVE</th>
<th>RESPECTFUL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is fully focused on understanding and helping families achieve their goals for their children; it embraces these goals as its own.</td>
<td>It actively and authentically engages families as full partners, not service recipients. Everyone is focused on helping student achieve their learning goals.</td>
<td>It anticipates families’ priorities and needs, responds quickly to their concerns, and communicates effectively.</td>
<td>It treats every family as worthy and important, acknowledging diverse perspectives and varying abilities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Being Committed Means…

- Taking time to understand what families and students want
- Effectively communicating student expectations, learning goals and performance
- Responding urgently to signs that a student is struggling
- Creating a school culture where kids feel safe, are respected, and can be themselves
- Thinking about student success holistically, not just in terms of academics

**IN PRACTICE**

Give parents report cards they can easily understand.

Track whether course grades match test scores.

Ask families about their long-term goals for their children and tell them honestly whether students are on track to meet them.
The Challenge: Parents’ perception is not always reality.

Problems Ed Navigators see:

- Test results are not interpreted or explained to parents
- Parents trust teachers more than test scores
- Teachers sometimes use soft language that fails to convey level of student struggle
- All parents want to believe their children are doing well and hear selectively

Parents’ perception of how kids are performing in school lags behind national data.

- 90% of parents believe their child is performing at or above grade level in reading.
- 85% of parents say their child is on track to meet learning goals and grade level expectations.
- 34% of eighth graders reading at or above grade level, according to national data.

Reading performance data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress 2015

Source: Learning Heroes, 2016
Being Collaborative Means…

- Treating families like allies and welcome guests
- Providing families with the information and supports they need to engage in their child’s education
- Understanding how a decision will affect parents before making it (e.g., start times, calendar, etc.)
- Asking parents about how the school can help them, not just explaining how they can help the school
- Approaching problems and challenges as issues to be addressed together

IN PRACTICE

Start the year with conversations about student learning goals, and how parents can play a role in achieving them.

Offering alternative ways to participate in conferences

Tell families how to help with homework
The Challenge: Parents want more information about student performance and progress.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“What information are you most interested in receiving from your child’s teacher?”</th>
<th>Elementary</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Updates about how my child is doing in school and how I can help him/her do better.</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timely notices when my child’s performance is slipping.</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information about my child’s behavior and how he/she gets along with other students.</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information about what my child is expected to learn during the school year.</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework and grading policies.</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom events calendar.</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best ways for communicating with the teacher (e-mail, phone, meetings, etc.).</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptions of daily instructional activities and how they meet the needs of my child.</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for parents to volunteer or be involved in the classroom or grade-level activities (field trips, special programs, etc.)</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Being Responsive Means…

- Communicating with families regularly
- Making it easy for families to find contact information for teachers and staff
- Taking families’ concerns seriously and addressing them quickly
- Publishing a clear calendar before the year begins and sticking to it
- Giving families regular opportunities to provide input and feedback

IN PRACTICE

Adopt a 24 hour responsiveness standard

Call with good news, not just bad.

Conduct an annual student and family survey
The Challenge: Parent and school interactions can be difficult.

• **When do parents hear from school?** Are teachers sharing the good news? Or do most phone calls home concern bad news?

• **What happens when they walk in?** Who greets families? How long are they typically asked to wait? What look do they have on their faces when they walk back out?

• **What happens when they call or email?** Is it common for families to ask for the same thing more than once before it happens?

• **What happens when there’s a problem?** When a student is struggling, are educators reaching out to families to work toward solutions, or do educators wait for families to raise the alarm themselves?

• **What happens after a meeting?** How do families know whether next steps have been taken and are yielding positive results?
Being Respectful Means…

• Making *every* family feel like they belong

• Being attentive to basic priorities that can have a big impact on families, like bus scheduling and dependability, meal service, after school care

• Valuing and respecting parents’ time by scheduling school events that are adaptive to their schedules

• Reducing the burden on parents whenever possible (extensive paperwork, or expensive uniforms)

• Taking into consideration cultural and educational diversity of parents when designing communications and events

IN PRACTICE

Allowing families to bring children to meetings after hours.

Translating key documents into the language parents speak.

Scheduling meetings that don’t require parents to miss work, if possible.
There are plenty of schools that parents \textit{like}, but it takes true, deep engagement to create a school that parents \textit{love}.

- \textbf{Are there practices your school is not using today that you would like to see it adopt?}

- \textbf{What barriers exist to implementing some of these practices in your school(s)?}
PARENT ENGAGEMENT:

What is good practice?

What is required?

What tools and resources are available?
Parental involvement always has been a centerpiece of Title I, however ESSA provides greater clarity and direction to school systems on what meaningful parent engagement should look like, particularly around:

- conducting ongoing parent outreach;
- developing parent and family engagement policies that are grounded in evidence-based strategies;
- coordinating and integrating parent services and resources; and
- removing language, learning, or other parent involvement barriers.
Title I school systems and schools must:

1. Conduct outreach to parents and family members and implement programs for involving parents and family members in Title I programs in consultation with parents.

2. Create a written parent and family engagement policy that shall be incorporated into the school system improvement plan under section 1112. The plan must identify expectations and objectives for meaningful parent and family involvement.

The law identifies four key steps in developing this policy:
Section 1116 (a)(2)
School systems shall develop a written parent and family engagement policy jointly with families that establish expectations and objectives for meaningful parent and family involvement. The policy shall be incorporated into the local educational agency's plan developed under section 1112, and shared with families.

Section 1116 (a)(1)
A school system may only receive funds if their plan is developed and implemented with the inclusion of ALL families and reaches beyond barriers of culture, language, disabilities, and poverty.

Section 1116 (a)(2)(C) and Section 1116 (e)(4)
School systems should coordinate and integrate parent and family engagement strategies, programs and activities, to the extent feasible and appropriate, with other relevant Federal, State, and local laws and programs.
Section 1116 (c)(4)
Requires school systems to provide parents with:
• timely information about parental involvement policies and programs;
• a description and explanation of each school’s curriculum and assessments, and **the achievement levels of the state academic standards**; and
• opportunities for regular meetings (when requested) to formulate suggestions and to participate, as appropriate, in decisions relating to the education of their child, and respond to any such suggestions as soon as practicably possible.

Section 1116 (d)(2)(D)
Ensuring regular two-way, meaningful communication between family members and school staff, and, to the extent practicable, in a language or format that family members can understand.
Developing the Parent and Family Engagement Policy: Support

Section 1116 (a)(2)(B)
School systems should provide the support necessary to assist and build the capacity of all participating schools in planning and implementing effective parent and family involvement activities to improve student academic achievement and school performance.

School systems shall provide materials and training to help parents support student learning at home and foster parental involvement such as literacy and technology training.
Developing the Parent and Family Engagement Policy: Evaluate

Section 1116 (a)(2)(D)
Conduct, with the meaningful involvement of parents and family members, an annual evaluation of the content and effectiveness of the parent and family engagement policy in improving the academic quality of all schools served under this part.

Section (a)(2)(D)(i)
Evaluation method and tools need to identify the type and frequency of family interactions and the needs families have to better support and assist their child’s learning at home. This includes ensuring that barriers to family engagement activities are removed from the evaluation process.

Section 1116 (a)(2)(E)
School systems should use the findings from the evaluation to design evidence-based strategies for more effective parental involvement, and revise, if necessary, their existing parent and family engagement policy.
Activity

Take 10 minutes to review the school system family engagement template and think through the following questions:

- What are the distinct changes in the requirements of the new policy versus the previous version?
- How do these changes impact your current family engagement policy?
- What steps will you need to check to make these changes happen?
- How can you ensure families have the opportunity to participate in the process?
PARENT ENGAGEMENT:

What is good practice?

What is required?

What tools and resources are available?
General:
  • List of Required and Optional Parental Involvement Activities

School System Policies:
  • Checklist
  • Template

School Policies:
  • Checklist
  • Template
Family Support Toolbox

www.louisianabelieves.com/resources/family-support-toolbox
Annie Morrison, Director of Family and Educator Communications
• annie.morrison@la.gov
• 225-342-0192

Stay connected with the Department by signing up for one of our weekly or monthly newsletters. Email ldoecommunications@la.gov to subscribe.

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Appendix: Family-School Compact
Family-School Compacts in ESSA

Section 1116(d) of ESSA states that schools must have a Family-School Compact.

As a component of the school-level family engagement policy, each school shall jointly develop with parents a school-parent compact that outlines how parents, the entire school staff, and students will share the responsibility for improved student academic achievement.

Such compact shall:

(1) describe the school's responsibility to provide high-quality curriculum and instruction in a supportive and effective learning environment that enables the children to meet the challenging State academic standards, and the ways in which each parent will be responsible for supporting their children's learning; and

(2) address the importance of communication between teachers and parents on an ongoing basis.
A Family-School Compact is an agreement that families, students and teachers develop jointly, and explains how they will work together to make sure all students reach or exceed grade-level standards.

Compacts are what makes the work of parent engagement policies concrete and actionable for families, as well as schools. They also bring laser-like focus to school improvement goals.

**Effective compacts:**
- link to goals of the school improvement plan;
- focus on student learning skills;
- explain what teachers will do to support student learning;
- share learning strategies parents can use at home;
- explain how teachers and parents will communicate about student progress; and
- describe opportunities for parents to volunteer, observe, and participate in the classroom.
Steps to Creating An Effective Family Compact

SET THE STAGE → LINK TO LEARNING → ROLL IT OUT
Step 1: Motivate and Get Buy-In from Staff
• At a staff meeting with teachers and members of the school leadership team, explain what a compact is and how it can contribute to student success.

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Step 2: Designate a Leader
• Pick the best person for your school: principal, assistant principal, literacy/math coach, teacher leader, or home-school coordinator with effective leadership skills.

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Step 3: Align Family Engagement Goals with School Improvement Plan

- Review and analyze school-wide data and the goals of the School Improvement Plan to determine a specific area that the compact should focus on for the year.

Watch the Video

Step 4: Grade-Level Input

- At data team meetings, grade-level teachers will develop grade-level goals (no more than three) and specific home learning strategies which will engage families in home learning to support the goals of the school.

Watch the Video
School Student Learning Goal: 75 percent of students will meet or exceed their growth target in reading.

To reach this goal, 1st grade teachers will:

• conduct daily small-group reading instruction.
• read aloud each day to students.
• provide take-home reading materials.
• provide homework that supports topics learned at school.
• take weekly trips to school library.
• keep families informed of children’s reading progress and ways to support learning at home.
Step 5: Engage Families and Students
• Through two-way conversations, share the grade-level goals with families and discuss how they can work with teachers to accomplish them. (What strategies should they use and how can they support each other to do them?)
• This can be done in workshops, class meetings, or parent nights.
• Develop home learning strategies families can use on a regular basis.

Watch the Video

Step 6: Engage Students
• Ask students how they will take responsibility for their learning and what do they want their teachers and families to do to support them.

Watch the Video
Example: Family and Student Goals

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<tr>
<th>School Student Learning Goal:</th>
<th>75 percent of students will meet or exceed their growth target in reading.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1st grade teachers will:</strong></td>
<td><strong>1st Grade families will</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• conduct daily small-group reading instruction.</td>
<td>• make reading a daily part of family time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• read aloud each day to students.</td>
<td>• ask children questions about books they are reading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• provide take-home reading materials.</td>
<td>• visit the local library on a regular basis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• provide homework that supports topics learned at school.</td>
<td>• complete homework assignments with students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• take weekly trips to school library.</td>
<td>• attend family literacy events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• keep families informed of children’s reading progress and ways to support learning at home.</td>
<td>• stay in touch with teachers about reading progress.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Steps to Creating An Effective Family Compact: Roll it Out

Step 7: Pull it All Together
• Create an attractive family-friendly document. View sample compact
• Design a “roll out plan” for introducing the compact to families
  Watch the Video

Step 8: Align All Resources
• Determine your professional development needs based upon your compact goals.
• Allocate funds to support school ad home learning with speakers, parent workshops, supplies, and technology/apps
• Identify volunteers and community partners
  Watch the Video
Example: Pulling it All Together

- Recruit parents to fun event -- then break into grade level groups with translators (if needed) to share student goals.

- Ask: How can the school help YOU support your children’s learning?

- Type up and circulate parents’ ideas.

- Teachers meet at each grade-level to respond, determine funding needs and draft Compact plan.

- Parents approve.
**Example: Family-School Compact**

**What's a Connection Kit?**
This kit is a cooperative plan to increase student achievement by focusing on specific skills required in each grade level. It outlines how parents, teachers, and students will work together to support the goals of the district, Verplanck School, and the standards and expectations of the Common Core for Learning. This document was a collaborative effort from the parents, students, and staff at Verplanck Elementary. The goals of each grade level were identified, teachers offered specific strategies to parents for home support, and families offered ideas on how they can support the grade level focus.

**Building Partnerships**
Activities:
- Is reading going to the dogs? Verplanck students participate in Pet Therapy to gain confidence in reading to animals.
- Go Hughes! Parents and students travel to UCONN to celebrate reading progress and athletes visit Verplanck as guest readers and tutors.
- Local pride! Some attend the fun activities in our neighboring Squares Community News Flash! Join us for flashlight night when you can cuddle on a blanket with your child and learn with a great book.
- We are the World! Our multi-cultural night in March celebrates the diverse community that we are, experience new customs, music, and great FOOD!

**Communication:** Weekly communication folders, newsletters, open house, report card conferences, school and teacher websites, curriculum nights, School Messenger, and our Family Resource Center.

**School Connection Kit**
Verplanck Elementary

**Achievement Goals**

**Grade 4 District Literacy Goals:**
- Identifying parts of a story
- Proper use of grammar, capitalization, and punctuation
- Telling a story using relevant and organized facts
- Writing stories with dialogue and description

**Grade 4 District Numeracy Goals:**
- Understanding place value for multi-digit numbers
- Adding/subtracting whole numbers to 1,400,000
- Measuring angles, lines, segments
- Solving multi-step word problems involving measurement
- Converting fractions to decimals

**School Goals:**
- In the Verplanck School Improvement Plan, two of our major goals are as follows:
  - 75% of all scholars will meet or exceed grade level expectations in literacy
  - A constant focus on fact fluency in numeracy to increase confidence and achievement in all mathematical operations

**In The Classroom**
The specific areas of focus in literacy and numeracy are fluency and continuous practice.

The connections to families include:
- At Open House and via newsletters and conferences, provide families with ongoing tips to strengthen their child's ability and understanding when they read, (monitoring, questioning, understanding vocabulary)

**At Home**
Some of our key at home activities to support student success in literacy and math are:
- Read my child's book before he does or with him for the first time. Ask questions about the story as you are reading. Stop and go back to read a favorite passage, ask him to describe the setting and what the main idea of the story is.
- Set up a math focus in our home similar to math stations in the classroom. Ask my child for help with measuring, have them count out money before depositing in the bank, do math drills in the car, play games when driving (Are there more billboards on the left side or the right side? How many more?)
- Use the math items sent home by the teacher and do one activity per week.
- Watch the YouTube videos of the teacher demonstrating how the different math skills are taught in the classroom.

**Students**
1. Ask for help when I don't understand what a word means.
2. Show my family samples of my written work before I pass it in and ask for suggestions.
3. When watching a movie or TV show, I will try to make predictions about what the outcome will be. I will also try to use the terms the teacher uses to complete my work.

If you have questions about your child's progress, please contact your child's teacher by phone (860-647-3383) or email your child's teacher by visiting our website for individual addresses.
Steps to Creating An Effective Family Compact: Roll it Out

Step 8: Market the Compact
- Seize the opportunity at every event to keep the goals of the school in the forefront with families.
- At conference time, discuss the goals/strategies with parents. Offer suggestions to modify the strategies if necessary to meet their child’s individual needs.

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Step 9: Review, Revise and Celebrate Progress Each Year
- Pull your compact team together toward the end of the year to review progress. What were your big successes? What could have been better?
- Draw up a plan for the process next school year based on your review.
- Ask students to show off what they’ve learned and how they took responsibility.
- Announce your successes at end-of-the year events and congratulate everyone involved!

Watch the Video
Connecticut School-Parent Compact Center: is an entire website dedicated to helping schools develop meaningful parent engagement policies and compacts. Within this website you will find:

- Sample School-Parent Compact and ESSA crosswalk
- Videos to support each step of the compact development process
- Tools to support each step of the compact development process such as a guide to aligning your compact to your SIP, parent and student surveys, and tips for engaging parents in the compact process and how to evaluate your compact year after year.

Parent Teacher Home Visits Model: connects the expertise of a student’s family with the classroom expertise of their teachers through at home or in the community meetings.

USDOE’s Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships: is a framework for designing family engagement initiatives that build capacity among educators and families to partner with one another around student success. It acts as a scaffold for the development of strategies, policies, and programs.