Empowering Families: The Six Building Blocks of Early Childhood Family Engagement

“Raising the next generation is a shared responsibility. When families, communities and schools work together, students are more successful and the entire community benefits.”

U.S Department of Education

Presented by:
Frog Street’s Professional Learning Department
Objectives

Participants will:

• Understand the impact of family engagement.

• Discover the Six Building Blocks of Engagement.

• Explore using *Partners in Education: Dual Capacity Framework*.

• Discuss the impact of collaborative communication.

• Engage in social and emotional supports for families.
Are we more alike than we think?
So, what’s the point?
Why is this a topic of interest?
My vision for family engagement is ambitious...

I want to have too many parents **demanding excellence** in their schools. I want all parents to be **real partners in education** with their children’s teachers, from cradle to career. In this partnership, students and parents should feel connected—and teachers should feel supported. When parents demand change and better options for their children, they become the **real accountability backstop for the educational system**.

—ARNE DUNCAN, U.S. SECRETARY OF EDUCATION, MAY 3, 2010
What Research Tells Us

☑ Working together, we can achieve far more than any one of us can achieve alone. (Worrell, 2012)

☑ Family involvement in early education is connected to the concept of learning. (Harvard Family Research Project, 2006)

☑ A child’s first experiences in school are often parents’ first experiences as critical stakeholders in their child’s formal schooling. (DeLoatche, et al., 2015)
Lessons Learned
“Parent participation is the leading predictor that supports students’ academic success, regardless of family race, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, or cultural background.”

Karen Mapp, Ed.D.
Harvard Graduate School of Education
What Is Your Role?
Parent Empowerment Framework

- School Culture/Climate
- Building Capacity
- Compliance
What do you know about your families?
What should you know about your families to be effective?
Are you aware of the poverty rates?
Have you heard of the Coleman Report?

It says, “schools are remarkably similar in the effect they have on the achievement of their pupils when the socio-economic background of the students is taken into account.”

(Egalite, 2016, p. 71)
What implications does your knowledge have?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACES</th>
<th>Increase Risks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional abuse</td>
<td>Adolescent pregnancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical abuse</td>
<td>Alcohol and drug abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual abuse</td>
<td>Depression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical neglect</td>
<td>Heart disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic violence</td>
<td>Liver disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household mental illness</td>
<td>Multiple sex partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household substance abuse</td>
<td>Domestic violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incarceration</td>
<td>Suicide attempts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homelessness</td>
<td>STDs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural disasters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Impact of Poverty
Is there a difference?

Parent Involvement

Parent Engagement

Connect

Student

Teacher
Understanding the Meaning of Some Very Important Words
Understanding Engagement

✓ Programs invite families to participate in decision making and goal setting for their child.

✓ Teachers and programs engage families in two-way communication.

✓ Programs and teachers engage families in ways that are truly reciprocal.
Understanding Engagement

✓ Programs provide *learning* activities for the home and the community.

✓ Programs *invite* families to participate in program-level decisions and wider advocacy efforts.

✓ Programs *implement* a comprehensive program-level system.
Parent Involvement Continuum

Parents = Change Agents

Decision Making:
  Community
  District
  Campus

Parents Support School Community

Parent Leaders Teach Other Parents
  Parents Mentor/Tutor Students

Parent Education

Parents Assist Teachers & Campus

U.S. Dept. of Education
Why is this important to your success?

✔ Ongoing

✔ Interactive

✔ Open-ended

✔ Collaborative

✔ Journey
What’s your current view?
Setting the Stage
Six Building Blocks of Engagement

1. Build Relationships
2. View Parents as Senior Partner
3. Identify Strengths
4. Involve the Whole Family
5. Link to Learning
6. Expand Their Network of Support
Build Relationships
Do we all share the same views?
What are your personal biases?
“Mutual caring relationships require kindness and patience, tolerance, optimism, joy in the other’s achievements, confidence in oneself, and the ability to give without undue thought of gain.”

- Fred Rogers
“Attributions of cultural homogeneity to parent involvement practices ignore the agency parents demonstrate in responding to challenges such as language barriers, racism, immigration status, and economic hardship that hinder participation in the manner schools most desire.” (Poza, et al., 2014)
Do you REALLY value them?
Identify Strengths
Involve the Whole Family
“Parent’s direct instruction of literacy skills is shown to improve children’s academic outcomes.”
(Senechal, 2006)
Expand Their Network of Support
Advocating with Intentionality

“To be intentional is to act purposefully, with a goal in mind and a plan for accomplishing it.”

- Epstein, 2007
Five Essential Supports

1. Leadership as the Driver for Change
2. Professional Capacity
3. Parent-Community Ties
4. Student-Centered Learning Climate
5. Instructional Guidance

Intentional
The Dual Capacity Framework

THE CHALLENGE

Lack of opportunities for School/Program Staff to build the capacity for partnerships

Ineffective Family-School Partnerships

Lack of opportunities for Families to build the capacity for partnerships

OPPORTUNITY CONDITIONS

Process Conditions
- Linked to Learning
- Relational Development
- Development vs. service orientation
- Collaborative
- Interactive

Organizational Conditions
- Systemic: across the organization
- Integrated: embedded in all programs
- Sustained: with resources and infrastructure

POLICY AND PROGRAM GOALS

To build and enhance the capacity of staff/families in the "4 C" areas:
- Capabilities (skills and knowledge)
- Connections (networks)
- Cognition (beliefs)
- Confidence (self-efficacy)

FAMILY AND STAFF CAPACITY OUTCOMES

School and Program Staff who can
- Honor and recognize families' funds
- Knowledge
- Connect family engagement
- Student learning
- Create welcoming, inviting cultures

Effective Family-School Partnerships

Supporting Student Achievement & School Improvement

Families who can negotiate multiple roles
- Supporters
- Encouragers
- Monitors
- Advocates
- Decision Makers
- Collaborators

frogstreet
Possible Barriers

- Limited time for communication and meaningful dialogue.
- Communication primarily during crises.
- Limited contact for building trust within the family-school relationship.
- Limited skills and knowledge about how to collaborate.
- Psychological and cultural differences that lead to assumptions and build walls.
The focus of home-school connection is on what both families and educators can do to promote student learning.

- Co-communicators
- Co-supporters
- Co-learners
- Co-decision makers
Listening Process

Hear

Remember

Attend

Respond

Understand

Active Listening
Who feels like they are communicating like this at times?
So, what's your plan?
Committing to Results

a goal without a plan is just a wish
- Antoine de Saint Exupéry
What support do you need from us?
We do not learn from experience... we learn from reflecting on experience.

- John Dewey
We Wish You Well

My heart to your heart. I wish you well.
My elbow to your elbow. I wish you well.

My back to your back. I wish you well.
My eyes to your eyes. I wish you well.

How can we help everyone we know?
How can we help each other grow?

Sometimes it’s hard to know what to do.
Wishing them well connects me and you.
Wishing them well connects me and you.