Collaborating for Success: Building the Capacity for Effective Family-School Partnerships

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Definition of Family Engagement

The various ways that a child’s adult caretaker (biological parents, foster parents, siblings, grandparents, etc.), at home, school or in the community, effectively support children’s learning and healthy development.
Family Involvement versus Family Engagement

• The latin root of the word "involvement" is “involvere” which means to wrap around, cover or envelop; roll, cause to roll.

• The latin root of the word "engagement" is “engare” which means to make a formal agreement, to contract with; to pledge; an obligation to do something.
Day One
Warm Up Exercise: Glows and Grows

• Describe your family engagement accomplishments - what’s been working (your “glows”)

• Describe your family engagement challenges – areas for improvement (your “grows”)
Impact of Family Engagement
Students with Engaged Families:

• Exhibit faster rates of literacy acquisition
• Earn higher grades and test scores
• Enroll in higher level programs
• Are promoted more and earn more credits
• Adapt better to school and attend more regularly
• Have better social skills and behavior
• Graduate and go on to higher education
• Students whose families received a home visit, one of the core strategies in the FEP, had 24 percent fewer absences than similar students whose families did not receive a visit.

• These same students also were more likely to read at or above grade level compared to similar students who did not receive a home visit.
PISA* Family Engagement Study (2010)

– Fifteen-year old students whose parents often read books with them during their first year of primary school show markedly higher PISA scores than students whose parents read infrequently with them or not at all (The average difference is 25 score points, which equates to over half a school year).

– The performance advantage among students whose parents read to them early in their school years is evident regardless of family’s socioeconomic status.

*Programme for International Student Assessment
Powerful Partnerships
Jorge’s Story

• Jorge entered our second grade classroom as a new student to the school. He is an English Language Learner and Spanish is the language spoken at home. When Jorge arrived, he didn’t yet know any of the sounds that letters make. On a reading assessment in late September, he scored at an early kindergarten level. At the mid-October family conference, both Jorge and his mother were in tears. It was devastating to be seven years old and not to be able to read. During the conference, Jorge set a goal to improve his reading. He pledged to read every chance he got and his mother promised to sit with Jorge each night and to listen to him read.
Jorge’s Story

• Jorge joined a reading intervention group at school, and I sent home many books for him to read, exchanging the books as he mastered them. In less than two months, Jorge could identify all the sounds the letters make, and he had increased his reading by two levels. In late November, Jorge was reading at an end of kindergarten level—with 6 months of the school year still ahead. At the next family conference, Jorge’s mother spoke about how she renewed her commitment to listen to Jorge read at home once she understood its importance. Without a doubt, Jorge’s ability to make reading progress was multiplied by the home-school connection. (p. 6)
Organizing Schools for Improvement
(2010)
FIVE ESSENTIAL SUPPORTS
The University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research

1. LEADERSHIP as the Driver for Change
2. PROFESSIONAL CAPACITY
3. PARENT-COMMUNITY TIES
4. STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING CLIMATE
5. INSTRUCTIONAL GUIDANCE

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Impact on Teacher Retention

“In elementary schools, teachers perceptions of parents as partners in students’ education are strongly related to their decisions to remain in their school.
What does an Effective Family-School Partnership Look Like?
Beyond the Bake Sale

The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships

Anne T. Henderson, Karen L. Mapp, Vivian R. Johnson and Don Davies

The New Press, 2007
Fortress School (Below Basic)

• “Parents don’t care about their children’s education, and they are the main reason the kid’s are failing”

• “Parents don’t come to conferences, no matter what we do”

• Principal picks a small group of “cooperative parents” to help out

• “We’re teachers, not social workers”

• “Curriculum and standards are too advanced for these parents”
Come-if-We-Call School (Basic)

- Parents are told what students will be learning at the fall open house
- Workshops are planned by staff
- Families can visit school on report card pickup day
- Parents call the office to get teacher-recorded messages about homework
Open-Door School (Intermediate)

• Parent-teacher conferences are held at least twice a year

• There is an “Action Team” for family engagement

• School holds parent events three or four times a year

• Parents can raise issues at PTA meetings or see the principal

• Diversity of families is recognized through multicultural nights are held once a year
Partnership School (Proficient)

- All families are seen as partners in improving educational outcomes
- All FE initiatives are connected to student learning/development
- Family knowledge is honored and respected
- Parent networks are valued and cultivated
- Families are actively involved in decisions
- FE happens in the community, not just at the school.