Family Engagement & SEPACs

SEPAC Summer School
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Overview

• What is family engagement?
• Benefits of family engagement
• Family engagement in MA
• Helping families engage
• Family engagement and SEPACs

What is Family Engagement?

When you hear the term “Family Engagement,” what do you think of?
Go to: https://bit.ly/SEPACAug11
Your Answers

When you hear the term “Family Engagement,” what do you think of?

- open house / meet the teacher night
- inclusion
- ok
- there needs to be trust
- learning
- partnering
- communication
- working together
- listening
- Trust

Collaboration

a way to build genuine relationship

Defining Family Engagement
One Definition

“All family engagement refers to the systematic inclusion of families in activities and programs that promote children’s development, learning, and wellness, including in the planning, development, and evaluation of such activities, programs, and systems.”


Another Definition

“All culturally responsive-sustaining family engagement is the practice of authentic, equal partnership with families, rooted in a deep knowledge and appreciation for the rich social and cultural identities, assets, habits and contexts that families bring to learning.”

— Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools (2020)
Why is it important that families are engaged in their children’s learning and education?

Findings from over 45 years of research show...

when families are involved at home and at school,

children do better in school...

and

schools do better educating children

Henderson & Mapp, A New Wave of Evidence, 2002
Engaged families support children’s learning

No matter what their family income or background, children with involved parents are more likely to:

- Attend school regularly
- Have better social skills
- Earn higher grades and test scores
- Pass their classes
- Graduate and go on to postsecondary education and careers

*Henderson & Mapp, A New Wave of Evidence, 2002*

Engaged families impact school performance

Five Essential Elements for High-Performing Schools:

- Effective School Leadership
- Rigorous Instruction
- Collaborative Teachers
- Supportive Environment
- Strong Family-Community Ties

Underlying Essential Element: TRUST

*Bryk, et. al, Organizing Schools for Improvement, 2010*
Family Engagement in MA

- Family Engagement Framework
- 11 State Agencies involved
- Not Exclusively for Schools
- Upcoming Affinity Group Listening Sessions
- On DESE Website and masfec.org

Each family is unique and all families represent diverse structures. Family engagement includes genuine efforts to understand each family's beliefs, values, priorities, goals and aspirations. Families and practitioners make joint decisions and share responsibility in a successful partnership.

Diversity is expressed and experienced at multiple levels such as (but not limited to) race, religion, ethnicity, culture, language, family structures, ability, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, and educational level. Acknowledging and accepting the need to engage all families is essential for successful engagement of diverse families and includes recognizing the strengths that come from their diverse backgrounds.

Building a respectful, trusting, and reciprocal relationship is a shared responsibility of families, practitioners, organizations, and systems. This positive relationship has the individual family's strengths and assets at its center.

Families are their child's first and best advocate. This premier role puts families in a unique position to nurture their children's growth and development and to help practitioners become knowledgeable about their child.

Equity is the eradication of privilege, oppression, disparities, and disadvantage. Family engagement must be equitable. Equitable family engagement comprises intentional and meaningful engagement activities and systems for all families or groups of families irrespective of families' level of or approach to engagement.
Framework Elements

- Building Positive Relationships
- Promoting Family Well-being
- Promoting Pathways for Partnerships with Families
- Supporting Child and Youth Development and Learning

Helping Families Engage

- Remove barriers to engagement
- Provide motivation for engagement
Barriers to Engagement

• **Personal** – lack of information; feeling like an outsider

• **Cultural** – what is seen as proper or appropriate for different groups of people / cultural norms

• **Institutional** – the internal workings of organizations favor the engagement of those already involved

Motivators for Families

Family members are more likely to become involved when they:

• Understand that they *should* be involved

• Feel *invited* by the school and their children

• Feel *capable* of making a contribution

*Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler*
How Can We Enhance Family Motivation?

- Communicate regularly with families and encourage them to share information about their children.
- Help families understand the educational system, its policies and procedures, curriculum and instruction.
- Keep families informed about upcoming school activities and events and personally encourage them to attend.
- Support families in making connections with other families for parent-to-parent support.
- Reinforce what families already do to support their children.

More Ideas...

- Help families understand learning standards and objectives at each grade level of their children.
- Inform and help families understand school and district policies and procedures.
- Provide families with data about school performance and help them interpret what the data means.
- Help families learn about and access resources and services in the community.
How can SEPACs support Family Engagement?

In small groups, consider:

• How to remove barriers to family engagement
• How to create more opportunities for family engagement
• With the most marginalized families in mind, rather than the mythical “typical parent”?

Resources on Family Engagement

• A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement by Anne T. Henderson and Karen L. Mapp (SEDL, 2002)


• Handbook on Family and Community Engagement by Sam Redding, Marilyn Murphy, & Pamela Sheley, Editors (2011) https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED565697

More Resources

- Global Family Research Project
  https://archive.globalfrp.org/family-involvement


- National Network of Partnership Schools
  http://nnps.jhu.edu/

- SEDL National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools http://www.sedl.org/connections/
  http://www.sedl.org/connections/engagement_forum/
  - A Toolkit for Title I Parental Involvement
  - Working Systemically: Engaging Family & Community

One more sli.do question!

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Thank You